

University of Minnesota
School of Social Work
SW 8505 - Community Organizing and Advocacy
(3 credits)

Course Description:

This course is geared for students who have a passion for social change, and the course hopes to nourish this passion by providing a conceptual framework for organizing and advocacy work, and an opportunity for developing skills useful for persistence in these endeavors. The course focuses on the community organizing and advocacy efforts of people working together to improve their communities. “Community” refers not only to local neighborhoods, but also to communities of interest and to larger systems, as in “communities of nations.” The course examines the history of community organizing in the United States; explores the different theories and approaches to effective grassroots organizing; and emphasizes the organizing skills necessary to empower people so they can improve their communities. The course will also introduce advanced social advocacy skills, with an emphasis on lobbying and direct action as tools for social change. The course intends to explicitly translate social work values into community-level practice, with a keen focus on self-determination and empowerment in community organizing and advocacy through the study of barriers to organizing, including the power imbalances in society. There will be special attention given to organizing and advocacy with economically disadvantaged and historically disempowered communities.

Social Work students enrolled in this course should have completed all of the introductory (foundation year) practice courses and the first year practicum, or be an advanced standing student. This course serves as the Foundation course for the Community Organizing and Advocacy emphasis of the Community Practice concentration, though it is open to all second year and advanced standing social work students, and students from other departments with instructor’s approval. This course will build on the material covered in Methods III.

Course Objectives:

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Describe the historical context of community organizing and advocacy in the field of Social Work.
- 2) Distinguish between and apply different community organizing strategies, including social action, asset-based development, community development, grassroots organizing, and neighborhood revitalization, based on the specific community context.
- 3) Productively employ a neighborhood analysis and/or community power analysis.
- 4) View social, economic, and political issues from a community organization and advocacy framework and act on these problems using a ‘praxis’ of organizing and/or advocacy.
- 5) Demonstrate the ability to apply coalition-building strategies across diverse communities, especially among single-interest groups and historically antagonistic groups.
- 6) Critically examine the role of the community organizer and advocate in the community, including personal and professional values and ethics that are relevant to community organizing and advocacy.
- 7) Delineate and develop proficiency in the major tasks, processes and technologies of organizing and advocacy.
- 8) Understand the need for culturally sensitive community organizing strategies for affecting real social change.
- 9) Engage in issue analysis, lobbying, direct action and coalition building as they apply to the establishment and maintenance of social change.
- 10) Understand the theories and skills of nonviolent social protest as an approach to achieving social change.

Course Requirements:

Requirements for successful completion of this course and their relative proportion of your final grade are:

Participation

Students are expected to attend all class sessions having read assigned materials and actively participate in class discussions and activities. Students who come habitually unprepared for class may lose up to 10 points from their final grade. Students who miss a total of 3 or more class sessions for any reason will not receive credit for the course.

An Advocate's Autobiography

5 points

Students are to write a description of their "political" self. What are your earliest memories of politics or being involved in social action? How have you been involved politically or in an advocacy role, if at all? If so, why? If not, why not? How do you expect to be politically involved in the future?

3-4 pages, double-spaced

Community Assessment

15 points

Individually or in a small group, students are to complete the first step of a community assessment. Students will choose a neighborhood in the Twin Cities or other city or a small town to study. Students will observe and describe the neighborhood, as well as conduct some research on community demographics. This assignment does NOT constitute a complete assessment – rather, it is an introductory activity towards a neighborhood analysis. A complete microanalysis would also integrally involve collaboration with community members and leaders. You are free to supplement your report with interviews if desired. More information will be given in class.

4-5 pages, double-spaced

Community Organizing Model Critique

15 points

Students are to choose one of the theoretical models of community organizing discussed weeks 4-7 and write an analytical critique of the model's usefulness for organizing (IAF, feminist, ACORN, Asset-Based, River & Erlich, hybrid, etc). More details in class.

4-5 pages, doubled-spaced

Advocacy/Lobbying Activity

20 points

Individually or in groups of 2-3, students will present an advocacy or lobbying technique to the class and lead a class discussion and/or activity in relation to this tactic. Students should present a one-two page handout to their classmates highlighting important points of their presentation. (Approximately 15-20 minutes). More information provided in class.

