



<b>Course title:</b>	Organizing for Social and Political Change
<b>Course #/term:</b>	SW 652, sec 1, Fall 2018
<b>Time and place:</b>	Thursday, 9:10am-12pm, room B770
<b>Credit hours:</b>	3
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	SW 560or permission of instructor
<b>Instructor:</b>	Maureen Okasinski
<b>Pronouns:</b>	she
<b>Contact info:</b>	<b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:mokasins@umich.edu">mokasins@umich.edu</a> <b>Phone:</b> 313.303.8911 You may expect a response within 48-72 hours
<b>Office:</b>	3760
<b>Office hours:</b>	Thursday, 12:15-1:15pm, and by appointment

## 1. COURSE STATEMENT

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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 Description:** 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.

**Curricular Themes**

### **Theme Relation to Multiculturalism & Diversity**

The course will focus on the issues involved in working for social change in a multicultural society and in engaging in social and political action in and with multicultural communities. It will also address the problems and potential of engaging in successful social and political action with diverse populations inclusive of diversity dimensions previously listed. Case examples of social and political action within multicultural communities will be used to illustrate strategic and tactical issues.

### **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 Promotion, Prevention, Treatment & Rehabilitation**

Although the course will focus on change at the macro level of intervention, it assumes that the creation of socially just and responsive policies and organizations through social and political action is a pre-condition for the development of effective programs that emphasize prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. In fact, the underlying principles of social and political action complement rather than contradict the objectives of promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation in social service programs.

### **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.

## **2. CLASS REQUIREMENTS**

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### **a. Text and class materials:**

Kim Bobo, Jackie Kendall, Steve Max (2009) Organizing for social change: Midwest Academy manual for activists, Publisher: Seven Locks Press 4th ed. ISBN: 978-09842752-1-2

Recommended: Smock, K. (2004). Democracy in Action: Community Organizing and Urban Change. New York: Columbia University Press. ISBN: 0231126735, 9780231126731

- The textbook is on reserve at the library and available through bookstore. All journal articles and other readings are posted in Canvas. Required readings are identified in this course syllabus and on the home page in Canvas. The list of required readings/views is dynamic—I may modify the dates or readings in response to student interest, new material availability or shifts in the schedule.
- Students should complete text, audio and digital media consumption prior to the class for which they are assigned. Classroom discussion and activities are based on this expectation.
- The Canvas home page will contain the up-to-date requirements. Periodic handouts and additional required readings will be assigned during the term. All will either be distributed in class and/or posted on Canvas. Updates are posted at least one week ahead of time in Pages.
- Supplemental readings are also posted for student use. Students are encouraged to share new and useful material—I can upload these into our Canvas site.

**b. Tentative Schedule**

*Schedule and reading may change according to class interests and needs. Changes will be shared in announcements and updated in relevant Canvas section.*

