

PA 1401 Organizing for the Public Good
Spring 2015 8:15 -- 9:30 am M-W
Blegen Hall 210
3 credits

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PA 1401: Organizing for the Public Good is a hands-on introduction for undergraduate students wanting to develop the skills, confidence, and knowledge to become empowered agents of change. It is located in an emerging field of civic engagement called “Civic Studies” which emphasizes agency (people’s capacities to act to shape the world around us) and citizens as co-creators of the shared world in a society of diverse and often conflicting values.¹ The course focuses especially on one strand of this field, the tradition of community organizing and its translation into professions and institutional change as “citizen professionals. Organizing develops people’s civic agency or collective power to work across ethical, racial, religious, economic and other differences to solve problems, make change, and negotiate a shared democratic way of life. This requires more than “consuming” democracy – it means learning how to help create it.

Using several methods (writing with feedback; discussions; interviews; public presentations) you will explore your own “public narrative,” the values which have led you to make critical decisions in your life and how you express or seek to express these in the public world. You will learn how to understand the public narratives and value frameworks of others. And you will have concrete ways to work across differences in ethics and values on public problems and to create public things, “what we all share.”

Students will gain concepts and practical skills of civic agency such as one-on-ones, public speaking understanding their own public narrative, or story and the story of others and how that can lead to a new level of awareness about the necessity to take action. You will come to better understand and use power, thinking politically, forming partnerships across lines of difference, understanding diverse self-interests, and knowing the culture, history and social networks of places. You will also have opportunities to organize classes around themes of your choice, related to the overall course focus on empowerment.

Course goals:

- To acquaint students with the methods and outlook of community organizing tradition in America as a strand of the emerging “Civic Studies” field
- To provide students with an introduction to the approach to ethics in Civic Studies, compared to other approaches. A framework of organizing for civic empowerment and public creation opens new possibilities for action in common on controversial questions (e.g. abortion, teen pregnancy, definitions of marriage, education, prayer in schools);

¹ The phrase “civic studies” was coined in 2007 in a joint statement by Harry Boyte, University of Minnesota; Stephen Elkin, University of Maryland; Peter Levine, Tufts University; Jane Mansbridge, Harvard University; Elinor Ostrom, Indiana University; Karol Soltan, University of Maryland; and Rogers Smith, University of Pennsylvania. The official site is hosted by Tufts University, at <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/civic-studies/>

- To give students a hands on introduction to organizing skills such as public speaking, power mapping, collective problem solving and one on one relational meetings;
- To enable students to develop and write their own public narrative, present it, get feedback from others, resubmit it, examine their own values and commitments in the context of their own story;
- To provide stages for students' public speaking
- To open the door to new civic possibilities in their own work and careers

Civic Life and Ethics Theme/ Liberal Education – Introduction to Civic Studies

This course involves an examination of key concepts of citizenship, politics, ethics, and democracy, as well as hands-on experiential learning in problem solving skills and team work especially from the framework called Civic Studies, developed to address the challenge of collective action in a world of often radically different ethical frameworks. It also shows how Civic Studies takes a different approach to the disciplines and fields of higher education than other main civic engagement approaches. Civic Studies was founded in 2007 by a group of political theorists including Harry Boyte, Steve Elkin, Peter Levine, Jane Mansbridge, Elinor Ostrom, Rogers Smith, and Karol Soltan. It has generated several major recent volumes, including Peter Levine, *We Are the Ones We've Been Waiting For*, Oxford University Press, 2013; Levine and Karol Soltan, Eds., *Civic Studies*, Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2014; and Harry Boyte, Ed., *Democracy's Education: Public Work, Citizenship, and the Future of Colleges and Universities*, Vanderbilt University Press, 2015. Each year there is a two week introduction to the fields and theories of Studies, an international Civic Studies Institute held at Tufts University in the summer.

American history has always had far more ethical and cultural diversity than was usually acknowledged in mainstream public discourse. But just over a hundred years ago Walter Rauschenbusch, the social justice theologian, could plausibly assume a common Christian world view when he urged his fellow citizens to address the plight of industrial workers, women, and the poor. The last hundred years has seen the radical pluralization of communities and ethical framework, and the challenges of ethical pluralism are arguably much more acute in a highly developed *consumer* society which feeds individual appetites and demands for individual "rights," and neglects the commons. The PA 1401 course will acquaint students with the way the Civic Studies field and the tradition of community organizing within it offers an approach to collective civic action and citizenship different than citizenship as focused on government ("civics"), or citizenship focused on service and volunteering ("the communitarian" approach). Today, there is no ethical consensus of shared norms of personal behavior, understandings of the good life and the meaning of "the American dream," what makes for a flourishing community and a good society. Civic Studies addresses this fragmentation through deliberative and public work practices associated with community organizing, in which the citizen is understood as a "co-creator" of communities who has to negotiate different values and interests to address common challenges. In addition to community organizing texts and practical skills, students will read several pieces which introduce students to Civic Studies (such as Peter Levine's "The Case for Civic Studies") and show its connections to traditions such as public deliberation, material on the "commons" (one founder, Elinor Ostrom, a political theorist, won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2009 for her work in this area), and public work/citizen professionalism (the course will show how community

organizing habits and practices have as been translated into citizen professionalism, drawing on Harry Boyte's writings on public work (e.g. Boyte, "Citizen Professionalism").