Community Organizing/Advocacy Project

45 points

Each student, either individually or in a small group, will participate in a community organizing and/or advocacy project. Students may base their project on their field placement, initiate their own project, or volunteer with one of a wide variety of neighborhood, community or campus organizations. They may continue a current project or begin a new one. Projects should be designed to achieve measurable outcomes by the end of the semester based on mobilizing the participation of others and/or influencing a local, state, federal, or international issue or problem. Students are expected to spend at least 15 hours on this project (not including writing the paper or preparing the presentation). There are 3 main options:

- 1) Initiate a project or campaign at your field placement, an organization at which you work or are a member, or with the student group, SW-ACT! For those initiating a new project, be sure to address how a new project will be carried forward after the completion of the assignment.

- 2) Join an existing community organizing campaign in the Upper Midwest. This can be any type of organizing or advocacy activity, including political or GOTV organizing for the upcoming elections.
- 3) Design your own type of organizing/advocacy activity. This must be discussed with instructor and be approved.

To facilitate project design, there will be a brainstorming session during the second week of class. Students must also turn in a one-paragraph project description to the instructor. Students are encouraged to keep a personal journal reflecting on their experiences related to the project, and journals or excerpts of journals can be included as an addendum to the final project report.

Final Project Report (40 points)

Students will each write a 10-20 page final regarding their projects (excluding title page, appendices, charts, flyers, photographs, abstracts, excerpts from journal, websites etc.). The paper should be free from errors, use APA style, and must incorporate course readings and discussion. Students who work in groups may work together on parts a, b & c (though papers involving collaboration should be in the 18-20 page range).

Papers should include, at least, the following sections:

- **Overview:** Provide a general overview of the organizing project, including the organization or group with which you worked, the issue or problem you were addressing, your general approach to organizing/advocacy, and the outcome you were hoping to achieve. How does this project intend to impact social justice?
- **Strategy:** Describe the strategy that you developed in your organizing activities (using the Midwest Academy Strategy Chart, see Hardcastle, p.402). Include a copy of the completed chart as an appendix.
- **Project Activities:** Detail the activities of your project, from the beginning through the conclusion of your project. Describe the actual steps of the project – what was done, what will be done in the future. Include in an appendix a log of the dates & times & activities you individually participated in.
- **Project Evaluation:** Provide an evaluation of your project. Did your project achieve your desired outcome? What worked? What didn't work? What would you do differently next time? What needs to happen in the future? What are the long-term impacts of the project? Discuss any ethical issues/dilemmas that occurred while carrying out your project.
- **Personal and Process Evaluation:** Provide an evaluation of yourself as an organizer during the semester. What were your experiences? What exactly did *you* do, and how would you evaluate your own performance? What did you learn about yourself as an organizer? What lessons did you learn overall about the processes/strategies/logistics of organizing?

Presentation (5 points):

Student will present their work to the class in an *interesting, creative* 10-minute presentation.

Total: 100 points

Extra Credit: Publish a Letter to the Editor in a Newspaper

2 EC points

One way of trying to achieve social change is to affect public opinion through having a letter to the editor published in a local newspaper. Choose an issue of interest to you related to social work, social welfare or any broad community

topic. Write a letter to your local newspaper, following their guidelines for being printed. This assignment is completed ONLY when a letter of yours is printed in the newspaper. At this point, you will receive 2 extra points. To receive credit, you must bring me a copy of the letter before the last day of the semester. (Credit only possible for one letter, though you are encouraged to write many!)

Required Texts:

Hardcastle, D. & Powers, P. (2004). Community practice: Theories and skills for social workers. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 0-19-514161-X (pbk)

Fisher, R., (1997) Let the people decide: Neighborhood organizing in America. New York: Twayne Pub. ISBN: 0805738606 (paperback)

Rivera, F. & Erlich, J. (1998). Community organizing in a diverse society. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon. ISBN: 020526834X (pbk)

Rogers, M. (1990). Cold anger: A story of faith and power politics University of North Texas Press; ISBN: 0929398130 (pbk)

Thoreau, H.D. (1993). Civil disobedience and other essays. (Reprint Edition). Dover Publications. ISBN: 0486275639 (pbk)

Shel Trapp, Basics Of Organizing, <http://www.tenant.net/Organize/orgbas.html>

Course Outline: This outline is subject to change!

