

COURSE TITLE:	<b>Organizing for Social and Political Change</b>
COURSE NUMBER:	652 (winter Term, 2015, Section 001, Class#25449)
TIME & PLACE	Thurs 9:00am-12:00pm, Room , School Social Work Building
CREDIT HOURS:	3
PREREQUISITES:	SW 522 or permission of instructor
INSTRUCTOR:	Maureen Okasinski, MSW, LEO Intermittent Lecturer I
CONTACT DETAILS:	SSWB 3760 E-mail: mokasins@umich.edu Phone: 313 303-8911
OFFICE HOURS:	Thurs: 12:15pm-1:15pm or by appointment
COURSE MEETS:	9/8/2015-12/14/21015; no class11/26/2015.
	-break

Course syllabus based on previous work of Larry Gant, Charles Keiffer and Maureen Okasinski

## **COURSE STATEMENT**

*This course statement was approved by Governing Faculty on September 3, 2014.*

### **Course Description**

This course examines methods of organizing people for social and political action on their own behalf or on behalf of others. Students will analyze different approaches to bringing people together for collective action, building organizational capacity, and generating power in the community. The course includes the study of skills in analyzing power structures, formulating action strategies, using conflict and persuasive tactics, challenging oppressive structures, conducting community campaigns, using political advocacy as a form of mobilization, and understanding contemporary social issues as they affect oppressed and disadvantaged communities. Special emphasis will be placed on organizing communities of color, women, LGBT populations, and other under-represented groups in U.S. society.

### **Course Content**

In this course, students will learn that organizing for social and political action aims to create change by building powerful organizations at the community and societal level. This course takes the perspective that organizing can win improvements in people's lives, make people aware of their own power, alter the relations of power in the community, and create a more socially just society. The history of organizing for social and political action and its underlying theoretical assumptions about

power, conflict, and change will be covered. This course will also examine the sociopolitical and political-economic arenas in which organizing operates; the roles and responsibilities of practitioners; several major strategies and tactics of organizing; forces that facilitate or limit organizing; ethical and value dilemmas of organizing; and lessons learned from research on social and political action and change. In addition, different schools of thought about organizing and their approaches to the formulation of goals, issues, constituencies, targets, and tactics will be compared. The course will also analyze strategies and tactics that employ conflict as a vehicle for generating power and creating change. Students will assess theories of conflict and power and ways of analyzing power structures at the community and societal level. Political advocacy will be examined as an empowering process of strengthening solidarity and challenging oppressive structures, systems, and institutions. In contrast to viewing advocacy as a narrow approach to representing group interests in legislatures and established institutions, this course will consider advocacy as an empowering process by which traditionally excluded groups advocate for themselves in ways which build organizations and develop communities.

### Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Understand and analyze the changing role of context of social and political action. (Practice Behaviors 5.CO, 9.CO)
2. Understand contemporary social and political issues and their relationship to social and political action strategies and tactics. (Practice Behavior 9.CO)
3. Understand and apply social and political dynamics as they relate to issues of power, privilege, social justice, and resource distribution. (Practice Behavior 5.CO)
4. Analyze alternative models, strategies, tactics, and modes of social and political action directed towards these goals. (Practice Behaviors 3.CO, 6.CO)
5. Demonstrate skills in community assessment, leadership and organizational development, planning and conducting campaigns, and evaluating their results. (Practice Behaviors 10.b.CO, 10.c.CO, 10.d.CO)
6. Formulate strategies to engage constituencies in social and political action. (Practice Behavior 10.a.CO)
7. Identify and incorporate attention to issues related to diversity dimensions such as ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation, as well community of residence and other dimensions which are associated with privilege, discrimination, domination, and oppression. (Practice Behavior 4.CO)
8. Identify and analyze value and ethical dilemmas that arise in the course of organizing for social and political action. (Practice Behaviors 1.CO, 2.CO)

### Course Design

The format of the course will include instructor lecture/class discussion, analysis of assigned readings, class exercises and simulations, and external individual and group activities. Speakers and videos will be used to augment other course materials. Students will contribute to developing a climate in the classroom in which everyone can (a) experiment with new skills; (b) explore their own multicultural competence and the implications of one's own background for developing and

implementing social and political action strategies; (c) consult with each other on action projects and assignments; and (d) generate plans and strategies for future learning and development.

