

**RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

**Course No. 19:910:539– Community Organization**

**Instructor:**

**Office:**

**Email:**

**Telephone:**

**Office Hours:**

**Overview:**

This course is designed to provide students with a structured overview of community organization. The course will include readings on defining and characterizing community; power and leadership dynamics in community; economic and class issues; determinants of health that relate to community; community assessments; and approaches and tools to use when conducting and evaluating community-organizing initiatives.

A major challenge associated with offering a course addressing community organization is the range of material needing to be covered. Community organization is an interest of social workers, sociologists, organization theorists, political scientists, epidemiologists, entrepreneurs and psychologists, to name but a few disciplines contributing to our knowledge of working with communities.

**Objectives:**

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Identify basic characteristics of community-organizing approaches to addressing social and health problems;
2. Define the concept(s) of community;
3. Compare and contrast different theories and models relevant to community organization;
4. Analyze organizations that apply community-organizing approaches;
5. Apply mezzo and macro social work principles in order to evaluate and perform research on community-organizing initiatives.

**Approach:**

This course will follow a seminar format with a flipped classroom model. It will include both live virtual and online discussions. Students are expected to learn the skills that will help further their thinking and practice. The role of the instructor is to assist students in this process by acting as a facilitator and as a resource.

**Required Textbook:**

Abrams, S. (2019). *Lead from the Outside: How to Build Your Future and Make Real Change*. Picador USA.

Minkler, M. (Ed.) (2012). *Community Organizing and Community Building for Health and Welfare*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. ISBN-13: 978-0813553009

### **Program Level Learning Goals and the Council of Social Work Education's Social Work Competencies**

The MSW Program at Rutgers is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). CSWE's accreditation standards can be reviewed at [www.cswe.org](http://www.cswe.org)

In keeping with CSWE standards, the Rutgers School of Social Work has integrated the CSWE competencies within its curriculum. *These competences serve as program level Learning Goals for the MSW Program and include the following. Upon completion of their MSW education students will be able to: demonstrate ethical and professional behavior; engage in diversity and difference in practice; advance human rights and social, economic and environmental justice; engage in practice informed research and research informed practice; engage with individuals, families, groups organizations and communities; intervene with individual, families, groups organizations and communities; and evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.*

This course will assist students in developing the following competencies:

### **Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that engagement is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand strategies to engage diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may impact their ability to effectively engage with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers value principles of relationship-building and inter-professional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate. Social workers:

- apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies; and
- use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies.

## **Competency 7: Assess with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that assessment is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in the assessment of diverse clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of assessment with diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process and value the importance of inter-professional collaboration in this process. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may affect their assessment and decision-making. Social workers:

- collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies;
- apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies;
- develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies;
  - select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies.

## **Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are knowledgeable about evidence-informed interventions to achieve the goals of clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to effectively intervene with clients and constituencies. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing and implementing evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals. Social workers value the importance of interprofessional teamwork and communication in interventions, recognizing that beneficial outcomes may require interdisciplinary, interprofessional, and inter-organizational collaboration. Social workers:

- critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies;
- apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies;
- use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes;
- negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies; and

- facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals.

### **Competency 9: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that evaluation is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Social workers recognize the importance of evaluating processes and outcomes to advance practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness. Social workers:

- select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes;
- apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes;
- critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes; and
- apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

### **Requirements:**

1. Class participation is heavily considered in evaluating grades. Students are expected to participate in every discussion and notify the class instructor if they are unable to fulfill this requirement for any reason.
2. Midterm and final paper– Students will have a midterm exam and final paper. These assignments will provide students the opportunity to synthesize material presented throughout the course.
3. Conduct and present one case study – Students will gather information from documents and interviews to provide a presentation on a group or organization which applies community-organizing strategies. The purpose of the case study is to provide a real-life context for class assignments. This project should serve as a framework within which students do the readings and prepare assignments.

### **Course Attendance and Participation Policies**

Students are expected to attend class regularly and to complete readings on a timely basis so that they can participate effectively in class discussions. More than two absences will result in the failure of the class. Students are expected to arrive to class on time and stay for the entire duration of class. More than 2 late arrivals or early departures will result in grade deductions. In addition, students are expected to take leadership roles in class discussions and exercises.

