



<b>Course title:</b>	Organizing for Social and Political Action	
<b>Course #/term:</b>	652 sec 1, Winter 2023	
<b>Time &amp; Place:</b>	Thursday, 6pm-8:50pm, B760	
<b>Credit hours:</b>	3	
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	none	
<b>Instructor:</b>	Maureen Okasinski	
<b>Pronouns:</b>	She/her	
<b>Contact info:</b>	<b>Email:</b> mokasins@umich.edu	<b>Phone/Text:</b> 313.303.8911
	You may expect a response within 24-72 hours	
<b>Office:</b>	<b>3760</b>	
<b>Student hours:</b>	Thursdays, 5:5:45 and by appointment	

## 1. Course Statement

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### 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, LGBTQIA+ 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**

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#### **Text and class materials**

- a. Kaba, Mirame. (2021). *We Do This Til We Free Us*. Haymarket Books. Chicago, IL. Available for free, online through UM Library.
- b. Recommended Text: Bobo, Kendall, Max (2010). *Organizing for Social Change*. Midwest Academy Manual for Activists.
- c. Additional required text/audio/video are listed on the Canvas/Course Schedule Page by week. These are labeled as Read, Listen, Watch depending on their medium.
- d. 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.
- e. The agenda and materials to complete prior to class are listed on Canvas/Course Schedule Page. These are posted at least one week in advance.
- f. When changes are made to the schedule, assignments, text/audio/video requirements, the Schedule Page will be updated, typically a week in advance.
- g. Students are encouraged to share new and useful material—I can upload these into our Canvas site.
- h. Tentative Schedule

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic(s)</b>	<b>Prior to Class</b>
<b>1</b> 1/5	Building a Learning Community	<b>Read</b>   <a href="#">Better Conversation guide</a> Download Better Conversation guide  <b>Read</b>   <a href="#">Aorta Anti-Oppressive Facilitation 'zine</a>
<b>2</b> 1/12	Who we are, What our vision is, How we want to proceed	<b>Read</b>   Kaba, Mariame essay So You're Thinking about Being an Abolitionist, pp 2-5 from We Do This Til We Free Us (& if you have time, another essay in Part I), UM Library  <b>Listen</b>   <a href="#">On Being podcast, Rami Nashashbi and Lucas Johnson</a> <b>Listen</b>   <a href="#">Trauma, Healing and Collective Power, Generative Somatics podcast</a>  <b>Read</b>   Gamble & Weil. (2009) Community Practice Skills: Local to Global Perspectives. Chapter 8 Social and Political Action.
<b>3</b> 1/19	Understanding the issue-the role of power, history and current context	<b>Read</b>   Kaba, Mariame Part 2 essay From 'Me Too' to 'All of Us' from We Do This Til We Free Us (& if you have time, another essay in Part II), UM Library  <a href="#">Listen   The Refuge Revealed, Reveal Podcast (indigenous land sovereignty &amp; environmental justiceLinks to an external site.</a>  <b>Self Selected Learning</b>   Your campaign analysis topic
<b>4</b> 1/26	Introduction to Organizing	<b>Read</b>   Kaba, Mariame 2 essays from Part III from We Do This Til We Free Us  <b>Watch</b>   <a href="#">Palente, Siempre Palente (Young Lords)</a> , 50 mins. UM Library
<b>5</b> 2/2	How movements and organizations grow through Base Building & Popular Education	<b>Read</b>   Kaba, Mariame 2 essays from Part IV from We Do This Til We Free Us  <b>Read</b>   <a href="#">ROC Food Justice Guide</a> Download ROC Food Justice Guide