Week 1 Topic A: Introduction to the Course, Introduction of Class Members
 Topic B: What is community practice? What is organizing & advocacy?

 Topic C: Lovely Acres – A simulation about power

Reading:

*O'Donnell, S.M. (1995). Is community organizing "the greatest job" one could have? Findings from a survey of Chicago organizers. Journal of Community Practice. 2(1): 1-19, 1995. *Skim*

Week 2 Topic A: Introduction to Organizing & Advocacy as a part of Community Practice
 Topic B: Community Practice Ethics

 Topic C: Community & Social "Problems"; Social & Economic Justice

 Topic C: Brainstorming Community Projects (Plus intro to SW-ACT!)

***** Organizing & Advocacy Autobiography Due

Readings:

Hardcastle Chapter 1, 3, 4

Start Reading: Rogers, M. Cold Anger

Review of Codes of Ethics:

Social Work Code of Ethics

<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>

Public Health Code of Ethics

<http://www.apha.org/codeofethics/ethics.htm>

Websites to Explore:

Minnesota Alliance for Progressive Action <http://www.mapa-mn.org/>

Minneapolis Center for Neighborhoods <http://www.center4neighborhoods.org/>

Minnesota Community Action Association <http://www.mncaa.org/>

Community Solutions Fund <http://www.solutionsfund.org/>

University Neighborhood Network http://www.unn.umn.edu/student_subject.asp

Week 3

Topic A: Theories and models of community practice

Topic B: Intro to Community Organizing Models/Theories

Topic C: Role & Tasks of Social Worker in CO

Topic D: Community Assessment: Asset Mapping

Readings:

Hardcastle Chapter 2, 6 & 7

Fisher, R. Let the People Decide: Neighborhood Organizing in America. Read: Introduction only

Rivera & Erlich, pp. 267-271. (Skim)

Week 4

Topic A: Historical Community/Neighborhood Organizing

Topic B: Industrial Areas Foundation Model – Alinsky (organizing institutions)

Readings:

Hardcastle, Chapter 14

Fisher, R. Let the people decide, chapters 1 & 2

*Alinsky, S. Rules for Radicals. Chapter One-Two. (pp. xiiv-47)

Week 5

Topic A: IAF Model (cont).

Topic B: Faith-Based Organizing (more institution-based organizing)

Topic C: ACORN Model (individual-based organizing)

Skills Workshop 1 & 2 Base Building

Readings:

Rogers, M. Cold Anger (whole book)

Hardcastle, Chapter 14 (already assigned)

Warren, M. (2001). Building Democracy Faith-based Community Organizing Today. Shelterforce Online. Find it here:
<http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/115/Warren.html>

Fisher, (1994). Let the People Decide. Skim Chapter 3. Read Chapters 4 & 5. Skim Chapter 6.

ACORN. From the Ground Up.
<http://www.acorn.org/index.php?id=49>

Week 6

Topic A: People of Color and Organizing (Rivera & Erlich Model), Feminist Model, Hybrid Models

Topic B: Community Development: Assets Approach (begin)

Skills Workshops 3 & 4

***** Community Assessment Due

Readings:

Rivera, F. & Erlich, J. (1998). A time of fear, A time of hope. In Rivera & Erlich (Eds), Community Organizing in a diverse society. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. 1-24. (Assigned: SW 8211)

Lee, P. (1998). Organizing in the Chinese American community: Issues, strategies, and alternatives. In Rivera & Erlich (Eds), Community Organizing in a diverse society. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. 117-145.

Gutierrez, L. & Lewis, E. (1998). A feminist perspective on organizing with women of color. In Rivera & Erlich (Eds), Community Organizing in a diverse society. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. 97-116. (Also assigned in SW 8702)

*Bradshaw, C.; Soifer, S. & Gutierrez, L. (1994). Toward a hybrid model for effective organizing in communities of color. Journal of Community Practice, 1(1), 25-42.

Hardcastle 5 (and 6 & 7 already assigned)

Check out this website:
<http://tinyurl.com/4awoe>

Week 7

Topic A: Popular Education

Topic B: Community Development: Assets Approach (cont.)

Topic B: Community Economic Development

Skills Workshop #5 & 6

Readings:

Check out this website:

<http://www.projectsouth.org/>

Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Penguin Books. Read: Chapter One, pp. 25-51. **SKIM** Find it here.