## **Grading:**

*SSW MSW Grading Scale:* Below is the grading scale for the MSW program

A	92-100
B+	87-91
B	82-86
C+	77-81
C	70-76
F	0-69

\*Scores to be rounded up at .5

## **Academic Resources**

### **Library Research Assistance**

**Dr. Karen Hartmann** is the social work the social work librarian on the New Brunswick Campus [karen.hartman@rutgers.edu](mailto:karen.hartman@rutgers.edu) p. 848-932-6104 ; **Natalie Borisovets** is at Newark, Dana Library [natalieb@rutgers.edu](mailto:natalieb@rutgers.edu)973-353-5909; **Katie Anderson** is at Camden, Robeson Library: [Katie.anderson@rutgers.edu](mailto:Katie.anderson@rutgers.edu) 856-225-2830. They are all available to meet with students.

### **Writing Assistance**

Success in graduate school and within the larger profession of social work depends on strong writing skills. Several resources are available to help students strengthen their professional and academic writing skills. Writing assistance is available to all MSW students as described below.

All MSW SSW students (New Brunswick, Camden, Newark, Intensive Weekend, online and blended) are eligible to access writing assistance at the New Brunswick Learning Center. Online tutoring may also be available.

<https://rlc.rutgers.edu/student-info/group-and-individual-academic-support/writing-coaching>

### **Additional Online Resources**

#### ***APA Style***

All students are expected to adhere to the citation style of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition (2020). It can be purchased at [APA Manual 9th Edition](#). The Purdue OWL website also provide assistance with APA style <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

### **Academic Integrity Policy:**

All work submitted in a graduate course must be your own. It is unethical and a violation of the University's Academic Integrity Policy to present the ideas or words of another without clearly and fully identifying the source. Inadequate citations will be construed as an attempt to misrepresent the cited material as your own. Your work should be in APA format. Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise. To

avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be properly cited in the text or in a footnote. Acknowledgement is required when material from another source is stored in print, electronic, or other medium and is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one's own words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: "to paraphrase Plato's comment..." and conclude with a footnote identifying the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material.

Information which is common knowledge, such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc., need not be footnoted; however, all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, only materials that contribute to one's general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography. Plagiarism can, in some cases, be a subtle issue. Any question about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with the faculty member. Plagiarism along with any and all other violations of academic integrity by graduate and professional students will normally be penalized more severely than violations by first-year undergraduate students. Since all violations of academic integrity by a graduate or professional student are potentially separable under the Academic Integrity Policy, faculty members should not adjudicate alleged academic integrity violations by graduate and professional students, but should refer such allegations to the appropriate Academic Integrity Facilitator (AIF) or to the Office of Student Conduct. The AIF that you should contact is Antoinette Y. Farmer, 732.932.2621. The student shall be notified in writing, by email or hand delivery, of the alleged violation and of the fact that the matter has been referred to the AIF for adjudication. This notification shall be done within 10 days of identifying the alleged violation. Once the student has been notified of the allegation, the student may not drop the course or withdraw from the school until the adjudication process is complete. A TZ or incomplete grade shall be assigned until the case is resolved. For more information regarding the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures, see: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>.

### **Disability Accommodation**

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

### **Course Evaluation**

Rutgers University issues a survey that evaluates both the course and instructor. This survey is completed by students toward the end of the semester, and all answers are confidential and anonymous. The instructor may also choose to conduct a mid-point evaluation.

## **Assignments:**

- Mid-Term Examination: 30%
- Case Study Assignment: 25%
- Final Paper: 30%
- Class participation: 15%

**Case Study Assignment:** This assignment requires students to perform a detailed study, critique, and presentation on information about a community initiative or organization which is relevant to social work. The study should include an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of a community group or initiative from a community-organizing perspective. For this assignment, you should select a community organization or community-based initiative that is of interest to you, conduct a case study of this organization by reviewing the organization's documents and materials, as well as interviewing an individual(s) representing the organization. Prepare a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation and convey your findings in class during week 10.

The case study assignment will be 40% of your grade.

**Final Paper:** Write a 5 page paper, using course content, on the challenges and benefits of community organizing. The essay must be in APA format, and include at least three (3) citations. The final paper is due on week 13. The final paper assignment will be 30% of your grade.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

### **WEEKS 1 AND 2**

#### **Introduction to basic concepts and foundations of community organization**

#### **Readings for Week 1:**

Christens, B. D., & Speer, P. W. (2015). Community organizing: Practice, research, and policy implications. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 9(1), 193-222.

#### **Chapters 1&2**

Minkler, M. (2012). *Community organizing and community building for health and welfare* (pp. 5-36). New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

#### **Readings for Week 2:**

#### **Chapter 3, 4, 5**

Minkler, M. (2012). *Community organizing and community building for health and welfare*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

### **WEEKS 3 AND 4**

#### **Environmental determinants of social and health problems**

#### **Readings for Week 3**

Mitchell, F. M. (2012). Reframing diabetes in American Indian communities: A social determinants of health perspective. *Health & Social Work*, 37(2), 71-79.

