



Course title:	Organizing for Social and Political Action	
Course #/term:	652 sec 1, Section, Fall 2021	
Time and place:	Thursday, 6pm-8:50pm, virtual	
Credit hours:	3	
Prerequisites:	none	
Instructor:	Maureen Okasinski	
Pronouns:	She	
Contact info:	Email: mokasins@umich.edu	Phone: 313.303.8911
	You may expect a response within 24-72 hours	
Office:	3760	
Student hours:	Thursdays, 5:5:45 and by appointment	

1. Course Statement

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, with emphasis on the role of labor unions, coalitions, political organizing, and community-based policy advocacy. The course includes the study of skills in analyzing power structures, developing action strategies, 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 around social, economic, racial, and political injustice in the US and globally. Additional emphasis will be placed on organizing with communities of color, women, LGBTQIA2S+ populations, and other under-represented groups.

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 in US and global contexts. (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)

a. 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. Podcasts 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.

Intensive Focus on Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice (PODS)

This course integrates PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of theories, practice and/or policies that promote social justice, illuminate injustices and are consistent with scientific and professional knowledge. Through the use of a variety of instructional methods, this course will support students developing a vision of social justice, learn to recognize and reduce mechanisms that support oppression and injustice, work toward social justice processes, apply intersectionality and intercultural frameworks and strengthen critical consciousness, self-knowledge and self-awareness to facilitate PODS learning.

2. Class Requirements

Text and class materials

- a. Recommended Text: Bobo, Kendall, Max (2010). Organizing for Social Change. Midwest Academy Manual for Activists.
- b. All required text/audio/video are listed and linked on the Canvas Modules. These are listed by week.
- c. 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.
- d. The agenda and materials to complete prior to class are posted in the week's Canvas Module. These are posted at least one week in advance.
- e. If changes are made to the schedule, assignments, text/audio/video requirements, these will be updated and an announcement sent, typically a week in advance.
- f. Supplemental readings are also posted on the week's agenda page. Students are encouraged to share new and useful material—I can upload these into our Canvas site.
- g. Tentative Schedule

Week	Topic(s)	Out of Class Learning	Assignments Due
1 9/2	Building a Learning Community Course Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frameworks for Winning Change, The Commons Social Change Library • Better Conversations Guide • Aorta Facilitation zine 	
2 9/9	Healing Justice Locating Ourselves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma, Healing and Collective Power, Generative Somatics podcast • On Being podcast, Rami Nashashbi and Lucas Johnson • Finn and Jacobson (2003) Just Practice Framework 	
3 9/16	Direct Action Organizing Mapping the Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United In Anger, film • Black Power Rising 5-year plan pillars, m4BL.org 	
4 9/23	Base and Power Building Popular Education Action Design Elements Studio: Pop Ed and Advocacy Toolkits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M4BL.com • Self-selected pop ed article or podcast • ROC Food Justice Guide 	
5 9/30	Disability Justice The Organization Action Design Elements Studio: How to have an organizing conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crip Camp/Netflix or Detroit Disability Power/ENGAGE recording, or Erkulwater (2018) How the Nation's Largest Minority Became White: Race Politics and the Disability Rights Movement, 1970-1980. Journal of Policy History. 	Draft part 1: mapping the problem

6 10/7	Environmental Justice & Land Sovereignty Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop Line 3 website • Refuge Revealed, Reveal Podcast 	
7 10/14	Strategies, Tactics and Counter Tactics Action Design Elements Studio: Power Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Films: Last Abortion Clinic or Battle for Gay Marriage • Article: Tactics in Anti-Gay Ballot Measures 	Draft part 2: The organization
8 10/21	Emergent Strategies Action Design Elements Studio: Ballot Initiatives, Legislative & Judicial Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergent Strategies adrienne maree brown, For the Wild podcast • The Breathe Act and how to guides 	
9 10/28	The role of technology Action Design Elements Studio: Digital organizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zeynep Turfeki, TED talk Online Organizing • The evolution of all-american terrorism, Reveal Podcast 	Draft Part 3: Strategies and Tactics
10 11/4	Keeping Momentum Action Design Elements Studio: Plan A Protest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Movement Action Plan, History is a Weapon 	
11 11/11	Action Design Elements Studio: Earned Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earned media examples 	Campaign Analysis
14 11/18	Capacity Building: Protecting Your Members Action Design Elements Studio: Accountability Session	Self Care as Generational Healing/Alex Elle, On Being Podcast Notice the Rage: Notice the Silence/Resma menakem, On Being podcast	
15 12/2	Electoral Organizing	Project Redmap/Planet Money podcast, Arizona and Georgia	Action Design Element

	Action Design Element Lab: Storytelling	Voting Laws, On Point podcast, Election Protection and Democracy/Making Contact Podcast	
16 12/9	Learning Reflections		Storytelling your campaign
Grades due 12/20			

Assignments

The assignment description in the syllabus is a general overview. Details, format, and rubrics are found in Canvas Assignments. Following the rubrics leads to good scores on assignments, as does beginning your assignments early. I expect your work to demonstrate concise yet thoughtful, evidence-based, integrative, and deep work. The course uses individual and group project, as consistent with social work practice. In the structure and grading of these, I seek to balance accountability and professional performance expectations.

