

Fall 2020

**Grassroots Community Organizing for Environmental Justice**

*Method Area: Community Organizing*

*Instructor: Diana WasaAnung'gokwe Seales*

ZOOM LINK: <https://umich.zoom.us/j/92847008131> (Links to an external site.)

**Schedule: \* We will be doing the first class completely remotely. I'll send out a zoom link. During this first class we will discuss if there is interest in meeting in person for part or all of the class (preferably outside). Even if the majority of the class would like to meet in person you may absolutely still participate with us remotely. You can even change your mind at the last minute and go remote. No explanation will be necessary. We will meet twice:**

September 12<sup>th</sup>, Saturday 10:00 – 6pm and

September 26<sup>th</sup>, Sunday 10:00 – 6pm

**For the first zoom session starting at 10 bring an object with you as a means to introduce yourself. This object can be anything (as long as you can fit it into the zoom screen!). It should be something that tells us a little bit more about who you are. It could be something that lets us know who inspires you, who your people are, what communities you feel you are a part, or represents your social justice journey, or from a place that is important to you (a rock, jewelry, journal, photo, record...use your imagination!)**

**Our first day will be partially synchronous and partly asynchronous. We will meet via zoom from 10 - 12 and then I will have a lesson plan and guide for you to follow along with (utilizing the tools, guides, videos, and articles that you will find in the media gallery and files tabs of CANVAS). We will have a discussion about preferences (in person, zoom, etc) for our next meeting. There is an active strike with GEO. I will send out a separate email (that will go to all my current students) around solidarity and non-retaliation for strike participants.**

**Please contact me with any thoughts, questions or clarifications! 810.240.7459 or [dseales@umich.edu](mailto:dseales@umich.edu)**

**Course Description:** This course looks at movements, resistance, resilience, and liberation. Community Organizing is growing as an academic field, especially as it relates to urban studies. A growing body of evidence reveals that people of color and low-income persons have borne greater environmental and health risks than the society at large in their neighborhood, workplace, and playgrounds. Over the last decade grassroots activists have attempted to change the way governments implement environmental and health laws. Grassroots groups have organized, educated, and empowered themselves to improve the way government regulations and environmental policies are administered.

In a class setting we will connect history, current events, and real-life experiences to local organizing and movement struggles that build power for our communities. These courses will utilize highly interactive popular education methods where participants share political analysis, learn facilitation and organizing skills, and think together about long-term, transformative strategies to build environmental, racial and economic justice.

It is critical for organizers, activists, scholars and community members to come together, connect our work with each other, share our experiences and place our local organizing within a larger historical and political context. We can build deep and strong social movements that act strategically and collectively over the long term.

### **Course Objectives:**

- Students will develop actual tools in popular education, facilitation and workshop organizing that can be applied immediately in the field
- Understand the roots of Environmental Racism/ Injustice
- Understand how organizing in grassroots communities is unique
- Understanding and practicing grassroots methods of organizing from the block to block and neighborhood to neighborhood level
- Understanding the differences between organizing methods: protests, campaigns, community organizing and movement building

### **Requirement for Academic Credit:**

**60% Class Participation:** Attendance and participation in all class sessions are critical for the learning process in this course. For this reason, students are expected to attend all class sessions. Exceptions will only be made for extreme circumstances. There will be no make up for missed class sessions.

**40% Presentation: Individuals or Groups** will create a presentation for an organizing campaign/ event.

### **SAMPLE IN CLASS ASSIGNMENTS**

The course relies on assignments to engage students and assess their comprehension of the course materials. For example:

1. **ORGANIZING ROLE PLAYS.** Early in the term students will be assigned to a small group of 4-5 persons that take on the identity of a community organizing group (either an actual organizing group from the community/region or a fictional one). From week to week, small groups will be given different scenarios and activities requiring them to implement various skills, analyses, and frameworks addressed in the class. For example, during a week covering grassroots fundraising, small groups could be tasked with creating a grassroots fundraising plan for the organization.

Assignments related to campaign planning, issue identification, research and direct action can be organized on a similar basis.

2. **ORGANIZATION/ CAMPAIGN CASE STUDY.** Students will be asked to analyze news articles or videos related to a specific organizing campaign, and write a case study about the campaign, such as explaining how the issue was identified, writing out a campaign time line or strategy chart, or answering other questions designed to assess their understanding of organizing vocabulary and concepts.

## **Schedule**

### **September 12<sup>th</sup> 2020**

#### **Morning (via zoom - synchronous): INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL CHANGE AND POWER.**

These sessions provide students with a basic overview of a definition of community organizing, its main concepts, and introduce some historical and political context to the study of organizing.

#### **Afternoon (asynchronous) COMMUNICATIONS**

#### **MOVEMENT HISTORY**

These sessions help to place the principles and practices of present-day community organizing in a deeper and wider historical framework. Ideally, students can use their own experiences (and/or those of friends and families) to help construct this framework through a sample timeline, as described below. Instructors should seek out resources about movement history relevant to their local communities.

How does community organizing change and develop the way people view themselves and each other? How do those ideas integrate with beliefs about race, class, gender and sexuality? About power and privilege? These readings invite students to situate themselves in these discussions.

Time for Individual and Group Work on final presentation

### **September 26<sup>th</sup> 2020**

#### **Morning COMMUNITIES, POWER, AND THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF ORGANIZING (DEVELOPING FACILITATION AND POPULAR EDUCATION SKILLS)**

This session focuses on some contemporary debates within community organizing to help students engage the question, "what is organizing for?" Assigned readings ask students to identify key aspects or elements of different organizing models and consider the relationship between organizers and communities.

#### **Afternoon Discussion and presentation: The United States Social Forum (USSF) in Atlanta and Detroit**

EMEAC was the anchor organization for the USSF in 2010 Detroit. Students will learn what the forum was, how it has influenced organizing and how it is shaping Detroit.

## PRESENTATIONS

Group Presentations on organizing campaign – implementing tools from this course.

### RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- **Story Based Strategy tool kit**

Available on Canvas

## Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
	Assignment <a href="#">Final Individual or Group Project</a>	
	Assignment <a href="#">Participation</a>	
	Assignment <a href="#">Session 1 agenda and work</a>	

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## To Do

- [Grade Final Individual or Group Project](#)  
40 points • No Due Date  
Ignore Final Individual or Group Project until new submission
- [Grade Session 1 agenda and work](#)  
0 points • No Due Date  
Ignore Session 1 agenda and work until new submission