Moniz, C. (2010). Social work and the social determinants of health perspective: A good fit. *Health and Social Work, 35*(4), 310.

Rine, C. M. (2010). Unnatural causes: Is inequality making us sick? *Health and Social Work, 35*(3), 229.

#### **Readings for Week 4**

Peterson, N.A., Yu, D., Morton, C.M., Reid, R.J., Sheffer, M.A. & Schneider, J.E. (2011). Tobacco outlet density and demographics at the tract level of analysis in New Jersey. *Drugs: Education, Prevention & Policy, 18*, 47-52.

Subica, A. M., Grills, C. T., Villanueva, S., & Douglas, J. A. (2016). Community organizing for healthier communities: Environmental and policy outcomes of a National Initiative. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine.*

Yu, D., Morton, C.M. & Peterson, N.A. (2014). Community pharmacies and addictive products: Sociodemographic predictors of accessibility from a mixed GWR perspective. *GIScience & Remote Sensing, 51*, 99-113.

#### **WEEK 5**

##### **Community assessment and issue selection**

#### **Readings for Week 5:**

##### **Chapter 9, 10, 11**

Minkler, M. (2012). *Community organizing and community building for health and welfare*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

#### **WEEKS 6 AND 7**

##### **Building authentic partnerships and organizing within and across diverse groups**

#### **Readings for Week 6:**

##### **Chapter 6, 12, 13**

Minkler, M. (2012). *Community organizing and community building for health and welfare*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

#### **Readings for Week 7:**

##### **Chapter 14, 17 & 18**

Minkler, M. (2012). *Community organizing and community building for health and welfare*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Powell, K.G. & Peterson, N.A. (2014). Pathways to effectiveness in substance abuse prevention: Empowering organizational characteristics of community-based coalitions. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership, & Governance, 38*, 471-486.



**WEEK 8 – Case Study Check-in/Guest Speaker**  
**\*NO READINGS**

**SPRING BREAK**

**WEEKS 9 AND 10**

**What Makes A Movement?**

**Readings for Week 9:**

**MID-TERM DUE**

**Chapters 3-5**

Garza, A. (2020). *The Purpose of Power: How We Come Together When We Fall Apart*. New York: One World.

**Week 10**

**Readings for Week 10:**

**Chapters 6-8**

Garza, A. (2020). *The Purpose of Power: How We Come Together When We Fall Apart*. New York: One World

**WEEKS 11 AND 12**

**Using the arts, internet and digital technology as tools for community organizing and community building**

**Readings for Week 11**

**Chapter 16**

Minkler, M. (2012). *Community organizing and community building for health and welfare*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Brady, S. R., Young, J. A., & McLeod, D. A. (2015). Utilizing digital advocacy in community organizing: Lessons learned from organizing in virtual spaces to promote worker rights and economic justice. *Journal of Community Practice*, 23(2), 255-273.

**Readings for Week 12**

**Chapter 15**

Minkler, M. (2012). *Community organizing and community building for health and welfare*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Agarwal, S. D., Barthel, M. L., Rost, C., Borning, A., Bennett, W. L., & Johnson, C. N. (2014). Grassroots organizing in the digital age: Considering values and technology in Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street. *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(3), 326-341.

### **WEEK 13**

#### **Final Exam Paper Due**

#### **Influencing policy through community organizing and media advocacy**

#### **Readings for Week 13**

##### **Chapter 20 & 22**

Minkler, M. (2012). *Community organizing and community building for health and welfare*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

### **Week 14**

#### **Measuring outcomes and evaluating community organizing and community building**

#### **Readings for Week 14**

##### **Chapter 19**

Minkler, M. (2012). *Community organizing and community building for health and welfare*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Peterson, N.A., Peterson, C.H., Agre, L.A., Christens, B.D. & Morton, C.M. (2011). Measuring youth empowerment: Validation of a sociopolitical control scale for youth in an urban community context. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 39, 592-605.

Speer, P.W., Peterson, N.A., Zippay, A. & Christens, B. (2010). Participation in congregation-based organizing: A mixed-method study of civic engagement. In M.R. DeGennaro and S. Fogel (Eds.), *Using Evidence to Inform Practice for Community and Organizational Change* (pp. 200-217). Chicago: Lyceum Books.

### **Week 15**

#### **Guest Speaker and Wrap-Up**