### **Theme Relation to Social Justice**

An underlying assumption of the course is that the goals of social and political action are to promote social justice and produce positive social change. The course will explore the different meanings of social justice and social change, and their implications for the development of strategies and tactics of social and political action. Historical and contemporary illustrations will be used to analyze these concepts.

### **Theme Relation to Behavioral and Social Science Research**

The course includes the analysis of contemporary and historical research on the application of theoretical models of social action and social change. Case examples of social and political action efforts will be evaluated in terms of the validity of their theoretical premises and their effectiveness in achieving stated ends. Issues for further research will also be identified.

### **Relationship to SW Ethics and Values**

The NASW Code of Ethics (revised 1996) establishes an ethical imperative for social workers to engage in social and political action on behalf of social justice and in support of the needs of diverse and disadvantaged populations. Since the emergence of the social work profession in the U.S., the pursuit of social justice through a variety of social and political strategies has been one of its fundamental tenets. This course reflects that heritage and applies those values in the analysis of contemporary social and political action efforts. It also discusses some of the ethical issues involved in pursuing social justice through social and political action.

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## **1. Required Texts**

Kim Bobo, Jackie Kendall, Steve Max (2009) Organizing for social change: Midwest Academy manual for activists, Publisher: Seven Locks Press 4th ed.

## **2. RELEVANT POLICIES**

a. Religious Holidays

Students who observe a religious holiday on the same day as class will have access to the class materials covered that day. Students are expected to notify the instructor if they plan to miss class. The official University of Michigan policy on religious holidays, and a list of possible conflicts with classes, can be found at:

[http://www.provost.umich.edu/calendar/religious\\_holidays.html](http://www.provost.umich.edu/calendar/religious_holidays.html)

#### b. Learning Needs and Disabilities

Students with specialized learning needs are requested to make an appointment with the instructor to discuss the necessary arrangements. If you have a disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please schedule a private appointment with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss accommodations for your specific needs. This information will be kept strictly confidential. For more information and resources, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities office at G664 Haven Hall, (734) 763-3000.

#### c. Academic Integrity

All students should be familiar with and take seriously the School of Social Work's standards regarding intellectual honesty and plagiarism. These standards are published in the MSW Student Handbook (<http://www.ssw.umich.edu/studentGuide/2007>). Detected and documented plagiarism for any class related assignment leads to automatic failure of the course. I want your own learning, writing, and thinking in the class.

#### d. Electronic Devices and Laptops

In consideration of your classmates and your own learning, please mute all devices during class. If you must be on call for personal or work reasons, let them know this is only for emergencies that no one else can handle. Personal communications such as texting or surfing are fine during breaks and are not during class time. Interruptions, no matter how brief, affect your ability to focus and research has found that it takes 20-40 minutes to get back to your level of productivity prior to the interruption. Computer use during class time that supports the mission of the course (e.g. taking notes) is encouraged. There will be times that I ask for screens down during some parts of the class and I expect ready compliance with that request.

#### e. Required Readings

Students should complete readings & digital media viewing prior to the class for which they are assigned. All required readings are described in this course syllabus and will be posted on Canvas. Supplemental readings are also posted for student use and enrichment. Periodic handouts and additional required readings may be assigned during the term. All will either be distributed in class and/or posted on Canvas.

#### f. Attendance

The School of Social Work attendance policy can be found in the Student Guide. Attendance will be recorded in this course, however, it is not included in the grading rubric.