The course includes use of the concept of public narrative, widely used in Civic Studies, as developed by the Harvard political scientist and organizer Marshall Ganz, as a way to explore their own ethical choices and histories and the way these are expressed in the public world. And it includes readings (for instance "Stoking the Fires of Democracy," by the young community organizer Stephen Smith) that treat organizing methods for addressing different ethical frameworks by stressing *productive* not simply *consumer* citizenship. Students will learn and practice problem solving skills and arts, such as the art of relational meetings ("one on ones" in organizing language), and develop everyday political mapping skills, such as mapping the diverse relationships of power in particular communities or organizational settings. The course will also include a team public work project.

Student Learning Outcomes

This course will help students acquire skills **for effective citizenship and life-long learning through the course goals of:**

- **Acquainting students with Civic Studies and the community organizing tradition in America and the distinctive ways in which this framework addresses questions of ethical pluralism**
- **Giving students a hands on introduction to organizing skills for civic agency, such as writing, public speaking, power mapping, collective problem solving and one on one relational meetings**
- **Enabling students to examine their own values and commitments in the context of their own public narratives**
- **Providing stages for students' public speaking**
- **Opening the door to new civic possibilities in their own work and careers**

Readings:

Grace Lee Boggs, *The Next American Revolution*

Stephen Noble Smith, *Stoking the Fire of Democracy*

Other selected readings and materials by Barbara Ransby, Saul Alinsky, Peter Levine, Harry Boyte, and others, which will be on moodle, handed out in class or sent to you through e-mail.

- Reading Load: approximately 50 pages (average) per week
- Work Load: 30-45 pages individual writing, including weekly reading reflections, three short papers and one public work group project report (10 page group paper). .
- Grade: 20% weekly reflections on reading; 40% three short essays; 20% in-class participation; 20% group public work project

COURSE COMPONENTS

There are five course components:

- 1) **Weekly reading reflections.** Most weeks you will write approximately one page on the reading of the previous week (all the weeks with reports due are noted in the following). The weekly reflections will be graded pass/fail. Students can redo a failed reflection.

The reflections should include three paragraphs, which will be explained in depth, including writing instruction on how to do these well:

- a. one on what you think the writer is saying to the world and why;
- b. one that relates the reading to some other reading or topic in the course;
- c. one on your personal reaction to the reading, based on your own experiences and life. Be as specific as possible.

- 2) **Three Essays.** You will write three short essays, three to five pages each. Grades - A-F.
 - a. The first, due February 16th, will relate your own public story, your story of self, to the story of the class – why you are here – and the story of “now,” how your story connects to the historical movement which we are in.
 - b. The second, due March 25th, requires you to put together an organizing plan about how you would go about solving a public problem or creating a public product, shared by the community or the world. This should show familiarity with the readings and discussions of the class.
 - c. The third involves a final paper, due on May 6th, the last day of class (there will be no final exam). The topic is how you see your work as a citizen who contributes to making a better society. What have you learned from this class that you will incorporate into your life and work?
- 3) **Class participation.** There will be much class discussion including class-led sessions, small group conversations, role plays and other activities. Class participation is expected; more than two unexcused absences will lower your grade. Grades will be A-F.
- 4) **One-on-ones:** Do at least three one-on-ones in the semester, with a reflection paper due April 22nd on who you did your one to ones with, what you learned and experienced doing them. The one to ones should be with a classmate, a person from the list, and someone who thinks different than you. Pass/Fail.
- 5) **Public work project:** The course will include a public work project. We’ll brainstorm together about projects and determine the groups on February 11th, Possibilities include: researching and organizing a public discussion at Tom’s drug store or the Citizens’ Commons at Trinity Lutheran Congregation; developing a YouTube Video on a “ public work” effort in Minnesota that illustrates citizen politics; research or work with an organizing effort in Minnesota like ISAI AH, Take Action Minnesota, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce etc., identify a public issue and develop a project to address it, research a commons in the Twin Cities like Global Market, or Nina’s and Golden Tyme Coffee Shops, or research the integration of organizing habits and public work into the Special Education Teacher Program or Nursing Program at Augsburg College or Public Achievement work at Maxfield Elementary School, or Fridley Middle School (FMS is transforming the field of special education) etc. This will be a group grade, A-F.