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Out of Class Learning</b>
<b>Week 1</b> 9/6	Overview of course & Organizing	
<b>Week 2</b> 9/13	Organizational models  Direct Action Organizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviews of one organizational model from: Smock, K. (2004). Democracy in Action: Community Organizing and Urban Change. (Chapters 2,9 &amp; chapter excerpt)</li> <li>• Bobo, Chapters 2 &amp; 3, <i>recommended: chapter 6</i></li> </ul>
<b>Week 3</b> 9/20	Direct Action strategies & tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch: United In Anger, film</li> <li>• Bobo, Chapters 4 &amp; 5-Strategy Chart &amp; Tactics</li> <li>• Checkoway &amp; Alinsky articles on strategies and tactics for organizing</li> </ul>
<b>Week 4</b> 9/27	Leadership  Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bobo, Chapters 10, 11, 13</li> <li>• Select a film from list in Pages focus on the leadership style</li> </ul>
<b>Week 5</b> 10/4	approaches/schools  Coalitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-selected article on schools/approaches</li> <li>• Bobo, Chapters 9 + 20 or 21 or 22</li> </ul>
<b>Week 6</b> 10/11	Traditional Media  Legislative & Ballot Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bobo, Chapters 14</li> <li>• Watch: Battle for Gay Marriage or Last Abortion Clinic, film</li> <li>• Article: Tactics in Anti-Gay Ballot Measures</li> </ul>
<b>Week 7</b> 10/18	visionary v. direct action organizing  Digital media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articles on visionary organizing and in defense of struggle</li> <li>• Self-selected organizing podcast: Making Connection</li> <li>• Bobo, Chapter 15-online organizing</li> <li>• Watch: Zeynep Turfeki, TED talk</li> </ul>
<b>Week 8</b> 10/25	Consumer Strategies  Popular education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journal article on consumer strategies</li> <li>• Bobo, Chapter 16 Designed and Leading a Workshop</li> <li>• ROC Facilitators Guide</li> </ul>
<b>Week 9</b> 11/1		<p>Self-scheduled work week</p> <p>Self-selected Participate in organizing activity/Interview an organizer</p>
<b>Week 10</b> 11/8	Violence and Non- Violence  Mass Mobilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch: Erin Chenowith on Violence/Non-Violence in Change</li> <li>• Bobo chapters 7 &amp; 8</li> </ul>

	Town halls & accountability sessions	
<b>Week 11</b> 11/15	Judicial Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal Advocacy What Organizations Need to Know</li> <li>• Listen: Imperfect Plaintiffs, More Perfect podcast</li> </ul>
<b>Week 12</b> 11/29	Unions & work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-select from the union-work film and article list or participate in an activity or interview</li> </ul>
<b>Week 13</b> 12/6	Peer review of CFC CFC dialogue	
<b>Week 14</b> 12/12 Final Strategy Chart and Narrative due		

**c. Assignments**

The assignment description in the syllabus is a general overview. Details, formats and rubrics are found in Canvas Assignments. I expect your work to demonstrate concise yet thoughtful, evidence-based, integrative and deep work.

Assignment	Due date, submission type	Percent of overall grade
<b>Weekly Assignments (35%)</b>		
1. Attendance and Participation	Weekly, observed	15%
2. Change in Action: journal & discussion	9/13-11/29, observed + Canvas	20%
<b>Campaign for Change (65%)</b>		
3. Choosing an Issue + Pillars of Power worksheets	9/27, hard copy in class	5%
4. Draft Strategy Chart	10/4, Canvas	5%
5. Project Management Plan	10/11, Canvas	5%
6. Offline Design Element	10/25, Canvas	5%
7. Online Design Element	11/1, Canvas	5%
8. Event/Activity Design Element	11/15, Canvas	10%

<b>9. Final Strategy Chart and Narrative</b>	11/29-draft hard copy, share in class 12/12-final, Canvas	20%
<b>10. Storytelling Your Campaign</b>	12/6, in class	5%
<b>11. Teamwork assessment</b>	12/6, hard copies	5%
If a Campaign for Change team needs to deviate from the submission schedule above, prior approval is required by the instructor.		

**Assignments Overview (see Canvas for details and rubrics)**

**1. Preparation, Participation & Attendance, 15%**

A point is earned each session based on my observation of your preparation, participation and attendance. Students are expected to attend every class session, come on time, remain for the entire class period, participate in class discussions and exercises. Class time is planned to make the most of being together in a group. We discuss, make plans, reflect and practice our knowledge and skills and your prior-to-class reading of assigned materials. Your preparation, attendance and participation are essential to learning. Students are expected to fully engage in the course through discussion, activities, listening and leadership and contribute to a meaningful learning community. Points are earned each day.

If you are unable to attend a session, please communicate with me in advance if possible, contact a peer to ask about what you missed and review the readings, handouts and materials from that session. Students who are using electronic devices not related to class activities will see the impact in this grade. The SSW [Policy on Class Attendance](#) is found in the MSW Student Guide.