Assignment	Due date, submission type	Percent of overall grade
1. Learning Community Engagement (participation and attendance)	Weekly, observed in discussions, shared documents, chats	30%
2. Campaign Analysis	Final 11/11, Canvas	35%
3. Action Element Design	12/2, Canvas	25%
4. Sharing Your Campaign & Self/Group Reflection	12/9, in class	10%
If a 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. Commitment to the Learning Community (Engagement, Participation & Attendance), 30%

Most weeks, I will have a podcast(s) or film(s) for listening/viewing that focuses on individual organizers and their work. These will provide more introduction to leadership, to lens, to approaches to organizing. I've selected these to include diversity of voices and issues and am open to changing and adding to these as needed. They are meant to be both reflexive and expansive supporting your own development as well as contribute to the course learning objectives. These are listed in the Canvas Module for that week. I will have discussion board or a collaborative document where everyone can contribute. We will have space to talk further in large and small groups about what you've heard, your reflections and questions.

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.

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 m is found in the MSW Student Guide.

2. Campaign Analysis, 35%

Focusing on a *single* campaign for social or political action led by a specific organization or coalition, students will work in small teams to 1) define the issue (local to international or global), the economic, political and social impact of the issue/problem, the community affected and how affect, and the relevant power dynamics, structural, historic and current context. 2) Identity an organization working on this campaign, describe the organization's leadership, structures, challenges and assets such as alliances, resources, communications systems, inclusion, conflict management and decision-making styles. 3) Identify the strategies and tactics used in the selected campaign, results, effectiveness and unintended outcomes, and counter tactics used by those who oppose this change. Analysis should move beyond descriptive to be comparative to other movements and organizations and/or use metrics. 4) Reflect on your team's process and the product. Identify limitations, gaps in knowledge and next steps.

3. Action Design Element, 25%

Having completed analysis of a campaign, students continue working with their same team. Each group develops an action element relevant to the campaign. This may be short form (i.e. a series of social media or blog posts) or long form (i.e. podcast, paper, film) media creation, visioning and developing (even implementing) 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.

4. Share Your Work + Self/Group Reflection, 10%

Throughout the semester, groups will share what they have learned about the issues, the campaign the organization and their analysis, soliciting resources and ideas from their peers. To close the semester, each team will share the story of their experiences in working on their Campaign Analysis and Action Design Element. An infographic or similar storyboard will serve as a visual medium for sharing with classmates.

Grading

Grading on assignments is completed within two weeks of submission. Grades and comments on scores identifying strengths and areas to improve are in the Canvas Assignment rubric. For further information, consult the MSW Student Guide policies on [Grades in Academic Courses and in Field Instruction](#) as well as [Student Grievance procedures](#) and the [policy for grading in special circumstances](#).

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

A+ 100+%	B+ 87-90%	C+ 77-80%	D <69% (no credit)
A 95%-100%	B 84-86%	C 74-76%	
A- 91%–94%	B- 81-83%	C- 70-73%	

Assignment Practices

- 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.
- Peer review:** Be prepared to share a completed document of the days with scheduled peer reviews. Done in a supportive environment, peer review is an intentional learning strategy that aids in critical thinking, further development of thoughts and ideas and feedback skills.

- c. **Due dates:** All assignments are due dates and times are in the Canvas assignments. For one assignment, 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, without a grading penalty. I will not accept a draft for review during the grace time. After the first late assignment, I will accept other late assignments, however, 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:** Documents will be professional in style, 11/12-point font, single spaced and citations will follow APA. 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. I do not accept assignment via email. All assignments go into Canvas.

h. **Class Recording and Course Materials**

I will be recording every class session. Audio and video recording of in-class lectures and discussions is prohibited without the advance written permission of the instructor. Students with an approved accommodation from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities permitting the recording of class meetings must present documentation to the instructor in advance of any recording being done. The instructor reserves the right to disallow recording for a portion of any class time where privacy is a special concern. If the instructor chooses to record a class, they will decide which classes, if any, are recorded, what portion of each class is recorded, and whether a recording is made available on the course management website. On days when classes are recorded, students will be notified a recording is occurring. Class recordings and course materials may not be reproduced, sold, published or distributed to others, in whole or in part, without the written consent of the instructor.

i. **COVID-19 Statement**

For the safety of all students, faculty, and staff on campus, it is important for each of us to be mindful of safety measures that have been put in place for our protection. Your participation in this course is conditional upon your adherence to all safety measures mandated by the state of Michigan and the University,

including properly wearing a face covering in class and compliance with the University COVID-19 Vaccination Policy. Other applicable and additional safety measures may be described in the Campus Maize & Blueprint. Your ability to participate in this course may be impacted by failure to comply with campus safety measures. Individuals seeking to request an accommodation related to the face covering requirement under the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the Office for Institutional Equity and those seeking an exemption related to the vaccination requirement should submit an exemption request through WolverineAccess. I also encourage you to review the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities and the COVID-related Addendum to the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

j. **Health-Related Class Absences**

Please evaluate your own health status regularly and refrain from attending class and coming to campus if you are ill. You are encouraged to seek appropriate medical attention for treatment. School of Social Work students who miss class due to illness of any kind will be given opportunities to access course materials online or provided with alternative learning opportunities. Please notify me by email about your absence as soon as practical, so that I can make accommodations. Please note that documentation (a doctor's note) for medical excuses is *not* required.

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*



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