#### g. Deadline Expectations

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date listed in the course outline. Late papers will have their letter grade reduced by ½ a letter grade for each day they are late. The day count begins once class starts on the day the paper is due. I will first score the paper as if it was submitted on time, so the student knows how I rated the quality of their work and then I will subtract the equivalent of ½ of a letter grade from those points for each day the paper is late. The point subtraction will be the amount that is equivalent of the middle range for each letter grade. For example, if a student earned 35/35 (100%) on an assignment and submitted the paper 2 days late, the grade would go from an A+ to a A- (31.5 points/92%). Exceptions will need prior permission of the instructor.

#### h. Participation

Students are expected to fully engage in the course through discussion, activities, listening and leadership. Everyone should feel safe and respected throughout the semester. Each of us has a responsibility to listen, ask questions and reflect in order to provide this. Communication can be complication and easily misunderstood. Please take time to understand what others are saying in spirit and word.

#### i. Grading System

A 100-point system is used. At the end of the semester, the project points earned will be translated into letter grades according to the following formula:

A+	98-100	B+	87-90	C+	77-80	D	<69 (no credit)
A	94-97	B	84-86	C	74-76		
A-	91-93	B-	81-83	C-	70-73		

### 3. Incompletes

Incompletes are not granted unless it can be demonstrated that it would be unfair to hold the student to the normal expectations of the course. The student must formally request an incomplete with the instructor prior to the final weeks of class. Please review the Student Guide section on Ethical Conduct in the University Environment. This section addresses plagiarism, harassment and discrimination policies.

### 4. Assignments

I grade assignments using the grading rubric found in the rubrics folder in Canvas. Follow these rubrics to complete the assignment. A hard copy of the assignment is due at the beginning of class (APA style/formatting is required for academic papers, professional documents may have other criteria) and a digital copy is submitted in Canvas folder and due at the beginning of class.

You are required to submit a draft of your strategy chart and final project. You may submit drafts of other assignments. I will review the draft and provide feedback based on the rubric. Most students have found this helpful in producing a quality paper that earns the grade they desire.

Group projects are not a requirement of this class. If you would like to work with a partner on the case study assignment, you may do so with approval of the instructor. You must ask for approval by week three of the course, no group projects will be approved after that class.

## 1. Organizing in the News (15%)

Students will contribute to furthering their understanding of contemporary social and political issues, the strategies and tactics used, context and dynamics related to power, privilege, social justice and resource distribution through this assignment. Throughout the semester, each student monitors media outlets (traditional & social media) for content on organizing for social and political action. This can be organizing on any level from local to international and on any change issue. It works well to focus on a couple of issues of interest to you or focus on one or two sources and the variety of issues that are reported in these. Seek a couple of regular sources and read their articles, Facebook postings, Twitter feeds, blogs, etc. In small groups, each student will share their 'organizing in the news' item with the group. The group discusses of what's been happening-the issue, the leaders, constituents, responses, controversies, opinion v. fact etc. See the Organizing in the News sharing guide for specifics on how to prepare to present, and for ideas about responding to others'.

## 2. Case Study (15%)

Students will research an organizing movement from the past and present key lessons learned to the class. The oral presentation is approximately 15 minutes to share some aspects of the campaign with a focus on analysis. Presentation materials and a brief paper will be turned via Canvas. Beyond a traditional presentation, you can get creative with this—structure it as a mobilizing speech, consciousness raising group or leadership strategy session set in the time period, incorporate multimedia strategies, produce a document for review and discussion. Your allotted time should include 5-10 minutes for Q & A.

Choose one of these identified topics such as labor, environment, civil rights, access to resources, political rule, education or other topic approved by the instructor. Include a minimum of six sources. The case study is a movement from the past, or a point in time for the movement. For your movement, it's important that enough time has passed that reflections on impact are possible.