**2. Journals, 20%**

Each week you will select or be assigned a reading, listening, viewing or action item related to one of the week’s learning themes. You can select from the recommended reading/viewing/listening list for the week or with prior approval, seek new sources for learning based on your needs & interests. These are listed in the Canvas Page for that week. You will write and turn in a ½ page journal. For about 30 minutes at the start of each class, students will meet in small groups to discuss what they’ve learned. The discussion should contribute to your overall understanding about organizing for social and political change as well as the specified course objectives. 2pts/week.

## **Campaign for Change**

Students will work in small teams to plan and complete aspects of a direct action organizing campaign. Class time is structured to build knowledge and skills for this and time is devoted each week for teams to meet. You will likely meet outside of class. Each team will develop a work plan to complete the project, research and competency development specific to this campaign, design elements that are used in the campaign, a presentation & final report. Within the team, one person will take the lead for each major component of the project. Your work is shared throughout the semester with other teams

### **3. Choosing an Issue + Pillars of Power, 5%**

The starting point for any direct action campaign is to review issues relevant to a social justice concern and select a focus that has a higher probability of success. Next the team examines the power structures that support the current state of affairs and targets the decision makers, shifts power and move toward change. Each team will complete these worksheets in class.

### **4. Strategy Chart Draft, 5%**

The team selects an organization that will initiate the campaign (or identifies a campaign already in progress that they would like to work on) and lays out a draft of the campaign using the Midwest Academy Manual Strategy Chart. This and the preceding assignment create a foundation for which to develop their plan of research over the semester about the organization, the issue, previous campaigns & similar organizations, relevant strategies, tactics, tactical investigations and the application of course readings and activities.

### **5. Project Management Plan, 5%**

The team completes a 2-4 page workplan for the entire project early in the semester to fairly divide the work, set timelines and responsibilities. Each week the lead for this assignment will check-in with team on progress and make adjustments to the plan, leading discussion on challenges and seeking solutions—it is a living document. Time is allotted each classroom session for teams to meet and have individual consultation time with the instructor.

### **6. Offline Design Element, 5%**

Using principals of good graphic design, complete an offline media/communications/marketing piece necessary for your campaign such as a poster for an event or informational brochure on the issue. Explain your selection in a brief narrative.

### **7. Online Design Element, 5%**

Using principals of good graphic design and effective use of social media, complete an online media/communications/marketing piece necessary for your campaign. Explain your selection in a brief narrative.

### **8. Activity/Event Design Element, 10%**

Design and, ideally carry out, a key action tactic, such as a protest rally or town hall meeting, or needed organizational development plan such a social media or fundraising plan for the campaign.



**9. Storytelling Your Campaign, 5%**

Tell the class the story of your experiences in working on the Campaign for Change and the story of your campaign. Use a poster, digital or print media, or other creative media to tell your story. Include an overview of the campaign, your strategy for success, the design elements and reflection on the learning process for your team. Provide a portion of the allotted time for discussion.

**10. Final Strategy Chart and Narrative, 20%**

Revise the initial assessment and draft strategy chart to demonstrate how you have integrated your research and learning, that shows the advancement of your understanding and skills for organizing, and how what you’ve done has a likelihood of success.

**11. Teamwork Assessment, 5%**

Team members complete evaluations of each team member using the provided form. Following the presentation to the class, members review with each other their feedback on working together as a team and turn in completed forms to the instructor.

NOTE: If students have prior experience with the assignments listed above, they can propose an alternative learning assignment to substitute for one or more of the assignments described in this syllabus. Assignment substitutions request must be done in advance by week three.