The project has four elements:

- Research and develop a plan of action that shows “citizens at the center,” working to address a public problem through an awareness strategy, creating public things that contribute to positive change;

- Act on it, and develop a product
- Write a paper as a team that captures what you did and learned (8-10 pages);
- Make a public presentation in class on what you did and have learned;

The grades will be based on each of these parts – the quality of the work and written story; the class presentation; and a team peer review of individual work.

Make-up of Missed Exams and Grading Late Work

There will not be any exams. Late work will be graded within specified time limit set by instructor.

Extra Credit

Extra credit opportunities will be given throughout the semester based on relevant institutional and community based prospects.

University of Minnesota Policies

Student Conduct Code:

The University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that is protective of free inquiry, and that serves the educational mission of the University. Similarly, the University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; that is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community.

As a student at the University you are expected adhere to Board of Regents Policy: *Student Conduct Code*. To review the Student Conduct Code, please see:

http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Student_Conduct_Code.html.

Note that the conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means "engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities."

Use of Personal Electronic Devices in the Classroom:

Using personal electronic devices in the classroom setting can hinder instruction and learning, not only for the student using the device but also for other students in the class. To this end, the University establishes the right of each faculty member to determine if and how personal electronic devices are allowed to be used in the classroom. For complete information, please reference: <http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/CLASSROOMPED.html>.

Scholastic Dishonesty:

You are expected to do your own academic work and cite sources as necessary. Failing to do so is scholastic dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. (Student Conduct Code:

http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Student_Conduct_Code.html) If it is determined that a student has cheated, he or she may be given an "F" or an "N" for the course, and may face additional sanctions from the University. For additional information, please see: <http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/INSTRUCTORRESP.html>.

The Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity has compiled a useful list of Frequently Asked Questions pertaining to scholastic dishonesty: <http://www1.umn.edu/oscai/integrity/student/index.html>. If you have additional questions, please clarify with your instructor for the course. Your instructor can respond to your specific questions regarding what would constitute scholastic dishonesty in the context of a particular class-e.g., whether collaboration on assignments is permitted, requirements and methods for citing sources, if electronic aids are permitted or prohibited during an exam.

Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences:

Students will not be penalized for absence during the semester due to unavoidable or legitimate circumstances. Such circumstances include verified illness, participation in intercollegiate athletic events, subpoenas, jury duty, military service, bereavement, and religious observances. Such circumstances do not include voting in local, state, or national elections. For complete information, please see:

<http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/MAKEUPWORK.html>.

Appropriate Student Use of Class Notes and Course Materials:

Taking notes is a means of recording information but more importantly of personally absorbing and integrating the educational experience. However, broadly disseminating class notes beyond the classroom community or accepting compensation for taking and distributing classroom notes undermines instructor interests in their intellectual work product while not substantially furthering instructor and student interests in effective learning. Such actions violate shared norms and standards of the academic community. For additional information, please see:

<http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/CLASSNOTESSTUDENTS.html>.

Grading and Transcripts:

The University utilizes plus and minus grading on a 4.000 cumulative grade point scale in accordance with the following:

- A 4.000 - Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements
- A- 3.667
- B+ 3.333
- B 3.000 - Represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements
- B- 2.667
- C+ 2.333
- C 2.000 - Represents achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect
- C- 1.667
- D+ 1.333
- D 1.000 - Represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements
- S Represents achievement that is satisfactory, which is equivalent to a C- or better.

For additional information, please refer to:

<http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/GRADINGTRANSCRIPTS.html>.

Sexual Harassment

"Sexual harassment" means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment in any University activity or program. Such behavior is not acceptable in the University setting. For additional information, please consult Board of Regents Policy:

<http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/SexHarassment.html>

Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action:

The University will provide equal access to and opportunity in its programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For more information, please consult Board of Regents Policy:

http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/administrative/Equity_Diversity_EO_AA.html.

Disability Accommodations:

The University is committed to providing quality education to all students regardless of ability. Determining appropriate disability accommodations is a collaborative process. You as a student must register with Disability Services and provide documentation of your disability. The course instructor must provide information regarding a course's content, methods, and essential components. The combination of this information will be used by Disability Services to determine appropriate accommodations for a particular student in a particular course. For more information, please reference Disability Services: <http://ds.umn.edu/Students/index.html>.

Mental Health Services:

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Student Mental Health Website: <http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu>.

This syllabus is subject to change based on our work, outside opportunities, and your input.

Class schedule

Week One

January 21 Introductions, course overview, the classroom as a free space, “The World as it is” vs “The World as it should be” How do we make change?

