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Welch Center for Graduate and Professional Studies

SYLLABUS – Organizing Communities: Advocacy, Activism, and Social Justice

Course Number: CSP650
Semester: Fall 2012
Instructor: Thomas Walker

Welcome to our Course!

Organizing Communities is designed to equip students with tools and perspectives to be effective and knowledgeable leaders and participants in organizing communities around issues and challenges related to cultural sustainability. The course surveys a variety of methods and perspectives on community organizing, ranging from traditional models based on empowerment and social, economic, and environmental justice to faith-based models and those based on arts and culture. We will explore connections between traditional organizing approaches, the formation and development of movement culture, and community building through arts and culture with a focus on the common foundations in theory and practice of social change, power, strategy, leadership, and voice. Organizing, advocacy, and activism involve different approaches and strategies to social change and each will be discussed and assessed. We begin the course with a self assessment of our own stories—which may be about activism, motivation and commitment to a social cause, or interest in a social issue—in order to ground our inquiry in social change philosophy or campaigns and enable us to build trustworthy relationships with communities.

The course will provide students with an opportunity to explore the philosophy and theory behind community organizing and its many uses as a tool to question and challenge the status quo. We intend to foster each other's critical thinking and to develop practical skills within the context of a broad vision of sustainability. The very idea of sustainability embraces justice, self-determination, and identity in the face of often countervailing forces of social and cultural disorganization. Knowledge of community organizing strategies provides a critical tool for cultural sustainability practice.

Course readings will be used to ground, inform, and challenge students as they explore the complex and exciting dynamics of community organizing. In addition to learning from readings, students are expected to engage in the practical work or critique and evaluation of an organizing campaign with which they are already involved or interested.

Main Course Topics

INTRODUCTION

Session 1: Introduction to the Course

- Outline course goals
- Review course structure, themes, topics
- Assignments
- Expectations

MODULE ONE: DYNAMICS

Session 2: The Power of Story: Self, Us, Now

- Present our "stories" to define our roles, abilities, capacities, and objectives.

Session 3: Organizing, Advocacy, and Activism

- Outline the range, ideologies, and assumptions of social change activities, focusing on organizing as distinct from advocacy, activism, and movements.

Session 4: Power, Empowerment, Leadership, and Civic Agency

- Explore structures power, funding mechanisms, and the role of official, unofficial, and NGO community leaders, civic agency, voice, identity, and social capital.

Session 5: Understanding Community and Solidarity

- Critique assumptions about 'community' and describe bonds of community.

MODULE TWO: METHODS

Session 6: Organizing Strategy and Method

- Explore and explain methods and strategies in community organizing.

MODULE THREE: CONTEXTS

Session 7: Neighborhood to Global Organizing

- Examine early social service to contemporary community economic development models to focus on economic justice, recent home foreclosures, health matters, and schooling and youth leadership issues.

Session 8: Labor Organizing and Capital

- Survey of labor issues and organization from free speech fights in the 1910s and bargaining rights in the 1930s to corporate campaigns of the 1980s and worker centers in our own era.

Session 9: Environmental Justice

- Focus on vulnerable populations to environmental burdens, health issues, and the role of citizen scientists.

Session 10: Peace, Social Justice, and Coalition Organizing

- Appraising the power and strategy of faith-based organizing, human rights approaches, and methods of multi-sector coalitions.

Session 11: Cultural Organizing

- Expanding the role of culture as both object and resource for organizing.

Session 12: New Media

- Explore the role of social media and social entrepreneurship in organizing.

CONCLUSION

Session 13: Student Presentations

- Presentation and discussion of student work.

Session 14: Wrap Up and Final Reflections

- Summary of main themes and ongoing challenges.
- Student reflections.

Learning Objectives

This course introduces students to the contexts, challenges and opportunities of community organizing. It will provide students with frameworks and tools to analyze and develop a deeper understanding and practical knowledge of community organizing. It seeks to engage students in a learning community to collaboratively develop a broader application of community organizing for cultural sustainability.

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to do the following:

1. Create and interpret personal narratives in a social change framework.
2. Describe different organizing traditions or approaches and interpret underlying principles of community organizing.
3. Demonstrate fundamentals of organizational practice.
4. Research, analyze, and critique social issues and organizing strategies and objectives.
5. Define issues and interests, and identify stakeholders and power structures.
6. Argue issues, listen to opposing points of view, and build common cause.
7. Critique campaign effectiveness.
8. Design, plan, and implement a strategy for an organizing campaign.

Course Format

- PowerPoint lectures with video
- Asynchronous discussion sessions
- Online links and reading resources
- Student summaries of assigned readings
- Live chats (3)
- WebEx meeting(s) for student presentations and discussion
- Final project

Required Readings

***Textbook/s*:**

Textbooks for this course are available through the Goucher College bookstore or through online booksellers.