- The objectives of the movement-what change was sought? to affect what group of people?
- What core issue(s) were confronted? (i.e. power, diversity dimensions, oppression, privilege & justice)
- Who was responsible for mobilizing efforts and how were they supported? (individuals, organizations involved or created to address the core issue)
- Brief background & social/historical/political context preceding the movement
- What model of organizing does this most closely resemble? (i.e. Smock) Explain
- What were the core tactics & strategies utilized to make a difference? (i.e. Checkoway & Bobo)
- What factors limited success?
- What was the identifiable impact or result of this effort?
- How does this movement from the past link, compare or contrast with current movements discussed in your Organizing in the News group or other current campaigns?
- For you, what was learned regarding organizing for social and political action from this case study?

### 3. Social Action (65%)

Each student seek out an organization or group involved in a current campaign for change and learn more deeply about this campaign and organization. Over the semester, you will observe, interact, participate in this and contribute something tangible to further the campaign's success. You will apply the knowledge and skills gained through the class to strategize its current status and create a plan of action for next steps toward success. You may work with a partner on this. My best advice is to choose a local or state movement rather than national or international movements, simply because students in the past have had more rewarding experiences with smaller groups. Following the issue means regular attention to media-social and traditional as well as actual engagement with the movement. This is a semester long assignment with multiple deadlines. Identify your issue early in order to have enough time to participate, research and respond to the movement.

a. *OBSERVE 5%*

Observe or participate in some aspect of this movement. This would likely include attending a meeting/rally/legislative session/forum or following and posting in social media. Write about what the movement seeks to change, why you choose this, what happened at the event (date, location, # of participants etc), your role/participation, your observations of the leaders & other participants and other reflections. Write this up as a journal entry 1-2 pages/entry.

b. *INTERVIEW 10%*

Interview an organizer, leader or other very active person in the movement.

- a. Why did s/he get involved? Why is this issue important to address now?
- b. Who is impacted by the issues? What is the impact of change? (consider power, resources distribute, justice, diversity dimensions, etc.)
- c. How does the leader/organization reach out to get people involved? How effective has outreach been?
- d. Who is opposed to the change? What power do they have?
- e. What tactics have been used to achieve the change? Which were successful & which were unsuccessful?
- f. What does s/he hope to achieve and in what time frame?
- g. What are their current needs for moving forward? Discuss with the leader what you can contribute to the movement (use this for planning your action project).
- g. Your own analysis: what are the strengths and limitations you see in the organization, leadership and current course of action to date?

c. *STRATEGY CHART + NARRATIVE (20%)*

Complete a strategy chart ( use the Midwest Academy format) for the movement that captures the current status of the movement/organization and sets out a plan for action for the next six months of activity (time frame may be adjusted as relevant to the campaign). The chart represents your application of course learning and may diverge from the actual plan of the organization or its leaders. The chart itself is compact but represents a great deal of knowledge. This will take some time to complete. Following the chart, you will write additional narrative to fully explain all aspects of the chart including details, rationale, barriers, strengths, dynamics etc. It should represent where the movement is now and where it goes next. You will write this as if you are a key leader planning next steps. Incorporate knowledge from the course (readings, discussion) and what you've learned about your specific movement into the narrative. The narrative will include key issues, model of organizing, population impacted, success of the model and tactics, barriers to progress, issues related to sustainability (volunteers, funding, etc) and lay out a plan of action (communicating with constituents, strategies and technology

- use). Remember to cite all sources for media, participation and interviews to make your point.
- d. **ACTION PROJECT (20%)**  
 Do something substantial to contribute to the social or political change campaign that you have been learning about throughout the semester. This is to put your organizing skills into action. In this instance, you leader or significantly contribute to an action (e.g. lead a meeting, speak publically, produce content for social or traditional media, fundraise, recruit new members). Ideas to consider for social or traditional media: websites, blogs, instagram, twitter, social bookmarks, Wikis, Facebook, Google Docs, Audio/Video Hosting (e.g. You Tube Channels), digitally created PSAs, PR strategy artifacts (e.g. brochures, zines, postcards, billboard copy/mockups, etc.), brochures, zines, postcards other needed media images.

