

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

19:910:539

Community Organizing

Instructor:

Office:

Email:

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Office Hours:

Overview

This course is designed to provide students with a structured overview of community organizing. 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.

As students read through this syllabus, they should also remember to closely **review the School-Wide Syllabus** in Canvas or the Student Handbook to find information on the School of Social Work mission statement and learning goals, school-wide policies (including academic integrity policies and the standardized attendance policy), and student resources and supports.

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. Develop skills needed to perform community-based organizing skills.
6. Apply mezzo and macro social work principles 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 lectures, small group discussions, and weekly reading reflections. Students are expected to learn the skills that will help further their thinking and application of community-based practice approaches. The role of the instructor is to assist students in this process by acting as a facilitator and as a resource.

Required Textbook

Bobo, K. A., Kendall, J., & Max, S. (2010). *Organizing for social change: Midwest Academy Manual For Activists*. essay, The Forum Press.

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

Schniederhan, Erik. (2016). *The Size of Others' Burdens*. Stanford University Press.

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.

In keeping with CSWE standards, the Rutgers School of Social Work has integrated the 2022 CSWE competencies within its curriculum. The competencies assessed in this course include:

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 individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are self-reflective and understand how bias, power, and privilege as well as their personal values and personal experiences may affect their ability to engage effectively with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers use the principles of interprofessional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate.

Social workers:

- a. apply knowledge of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, to engage with clients and constituencies; and
- b. use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to engage in culturally responsive practice with 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. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and they critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in culturally responsive assessment with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Assessment involves a collaborative process of defining presenting challenges and identifying strengths with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities to develop a mutually agreed-upon plan. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process and use interprofessional collaboration in this process. Social workers are self-reflective and understand how bias, power, privilege, and their personal values and experiences may affect their assessment and decision making.

Social workers:

- a. apply theories of human behavior and person-in-environment, as well as other culturally responsive and interprofessional conceptual frameworks, when assessing clients and constituencies; and
- b. demonstrate respect for client self-determination during the assessment process by collaborating with clients and constituencies in developing a mutually agreed-upon plan.

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. Social workers understand theories of human behavior, person-in-environment, and other interprofessional conceptual frameworks, and they critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in selecting culturally responsive interventions with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-informed interventions and participate in interprofessional collaboration to achieve client and constituency goals. Social workers facilitate effective transitions and endings.

Social workers:

- a. engage with clients and constituencies to critically choose and implement culturally responsive, evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals; and
- b. incorporate culturally responsive methods to negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of clients and constituencies.

[Explore the entire set of 2022 CSWE competencies.](#)

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 exam 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, that is engaged in direct social action, and is utilizing 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 can connect the topics discussed in the readings and the lecture materials.

Course Attendance and Participation Policies

Please refer to the school-wide syllabus for the standard attendance policy for classes in on-the-ground (traditional) program, intensive weekend program (IWP), and asynchronous online program.

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 three absences will result in failing the class. Students are expected to arrive at class on time and stay for the entire duration of class. More than two late arrivals or early departures will result in grade deductions. In addition, students are expected to take leadership roles in class discussions and exercises.

Required Texts

Bobo, K. A., Kendall, J., & Max, S. (2010). *Organizing for social change: Midwest Academy Manual for Activists*. essay, The Forum Press.

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

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

- Weekly Reading Response Submission: 10%
- Mid-Term Examination: 30%
- Case Study Assignment: 20%
- Final Paper: 30%
- Class participation: 10%

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

The case study assignment will be 20% of your grade.

Final Paper: This 5-to-7-page paper should be a critical analysis of the book *The Size of Others' Burdens* by Erik Schneiderhan. It should focus on the differences and similarities between the organizing approaches utilized by Jane Addams and Barack Obama. The paper must be in APA format and include at least three (5) citations. The final paper is due on week 13. The final paper assignment will be 30% of your grade.

All written assignments **must** follow APA format. The professor reserves the right to reduce the letter grade for any assignment that does not conform to APA format.

CLASS SCHEDULE

MODULE 1

Introduction, review of the syllabus, discuss course materials

MODULE 2

Module two will explore the foundational concepts of community organization, delving into theories of social change, power dynamics, and grassroots mobilization. Through theoretical study and practical engagement, gain insights into advocacy strategies and sustainable community development.

Readings for Module 2:

Bobo, K. A., Kendall, J., & Max, S. (2010). Chapter 2 & 6. In *Organizing for social change: Midwest Academy Manual for Activists*. essay, The Forum Press.

Minkler, M. (2012). Chapter 1 & 2. *Community organizing and community building for health and welfare*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

MODULE 3 AND 4 -Issue Selection and Developing Strategies

In modules three and four we will review issue selection and strategy development in community organizing, which will provide a thorough examination of identifying pressing community concerns and formulating effective plans for action. Students will learn to assess needs, prioritize issues, and create impactful strategies to mobilize community efforts for sustainable change.