**d. Grading**

This is a 100-point system. The final letter grade is assigned according to the following formula:

A+ 99%-100%	B+ 87-90%	C+ 77-80%	D <69% (no credit)
A 94%-98%	B 84-86%	C 74-76%	
A- 91%–93%	B- 81-83%	C- 70-73%	

**Assignment Practices**

- a. **Drafts:** students may submit a draft of their assignment for review in advance of its due date. I will provide ungraded feedback based on the rubric. The latest you may submit a draft to me is one week before its due date-this provides me with the time necessary to provide quality feedback and you with time to respond to it. Most students have found this helpful in producing a quality paper that earns the grade they desire.
- b. **Peer review:** One of my intentional learning strategies is peer review. You must have a paper copy of a draft of your assignment ready at the beginning of class on the day of peer review. The process aids you in further developing your thoughts and ideas, provides you with a pre-graded check of your understanding of the assignment requirements and gives you a chance to develop your critical thinking and feedback skills with peers in a supportive environment.
- c. **Due dates:** All assignments are due by the start of class on the date listed in Canvas. However, I will grant a grace period of one week in which you can submit your assignment if you request

this prior to the day it is due. I will not accept a draft for review during the grace time. While I will accept the assignment, the points awarded will be reduced by the equivalent of ½ letter grade. Exceptions to this will need permission of the instructor one week prior to the due date and will only be made in extenuating circumstances.

- d. **Resubmission:** Sometimes despite your best effort, the peer review, and/or your submission of a draft to me for review, your assignment misses the mark. You may choose to resubmit one assignment (note: you must have submitted an assignment in the first place). If you would like to resubmit, let me know prior to the last scheduled date of class. To resubmit, you must meet with me or have received significant written feedback about the needed improvements to the assignment. A resubmitted assignment will be accepted up until one week past the last class date.
- e. **Submission format:** all assignments are submitted via Canvas assignments. Documents should be 11/12-point font, single spaced and the narrative portion within 2 pages of the recommended length. Cover pages, executive summaries, extensive graphic elements, references and appendix are not part of the length of the paper. The principles of good design are expected in assignments and accounted for in the rubrics. Additionally, well-written, error free narrative using professional language and tone are expected. Beyond traditional document formats, you can use more creative media formats for your assignments –I will use the same grading rubric regardless. A less traditional format may require a bit of conversation about length and submission format.

### 3. ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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- a. **Teaching philosophy:** This classroom is a learning community, an integration of knowledge, skills and the School of Social designated expectations. Project-based learning and dialogic development are the centerpiece of my approach and the course is a collaboration between instructor and students. My selection of structures, processes, assignments and readings are meant to provide the space for you to meet your learning goals. What you gain from the course is a direct result of your own effort as well as that of your peers. We use active and cooperative learning each week. I believe the process of planning, doing and reflection and then trying again are essential to learning. It's important for all of us to be able to make mistakes, ask questions and receive feedback through the semester.
- b. **Learning Environment:** Everyone should feel safe and respected throughout the semester. Each of us has a responsibility to listen, ask questions and reflect so we can provide this. Communication can be complication and easily misunderstood. Please take time to understand what others are saying in spirit and word. Students 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, implementing & using evaluation
  - c. consult with each other on projects and assignments
  - d. generate plans and strategies for future learning and development.

Student represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. I am committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

- share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
- be open to the views of others

- honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community
- value each other's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature
- use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in this course and across the department.

**c. Electronic Devices:** Mute all devices during class. If you must be on call for personal or work reasons, set to vibrate. Personal communications are fine during breaks and are not acceptable during class time. Interruptions, no matter how brief, affect your ability to focus. 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. Your final grade will be affected by your use of electronics during class time for activities not relevant to the course as commensurate with my observed frequency of these activities.

**d.** Additional School and University policies, information and resources are available here:

<https://ssw.umich.edu/standard-policies-information-resources>. They include:

- *Safety and emergency preparedness*
- *Mental health and well-being*
- *Teaching evaluations*
- *Proper use of names and pronouns*
- *Accommodations for students with disabilities*
- *Religious/spiritual observances*
- *Military deployment*
- *Writing skills and expectations*
- *Academic integrity and plagiarism*



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