Complete the action and provide tangible evidence of it. Write a narrative that describes what you did, your rationale for choosing this action-tying it to your strategy chart ( why this makes sense for the organization, its constituents, the targets of change and such at this time), include how this is/was distributed or communicated to appropriate populations, how others responded to it and your success determinant (substantive evaluation criteria).

- e. **FINAL REFLECTION (10%)**  
 Present to the class a poster (digital or print) that gives an overview of the movement to date (timeline, goal(s), constituents, targets), your contribution and its outcome, was, where the movement goes from here and what impact this has had on you and your future involvement in organizing. The class will view these individually and then discuss in a large group.

## 5. ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION SCHEDULE

Assignment	Due Date	Draft Date
Identify social action topic & case study subject	10/1	
Case Study-presentation	begin week of 10/8, finish 11/19	
Social Action Project: PARTICIPATE	10/15	
Social Action: INTERVIEW	10/29	
Social Action: STRATEGY CHART	11/12	11/5
Social Action: PROJECT	12/10	11/19
Social Action: REFLECTION	12/10	



## 6. SESSIONS, LEARNING TOPICS, & READINGS

Guest speakers to be announced, schedule may change to accommodate guest speakers

Add SM articles from Molly's paper, add violence talk from ...add

Date	Topic	Outside class learning
1. Sept 17	Intro to course & syllabus; what is organizing?	
2. Sept 24	Models of organizing, choosing an issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smock, K. (2004). <i>Democracy in Action: Community Organizing and Urban Change</i>. (Chapters 1 &amp; 2) New York: Columbia University Press</li> <li>• Checkoway, B. (1995) Six Strategies of Community Change. <i>Community Development Journal</i>. 30(1), 2-20.</li> <li>• Bobo, Chapters 2, 3-Direct Action Org &amp; Choosing an Issue</li> </ul>
3. Oct 1	Strategies and Tactics Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smock, K. (2004). "Lessons Learned", in <i>Democracy in Action: Community Organizing and Urban Change</i> (pp. 247-261). New York: Columbia University Press.</li> <li>• Bobo, Ch 4, 5- strategy &amp; tactics</li> <li>• Film: <i>United In Anger: ACT-UP</i></li> </ul>
4. Oct 8	Meetings, Coalitions, Leadership Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Case study presentations begin</i></li> <li>• Bobo, Chapter 7, 9, 11, 12</li> <li>• Baker, Chris. (2008) <i>The Highlander Research and Education Center: Utilizing Social Change-Based Models for Public Policy</i> <i>Race, Gender &amp; Class</i> 15:3-4 p.308-335</li> <li>• Speer, P.W. and Hughey, J. (1995). <i>Community Organizing: An Ecological Route to Empowerment and Power</i>. <i>American Journal of Community Psychology</i>, 23(5), 729-748.</li> <li>• Bailey, Shiau, Zola, Fernyak, Fang, So, Chang. (2011). <i>San Francisco Hep B Free: A Grassroots Community Coalition to Prevent Hepatitis B and Liver Cancer</i>. <i>Journal of Community Health</i>. 36:538–551</li> <li>• Film <i>Thundebird Woman</i>: Winona LeDuke</li> </ul>
5. Oct 15	Organizing Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bobo, Chapter 10, 13, 14, 15</li> <li>• Alinsky, S. (1971). "Tactics", in <i>Rules for Radicals</i>. (pp. 126-164). New York: Vintage Books. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ford School Policy Talk, Erin Chenoweth <a href="http://fordschool.umich.edu/video/2015/erica-chenoweth-why-civil-nonviolent-resistance-works">http://fordschool.umich.edu/video/2015/erica-chenoweth-why-civil-nonviolent-resistance-works</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