<http://www.webster.edu/~corbette/philosophy/education/freire/freire-1.html>

Cordova, C. (1998). Living in the U.S.A.: Central American immigrant communities in the United States. In Rivera & Erlich (Eds), Community Organizing in a diverse society. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. 180-200.

Pantoja, A. & Perry, W. (1998). Community development and restoration: A perspective and case study. In Rivera & Erlich (Eds), Community Organizing in a diverse society. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. 220-242.

Devore, W. (1998). The house on Midland: From inside out.. In Rivera & Erlich (Eds), Community organizing in a diverse society. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. 62-74

Kretzmann & McKnight (1993). Building communities from the inside out: A Path toward finding and mobilization a community's assets. Evanston: Northwestern University. Introduction. Found at...

<http://tinyurl.com/4v4n6>

Delgado, M. (1997). Role of Latina-owned beauty parlors in a Latino community. Social Work; 42(5) 445-453.

Find it on Academic Search Premiere. (Library Index)

Week 8

Topic A: Lobbying & Legislative Advocacy

Topic B: Action Research

Skills Workshop #7 & #8

***** Model Critique Due

Readings:

Hardcastle, 13

Lens, V. & Gibelman, M. (2000). Advocacy be not forsaken: Retrospective lessons from welfare reform. Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 81(6), 611-620.

Access via Social Work Abstracts. (Library Index)

San Francisco Aids Foundation. (2001). Everybody Voice Counts: A grassroots advocacy manual for the HIV/AIDS Community. (SKIM)

<http://www.sfaf.org/policy/grassroots/grassroots200103.pdf>

Illinois Health Care Association. (2002) Grassroots Lobbying Guide. (SKIM)

<http://www.ihca.com/ AcrobatFiles/Grassroots2002.PDF>

Compare these two “action centers”

NRA Action Center

<http://www.nraila.org/ActionCenter/GrassRootsActivism.aspx?>

Brady Campaign Action Center

<http://www.bradycampaign.org/action/>

Morales , J. & Reyes, M. (1998). Cultural and political realities for community social work practice with Puerto Ricans in the United States. In Rivera & Erlich (Eds), Community Organizing in a diverse society. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. 75-96.

*Wagner, D. (1991). Reviving the action research model: combining case and cause with dislocated workers. Social Work: 36(6) 477-482.

Week 9

Topic A: Debrief Election

Topic B: State Legislative Process: How it REALLY works

Topic C: Case Study in State Lawmaking: 15 minutes with Senator Sleepy

Readings:

Freeman, I. (2004). Advocacy in aging policy: Working the bills on Capitol Hill(s). Generations, 28(1), 41-47.

Access via Academic Search Premiere (Library Index)

Handouts

Week 10

Topic A: Social Work Advocacy

Topic B: Online Advocacy

Topic C: Social Marketing

***** *Student Advocacy Presentations*

Readings:

Hardcastle, Chapter 12

<http://www.netaction.org/training/reader.pdf>

Week 11

Topic A: Social Work Advocacy Skills

Topic B: Coalitions, Conflicts & Networks

Skills Workshop 9 & 10

***** Student Advocacy Presentations

Readings: Hardcastle Chapter 11

Week 12

Readings:

Thoreau: Civil Disobedience

Week 13

Topic A: Non-Violent Social Action
Topic B: Revisiting Role of Social Worker in CO & Advocacy
Knowledge, Skills & Attitudes
Social Justice

Topic C: Organizing and Advocacy in the 21st Century
Lessons from the Past
Reflections on Organizing
Keeping the Passion

Readings:

Thoreau: Civil Disobedience

Hardcastle, Chapter 8

Fisher. Read Chapter 7

Addams, J. Twenty years at Hull House, Chapters, 4 , pp 60-89
<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/addams/hullhouse/hullhouse-04.html>

Rivera & Erlich (1998). Epilogue: The Twenty-first century—Promise or illusion. In Rivera & Erlich (Eds), Community Organizing in a diverse society. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. 243-257.

Week 14

Topic A: Group (Individual) Presentations
Topic B: Course & Instructor Evaluation

Topic C: End of Semester Party

***** Final Project Presentations & Final Reports Due