		<p><b>Read</b>   selected essay on Popular Education in the Labor Movement</p> <p><b>Self Selected Learning</b>   Your campaign analysis topic-focus on an organization and how they are base building</p>
<b>5 2/9</b>	The characteristics of organizations (leadership, decision making, scope of action, member capacity building and their use of conflict, persuasion and collaboration tactics	<p><b>Read</b>   Kaba, Mariame 2 essays from Part V from We Do This Til We Free Us</p> <p><b>Watch</b>   <a href="#">United In Anger</a> (ACT- UP), 93 mins YouTube</p> <p><b>Optional Watch</b>   Crip Camp film (disability justice)</p> <p><b>Self Selected Learning</b>   Your campaign analysis topic-focus on an organization and its structure and practices</p>
<b>7 2/16</b>	Strategies, Tactics and Counter Tactics	<p><b>Read</b>   Kaba, Mariame 2 essays from Part VI from We Do This Til We Free Us</p> <p><b>Watch</b>   <i>choose one</i> Last Abortion Clinic or Battle for Gay Marriage</p> <p><b>Draft</b>   Campaign Analysis</p> <p><b>Optional Listen</b>   <a href="#">The Deed, Uncivil Podcast</a> (land ownership)</p>
<b>8 2/23</b>	Public Advocacy Strategies	<p><b>Read</b>   Kaba, Mariame 2 essays from Part VII from We Do This Til We Free Us</p> <p><b>Read</b>   Michigan Made Progress on LGBTQ Rights but then Lawsuits happened (MLive)</p> <p><b>Read</b>   Voters not Politicians materials (gerrymandering &amp; ballot initiative)</p> <p><b>Read</b>   The Breathe Act, Movement for Black Lives (racial justice &amp; legislative action)</p> <p><b>Optional Listen</b>   Imperfect Plaintiff, podcast (judicial action &amp; LGBTQ rights)</p>
<b>9 3/9</b>	Mass Mobilization	<p><b>Listen</b>   <a href="#">The Chicano Moratorium 50 Years Later</a> Making Contact podcast, 26 min.</p> <p><b>Watch</b>   COP22 climate Action Protests</p>

		<b>Read</b>   Election 2020 protests
<b>10 3/16</b>	The use of Technology, the Arts & Design in Organizing	<b>Watch</b>   Zeynep Turfeki, TED talk Online Organizing <b>Listen</b>   The Evolution of All-American Terrorism, Reveal Podcast <b>Listen</b>   Project Redmap, <a href="#">Planet Money</a> podcast <b>Watch</b>   <a href="#">First Your Liberation Then Mine</a> , film, 2min, Insidesouthwest.com
<b>11 3/23</b>	Abolition and transformative justice conclusion Plan a Protest	<b>Finish reading</b> We Do This Til We Free Us <b>Watch</b>   <a href="#">March 9 Day of Action Stop Cop City, Atlanta March</a> <a href="#">Links to an external site.</a> , 3 hours-choose sections of this <i>for about an hour of viewing</i>
<b>12 3/30</b>	Teach-ins and Popular Education	<b>Review</b>   <a href="#">ROC Food Justice Guide Download ROC Food Justice Guide</a> (read previously) <b>Watch</b>   <a href="#">Know Your Rights Workshop, Warehouse Workers For Justice, 42 mins</a>
<b>13 4/6</b>	Learning in Action	<b>Watch</b>   AMC 2022, <a href="#">Reporting Revolution: tooling citizen media for Liberation,Links to an external site.</a> 1.5 hours (several speakers) <b>Watch</b>   <a href="#">NAACP Advocacy In Action Jackson MS Water Crisis, 1 minLinks to an external site.</a> , <a href="#">Line 3 Biggest Oil Spill in History MN, 1 minLinks to an external site.</a> , <a href="#">Erin Brockovich hosts Town Hall East Palestine Train Derailmen</a>
<b>14 4/13</b>	Learning Reflections	
<b>Grades submitted 4/17</b>		

## Assignments

The assignment description in the syllabus is a general overview. Details, format and rubrics are found in Canvas/Assignments. The course uses individual and group project, as consistent with social work practice. In grading these, I seek to balance engagement, understanding concepts, application, accountability, and professional performance expectations. I look for your work to demonstrate concise, yet thoughtful, evidence-based, and integrative work.