6. Oct 22	Empowered Community Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Padgett, D.L. (2002). "Institutionalizing Activism: The History of the Sherman Park Community Association," <i>Journal of Community Practice</i>, 10(4), 67-83.</li> <li>• Brooks, F. (2005). <i>Resolving the Dilemma between Organizing and Services: Los Angeles ACORN's Welfare Advocacy</i>. <i>Social Work</i>. 50, 3: 262-270.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kline, M, Dolgon, C., and Dresser, L. (2000). The Politics of Knowledge in Theory and Practice: Collective Research and Political Action in a Grassroots Community Organization. <i>Journal of Community Practice</i>, 8(2), 23-38.</li> <li>• Films: Rebuilding of Rascal Flats, Temporary Dwellings</li> </ul>
7. Oct 29	Media & Online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bobo, Chapter 14, 15-media, online organizing</li> <li>• Etling, Faris, Palfrey (2010). Political change in the digital era. <i>SAIS Review</i>. Vol XXX. Spring-summer.</li> <li>• Parigi, Gong. (2014). <i>From Grassroots to digital ties: a case study of a political consumerism movement</i>. <i>Journal of Consumer Culture July 2014 vol. 14 no. 2 236-253</i></li> <li>• Zeynep Tufekci, TED Talk, Online Activism-easy to organize, hard to win</li> <li>• Other readings TBD</li> </ul>
8. Nov 5		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bobo, Chapter 17</li> <li>• Laura Sanders, Ramiro Martinez, Margaret Harner, Melanie Harner, Pilar Horner, and Jorge Delva (2012). <i>Grassroots responsiveness to Human Rights Abuse: History of the Washtenaw Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights</i>. <i>Social Work</i>. 58(2).</li> <li>• Edward T. Walker* and Lina M. Stepick. (2014) <i>Strength in Diversity? Group Heterogeneity in the Mobilization of Grassroots Organizations</i>. <i>Sociology Compass</i> 8/7 959–975.</li> <li>• Cari L. Gulbrandsen<sup>1</sup> and Christine A. Walsh. (2012). <i>It starts with me: Women mediate power in feminist activism</i>. <i>Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work</i> 27(3) 275-288.</li> </ul>
9. Nov 12	Legislative efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stone, Amy. (2011). <i>Dominant Tactics in tactical repertoire: anti-gay ballot measures 1974-2008</i>. <i>Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change</i>. 31(3).</li> <li>• Film: The Last Abortion Clinic</li> </ul>
10. Nov 19	Labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bobo, Chapter 21 &amp; 22 -local unions &amp; labor partnerships</li> <li>• Yu, Kuong-hee. (2013). Organizing immigrants: meaning generation in community. <i>Work, Employment and Society</i>. 28(3). pp. 355-371.</li> <li>• Denisse Roca-Servat. (2010). Justice for Roofers: Toward a Comprehensive Union Organizing Campaign Involving Latino Construction Workers in Arizona. <i>Labor Studies Journal</i> 35 (3). Pp.343-363</li> <li>• Film: Standing Tall: Women Unionize the Catfish Industry</li> </ul>
11. Dec 3	Youth, arts, environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christens and Dolan (2011). Interweaving youth development, community development and social change through youth organizing. <i>Youth and Society</i> 43(2). Pp. 528-548.</li> <li>• FCYO. (2011). Youth Leading the Way for a Sustainable Planet.</li> <li>• Films: Mural Arts Project, Open Air Philadelphia</li> <li>• Lorenz, Shanna. (2013). <i>Black and latino hip hop alliance for immigration reform</i>. <i>American Music</i> 31(3).</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Films: The Interrupters, No Justice, No Peace</li> </ul>
<b>12. Dec 10</b>	<b>Student presentatio ns and course wrap up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflection</li> </ul>
<b>13. Dec 17</b>	<b>Exam week-no class</b>	



**LEO Lecturers'** Employee Organization, Local 6244, AFL-CIO