Readings for Module 3

Bobo, K. A., Kendall, J., & Max, S. (2010). Chapter 3. In *Organizing for social change: Midwest Academy Manual for Activists*. essay, The Forum Press.

Minkler, M. (2012). Chapter 4. *Community organizing and community building for health and welfare*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Readings for Module 4

Bobo, K. A., Kendall, J., & Max, S. (2010). Chapter 4. In *Organizing for social change: Midwest Academy Manual for Activists*. The Forum Press.

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

MODULE 5 - Community Assessment

This week aims to equip students with the skills to conduct comprehensive community assessments, explore various assessment tools, analyze assets, and interpret data for informed decision-making. By the end of the week, learners will be adept at conducting ethical community assessments, interpreting findings, and effectively communicating results to stakeholders in community organization efforts.

Readings for Module 5

Bobo, K. A., Kendall, J., & Max, S. (2010). Chapter 3 & 4. In *Organizing for social change: Midwest Academy Manual for Activists*. The Forum Press.

Minkler, M. (2012). Chapters 10 & 11. *Community organizing and community building for health and welfare*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

MODULES 6 AND 7 - Building authentic partnerships and organizing within and across diverse groups

Students will develop the skills to effectively navigate and cultivate authentic partnerships within diverse communities at the end of week seven. They will demonstrate an

understanding of inclusive communication strategies, conflict resolution techniques, and consensus-building methods, enabling them to organize and collaborate across diverse groups to achieve collective action and shared goals while respecting and valuing diverse perspectives.

Readings for Module 6:

Bobo, K. A., Kendall, J., & Max, S. (2010). Chapter 9. *Organizing for social change: Midwest Academy Manual for Activists*. The Forum Press.

Minkler, M. (2012). Chapters 6, 12 & 13. *Community organizing and community building for health and welfare*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Readings for Module 7:

Minkler, M. (2012). Chapters 17&18. *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.

MODULE 8 – Case Study Check-in/Guest Speaker/

***NO READINGS**

SPRING BREAK

MODULES 9 AND 10-What Makes a Movement?

MIDTERMS DUE

Modules nine and ten involve a review of select chapters from Alicia Garza's book, *The Power of Purpose*, focusing on strategies for initiating and nurturing social movements. Through critically analyzing Garza's insights and experiences, students will glean invaluable knowledge on the foundational elements crucial for effective movement building. This exploration aims to equip students with a nuanced understanding of grassroots organizing tactics, leadership dynamics, and coalition-building strategies essential for effecting transformative change within communities.

Readings for Module 9:

Chapters 3-5

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

Readings for Module 10:

Chapters 6-8

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

MODULES 11 AND 12 - The Arts and Innovation

These modules delve into harnessing the power of arts, the internet, and digital technology as pivotal tools for community organizing and fostering community cohesion. Students will explore how various artistic expressions, online platforms, and digital tools can amplify voices, catalyze engagement, and mobilize collective action within communities. Through practical exercises and case studies, learners will develop the skills to leverage these mediums effectively, empowering them to create compelling narratives, build networks, and foster inclusive communities utilizing innovative technological and creative approaches.

Readings for Module 11

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.

Minkler, M. (2012). Chapter 16. *Community organizing and community building for health and welfare*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Readings for Module 12

Minkler, M. (2012). Chapters 14 & 15. *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.

MODULE 13 - Influencing Policy and Media Advocacy

Final Exam Paper Due

Module thirteen and module fourteen integrate community organizing with media advocacy strategies to drive impactful policy changes. Students will learn to leverage grassroots efforts and media platforms effectively, crafting compelling narratives to influence public opinion and policy agendas. Students will gain skills in advocating for community needs, emphasizing the pivotal role of media advocacy in shaping policy decisions.

Readings for Module 13

Minkler, M. (2012). Chapters 20 & 22. *Community organizing and community building for health and welfare*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

MODULE 14 - Measuring outcomes and evaluating community organizing and community building

Module 14 will focus on the processes to evaluate the impact of community organizing and building efforts. Students will learn methods to measure outcomes, analyze data, and assess the success of community initiatives. Through practical exercises, they will develop skills in setting measurable goals and employing evaluation techniques to ensure effective and sustainable impacts within communities.

Readings for Module 14

Minkler, M. (2012). Chapter 19. *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.

MODULE 15

Guest Speaker and Wrap-Up

Our final session will feature a guest speaker sharing invaluable insights into real-world applications. Each participant will develop an action plan, leveraging the significance of community organizing in social work practice. This step aims to practically apply our learnings, integrating the guest speaker's expertise and emphasizing the role of inclusive engagement in creating sustainable change within communities, reinforcing the essential connection between community organizing and impactful social work practice.