- Alinsky, Saul D. 1971. *Rules for Radicals.* Vintage Books Edition, 1989. New York: Vintage.
- Mondros, J and Wilson, S. 1994. *Organizing for Power and Empowerment.* New York: Columbia University Press. (also available online)
- Putnam, Robert D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Suggested Readings:

- Aaker, Jennifer and Andy Smith. 2010. *The Dragonfly Effect: Quick, Effective, and Powerful Ways To Use Social Media to Drive Social Change.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Bobo, Kendal, Max. 2001. *Organizing for Social Change: A manual for activists.* Midwest Academy.
- Freire, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* 30th Anniversary Edition. New York: Continuum.

***Articles, Chapters, Other Readings*:**

Articles, book chapters, and online publications will be available in the *Readings* section for each weekly session. An average of four readings will be assigned for required reading each week.

Resource Websites and Videos:

These resources when assigned will also be available for the weekly session to which they are assigned.

Suggested Sites:

- Center for Community Change – **http://www.communitychange.org/library**
- Midwest Academy – **www.midwestacademy.com**
- Check the Wiki on our GoucherLearn for additional sites and other compiled resources.

Grading

Course Elements	Percent [or points]
Discussion and participation (posting original thoughts and responding to colleagues each session)	30%
Leading class discussions (including article summaries and weekly video recap)	30%
Participating in a Live Chat (3 times)	10%
Participating in the WebEx session week	10%
Final project	20%
TOTAL	100%

Grade Scale

A	93 or more points
A-	90 - 92 points
B+	87 - 89 points
B	83 - 86 points
B-	80 - 82 points
C+	77 - 79 points
C	73 - 76 points
C-	70 - 72 points
D	60 - 69 points
F	59 points and below

Course Policies

Communication:
Faculty will be available at their Goucher email address and will respond to queries within 24-48 hours. Course participants are responsible for maintaining continuous involvement with faculty, fellow students and student groups. In particular, participation in all online discussions is required. Ongoing communication allows you to gain deeper insights into the content, activities and assignments in the course. Please give notice of any obstacle that prevents this.
You are encouraged to ask questions whenever information needs clarifying.
For questions pertaining to your assignments: send an email directly to the instructor (please do not post personal questions on the discussion board).

For questions about assignments that may be interesting and helpful to other class members: please use the discussion board.

For problems with technical aspects of the website: contact helpdesk@goucher.edu (you may copy the instructor).

Missed Work:
You are responsible for material covered in the course. It is your sole responsibility to obtain any materials missed.

Late Policy:
For proper graduate student learning to occur, pacing of content mastery is critical. Therefore, assignments are to be completed on time. If extreme circumstances prevent an assignment to be completed in a timely fashion, please notify me before the assignment is due so a new date can be negotiated. Only follow-ups completed by the due date can be redone. Late assignments without such notification will be docked.

Academic Integrity:
All final work products are to be the independent work of each student and stored in the electronic portfolio. Suspected violations of the Honor Code will be referred to the Academic Honor Board. For a full description of the code and what constitutes a violation of the code, refer to the Goucher Handbook or online at www.goucher.edu/x1292.xml.

Other Course Requirements and Expectations

For proper graduate student learning to occur, pacing of content mastery is important. Therefore, all assignments are to be completed on time. If extreme circumstances prevent an assignment to be completed in a timely fashion, the instructor should be notified before the assignment is due so a new date can be negotiated. Only follow-ups completed by the due date can be redone.

Suspected violations of the Honor Code will be referred to the Academic Honor Board. For a full description of the code and what constitutes a violation of the code, refer to the Goucher Handbook or online at www.goucher.edu/x1292.xml.

Participation in all online discussions through GoucherLearn are required and will allow students not only to gain deeper insights into research, but will facilitate completion of follow-up assignments. The subject matter is carefully developed in class and class activities extend and refine student knowledge. GoucherLearn material and explanation clarify and expand materials found in the text. Students are clearly responsible for material covered through GoucherLearn. It is the entire responsibility of the student to obtain handouts and any materials missed from GoucherLearn.

Students are encouraged to ask questions whenever information needs clarifying. Do not hesitate to ask questions!

Additional Requirements:

- Turn in assignments on time
- Active class participation

- Communicate with me personally and in a timely manner if you have any suggestions or grievances.
- Advise me immediately of any changes in circumstances that may halt your progress in class.

What the Instructor Expects to Provide Students:

- I will give you feedback on your progress and address any personal issues via private email.
- I will make suggestions to help you improve performance or carry out assignments.
- I will be open to your questions about course content and assignments.
- I will listen in on discussions on the discussion board, but will only comment when needed.