



Course title:	Organizing for Social and Political Action	
Course #/term:	SW 652.001, Fall 2022	
Time and place:	Thursdays, 18:00-20:50 (6:00-8:50PM), SSWB 1636	
Credit hours:	3	
Prerequisites:	None	
Instructor:	Carrie A Rheingans	
Pronouns:	She, her, hers	
Contact info:	Email: crheinga@umich.edu	Phone: 734-417-2537 (texting is ok)
	You may expect a response within 48 hours	
Office:	3832 SSWB (I am rarely there)	
Office hours:	By appointment only and may be held remotely	

1. Course Statement

a. 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.

b. Course objectives and competencies

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.
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)

c. Course design

The class will be very hands-on and will also utilize innovative resources in teaching content, including videos, podcasts, and guest lectures (live or recorded). Skills will be learned, practiced, and applied in class-based and project-based experiences.

Additionally, this course is an advanced level course with adult learners. Thus, the expectation is that students take charge of their own learning, their own participation and their support for the learning of their colleagues in the classroom. The class will consist of a combination of mini-lectures and direct application of skills in small groups as well as in assignments. Students must come prepared to fully engage in order to get the most out of this class. Additionally, this class does not approach education from the “banking” perspective. Everyone in the classroom has expertise and experience to offer into the learning space. Thus, students will be asked to bring and share examples and root the larger theories of change in their own background and experience.

d. Intensive focus on 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

a. Text and class materials

There is no assigned textbook for this course. All assigned readings, assignment information, presentation slides, podcasts, lecture recordings and other course materials can be found on the course Canvas site at <https://canvas.umich.edu>. To fully engage in the course topic and become a competent and skilled social work practitioner, it is expected that students will complete all required course materials the week they are assigned. Course content will be delivered in a variety of formats, including book chapters, articles, content summaries, audio and video through the Canvas learning management system. Required course materials can be found on Canvas in weekly modules. While it is not required to purchase because it is available in the UM library, it is recommended for anyone who is/wants to be an organizer that you have a personal copy of one of the most foundational books in political organizing: Alinsky, S. D. (1989). Rules for radicals: A practical primer for realistic radicals. Vintage.

b. Class schedule

Date/Time	Topic	Assignments Due
Week 1 September 1	Course Overview Introductions	
Week 2 September 8	Meeting Off-Site & Talking to Local Leaders	
Week 3 September 15	Identifying and Learning about Issues and Strengths	
Week 4 September 22	Power and Influence Positionalities	

Date/Time	Topic	Assignments Due
Week 5 September 29	Political Will Building Buy-In	
Week 6 October 6	Relationships Conflict and Persuasion	Critical Consciousness Reflection 1
Week 7 October 13	Working at Multiple Levels Collaboration	Campaign Analysis
Week 8 October 20	Building Leadership, Power, Capacity	
Week 9 October 27	Creating and Maintaining Momentum Using Technology	
Week 10 November 3	Progress vs. Perfection Decision-Making Methods	
Week 11 November 10	Action and Reaction Cycle Escalation and De-Escalation Accountability	Action Element Design
Week 12 November 17	Risks and Unintended Outcomes Controlling the Narrative Counter-Movements	Critical Consciousness Reflection 2
THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS NOVEMBER 24		
Week 13 December 1	Reflecting On and Adjusting the Work Visions for the Future Course Wrap-Up	
Week 14 December 8	Group Reflection Meetings This Week	Assignment 4: Self & Group Reflection

c. Assignments

All assignments are to be submitted via Canvas before class (18:00 or 6:00PM) when possible; for some creative methods, or for the in-person final group reflection with the instructor, these will be submitted in other ways. Full descriptions of each assignment will be available in Canvas, including grading rubrics.

Assignment	Due date	Percent of overall grade
Critical Consciousness Reflections, #1 and #2	#1 due: October 6 #2 due: November 17	10% 10%
Campaign Analysis	October 13	35%
Action Element Design	November 10	35%
Self & Group Reflection	Week of December 5	10%

d. Attendance and class participation

This course will have no explicit attendance and class participation minimum standards; you are paying for this course and you will get out of it a level of learning to the effort you put into it. Please alert the instructor if you will be late or miss class, and make every effort to arrive to class on time and stay for the duration. Please discuss accommodations with the instructor to help support you in participation in the ways that work best for you.

e. Grading

It is important to keep in mind that ***you are not your grade!*** Students come to graduate school with a wide range of academic experiences and preparedness, as well as varying practice experience. Thinking and writing about complex issues and abstract concepts can be very challenging for many students. If you are satisfied with the level of effort you have invested in the course, and you earn a grade of B or better, I hope you will feel very good about your performance.

Assessment Classification	Range	Grade	Grade Point
Excellent Work (above course expectations)	97-100	A+	4.3
	93-96	A	4.0
	90-92	A -	3.7
Good Work (meets course expectations)	87-89	B+	3.3
	83-86	B	3.0
	80-82	B-	2.7
Poor Work (meets minimal course expectations)	77-79	C +	2.3
	73-76	C	2.0
	70-72	C -	1.7
Failing Work	0-69	F	0.0

Excellent Work

Excellent work is work that is above course expectations. Students display excellent work (***beyond course expectations***) in several ways: evidence that additional readings, beyond what is assigned, have been completed and integrated into written or in class

presentations/participation; superior written work; evidence of critical thinking; demonstration of advanced practice skills applied to practice; and creativity and innovation in conceptual as well as practice-related thinking are frequently seen in the student's work.

Good Work

Good work is work that meets course expectations. Students display good work in several ways: basic mastery of course material is evident in written or in class presentations/participation; solid development of practice skills fitting with concentration-year expertise is evident; and creativity and innovation are noted but to a lesser degree and less frequently than that in the "excellent" category.

Work Minimally Meets Course Expectations

Marginal work is work that meets minimal course expectations. Students display marginal work in several ways: through evidence that course readings have not been covered, as observed in written or in class presentations/participation; conceptual confusion and difficulty with critical thinking are evident in written and verbal work; and through work that lacks an integration of theory and practice.

Failing Work

Student demonstrates poor or unacceptable work during the course in several ways: inadequate understanding of course content, poor quality written work, plagiarism, and poor or unethical demonstration of practice skills.

More information on 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](#). Here are some resources around [testing and grading from CRLT](#).

f. Class Recording and Course Materials

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.

g. 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 Wolverine Access. 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.

h. 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.



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A LEO LECTURER

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*