Assignment	Due date, submission type	Percent of overall grade
1. Learning Community Engagement (participation, and attendance) + reflection essays	Engagement=weekly observations + recorded contributions Reflection essays=Canvas, 1/26, 2/23, 4/13	30%
2. Campaign Analysis	Draft=Canvas, 2/9 Final=Canvas, 3/9	35%
3. Action Element Design	Draft=in class, 3/23 Final=Canvas, 4/6	35%
If you need to deviate from the submission schedule above, prior approval is required by the instructor.		

**1. Commitment to the Learning Community (Engagement, Participation & Attendance), 30%**

Students are expected to fully engage in the course through discussion, activities, listening and leadership and contribute to a meaningful learning community. Preparation, presence and participation are central to our learning community. 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 efforts support your learning and your classmates.

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.

Participation is broadly defined and includes preparation for class through out-of-class materials and in-class engagement with discussions, journaling, etc- including showing up on time/posting/submitting assignments on time and returning from breaks on time/responding to questions or comments in a timely manner. Participation includes asking questions, applying course concepts to questions about your own experiences, contributing to the learning of others, providing accurate and respectful feedback to others, identifying any unique learning needs or problems to the professor, and utilizing

office hours/email communication when necessary to ask for clarification or assistance in fulfilling course expectations and assignments. Class contributions should focus on relevant course concepts and professional practice experiences.

For more information, please see the [Policy on Class Attendance](#) found in the MSW Student Guide.

In class engagement: 15%

Reflection essay 1 locating yourself, course engagement: 5%

Reflection essay 2 observation activity, course engagement: 5%

Reflection essay 3 course engagement and learning: 5%

## **2. Campaign Analysis, 35%**

Focusing on a *single* organization/coalition and current campaign for social or political action, students will work in small teams to 1) understand the issue (local to 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) understand the 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, their 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. You will share a draft and final in class.

## **3. Action Design Element, 35%**

Having completed analysis of a campaign, students continue working with their same team. Each group develops an action element that would be valuable in the campaign in the future. This can be a workshop or mass mobilization event. The group will complete a detailed plan that demonstrates principles of anti-oppressive practice and inclusion and includes outreach and communications for the event, budget, staffing and facilitation. Associated design materials such as fliers or social media posts will be included. You will share a draft and your final in class.

## **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.



- b. **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:** Course assignments are due on the date specified on Canvas. Occasionally, unforeseen circumstances arise (e.g. illness, personal or family emergency) which may make it difficult for a student to complete the assignment by its designated due date time. Should this happen, it is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor. 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. 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. University policies related to persons with disability (i.e. temporary or permanent accommodations), bereavement, and religious observations supersede this policy (see MSW Handbook).
- d. **Resubmission:** Sometimes despite your best effort, your assignment misses the mark. You may choose to resubmit one assignment (note: you must have submitted an assignment on time in the first place). 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 are the only aspect that follow APA style. 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.

## Grading

Students come to graduate school with a wide range of academic experiences and preparedness. Thinking and writing about complex issues and abstract concepts can be 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, it is hoped you will feel very good about your performance.

### Excellent Work

Students display excellent work 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. (NOTE: There is no A+ awarded in this class!)

### **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.

<b>Assessment Classification (A+ not available!)</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Grade Point</b>
Excellent Work	94-100	A	4.0
	91-93	A -	3.7
Good Work	88-90	B+	3.3
	84-87	B	3.0
	81-83	B-	2.7
Poor Work	78-80	C +	2.3
	74-77	C	2.0
	71-73	C -	1.7
Failing Work	70-0	F	0.0

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](#).

**i. 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. [Recording and Privacy Concerns FAQ](#)

**j. 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](#).

**k. 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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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

I.