*Readings: Walljasper, All that We Share selections moodle
Chambers, Chapter 1, Roots for Radicals moodle*

Week Two

January 26 Public Narrative: What has brought me here? What core values have I acted on in key decision points in my life? What is my public story? – an introduction to civic life and the challenges of acting effectively in a society of ethical pluralism

*Reading: Ganz, "What is Public Narrative?" moodle
Reading: Alinsky Chapter 6 moodle*

First Reflection Due (All that We Share)

January 28 Discussion of the “commons”, and models of Democracy and Citizenship. What is civic agency? What are indicators of civic agency? Present and discuss public work group project ideas.

Week Three

February 2 Power, Self-interest, and One to One Relational Meetings Part 1
Second Reflection Due (Alinsky Chapter 6)

Reading: Boyte, Empowerment moodle

February 4 One to One Relational Meetings Part 2

Week Four

February 9 Discussion of Empowerment and other experiences: building a culture of empowerment in the Twin cities. *Guest: Harry Boyte*
Third reflection due (Empowerment)

February 11 The culture and roots of Public Achievement
Choose group for projects

Week Five

February 16 Public and Private: The challenges of developing a public life

Reading: Boggs, The Next American Revolution Chapters 1, 2 and 3
First Essay Due (Your Public Narrative)

February 18 Guest panel of organizers and “citizen” professionals

Week Six

February 23 Power mapping and discussion about organizing plan assignment
Reading assignment: Smith, Stoking the Fire of Democracy Intro, Chapters 1, 2, 3
Fourth Reflection due (Boggs)

February 25 Research day - work in class with your group

Week Seven

March 2 Discussion of Smith and introduction to the Civil Rights Movement
Reading: Ransby, Chapter 6, Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement moodle
Fifth Reflection Due (Smith)

March 4 We Were There: The March on Washington

Week Eight

- March 9 Project groups share work and challenges
Work on Civil Rights Movement topics for discussion
Sixth Reflection Due (Ransby)
- March 11 Student led discussion on the Civil Rights Movement Part 1

March 16-20 SPRING BREAK

Week Nine

- March 23 Student led discussion on the Civil Rights Movement Part 2
Reading assignment: Nehemiah Old Testament Chapter
Boyte Op-Ed, "Our Passive Society Needs some New Nehemiahs"
- March 25 One to one practice
Second Essay Due (Organizing Plan)

Week Ten

- March 30 Share organizing plans with class
Seventh Reflection Due (Nehemiah)
Reading assignment: Mike Rose, The Working Life of a Waitress moodle
- April 1 Discussion of Nehemiah as a tale of developing a common narrative

Week Eleven

- April 6 Workplace as a citizenship school
Eighth Reflection Due (Rose)
Reading assignment: Boggs, Chapters 4, 5, and 6
- April 8 Student organized class

Week Twelve

- April 13 Research day – meet in class with your group
Ninth Reflection Due (Boggs)
- April 15 Discussion of Boggs and education challenges in the 21st century

Week Thirteen

April 20 Research day – meet in class with your group
Reading assignment: Smith, Chapter 4 through Afterword

April 22 Guest panel of organizers and “citizen” professionals
One on one reflection paper due

Week Fourteen

April 27 Deliberation on the role of higher education in the changing world of work
Guest: Elaine Eschenbacher

April 29 Student organized class

Week Fifteen

May 4 Group presentations to class and guests

May 6 Group presentations to class and guests
Final Essay due: Your public work as a Citizen

May 11 Group written paper due

Additional Course Resources:

Nobody Turn Me Around, Charles Euchner

Odd Girl Out, Rachel Simmons

Going Public, Michael Gecan

Free Spaces, Sara Evans & Harry Boyte

Roots for Radicals, Ed Chambers

I've Got the Light of Freedom, Charles M. Payne

Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement, Barbara Ransby

Geno: The Life and Mission of Geno Baroni, Lawrence M. O'Rourke

The Citizen Solution, Harry Boyte

We Make Change, Kristin and Joe Szakos, eds.

If Your Back's Not Bent, Dorothy Cotton

Faith in Action, Richard L. Wood

From Command to Community, Nick Longo and Cindy Gibson

Everyday Politics, Harry Boyte

American Democracy Project blog <http://adpaascu.wordpress.com/>

Campus Compact <http://www.compact.org/>

Center for Democracy and Citizenship Website: www.publicwork.org

Civic Practices Network: www.cpn.org

Gamaliel Foundation: <http://www.gamaliel.org.default.htm>

Everyday democracy (Study Circle Resource Center):

<http://democracyspace.typepad.com/democracyspaceorg>

Industrial Areas Foundation: <http://my.voyager.net/ttresser/iaf1/htm>

Jane Addams School for Democracy: <http://www.publicwork.org/jas/>

Peter Levine blog on civic engagement: <http://www.peterlevine.ws/mt/>

Project for Public Spaces (on revitalizing public spaces): www.pps.org

Public Achievement: www.publicachievement.org (US web site)

www.publicachievement.com (Northern Ireland web site)

www.paunite.org