Course Description
This course examines methods of organizing people for social and political action on their own behalf or on behalf of others. Students will analyze methods of bringing people together for collective action, building organizational capacity, and generating power in the community. The course includes the study of skills in analyzing power structures, formulating action strategies, using conflict and persuasive tactics, challenging oppressive structures, conducting community campaigns, using political advocacy as a form of mobilization, and understanding contemporary social issues as they affect oppressed and disadvantaged communities. Special emphasis will be placed on organizing communities of color, women, LGBT populations, and other underrepresented groups in U.S. society.

Course Content
In this course students will learn that organizing for social and political action aims to create change by building powerful organizations at the community and societal level. This course takes the perspective that organizing can win improvements in people’s lives, make people aware of their own power, alter the relations of power in the community, and create a more socially just society.

The history of organizing for social and political action and its underlying theoretical assumptions about power, conflict, and change will be covered. This course will also examine the sociopolitical and political-economic arenas in which organizing operates; the roles and responsibilities of practitioners, several major strategies and tactics of organizing; forces that facilitate or limit organizing; ethical and value dilemmas of organizing; and lessons learned from research on social and political action and change. In addition, different schools of organizing thought and their approaches to the formulation of goals, issues, constituencies, targets, and tactics will be compared.

The course will also analyze strategies and tactics that employ conflict as a vehicle for generating power and creating change. Students will assess theories of conflict and power and ways of analyzing power structures at the community and societal level.

Political advocacy will be examined as an empowering process of strengthening solidarity and challenging oppressive structures, systems, and institutions. In contrast to viewing advocacy as a narrow approach to representing group interests in legislatures and established institutions, this course will consider advocacy as an empowering process by
which traditionally excluded people advocates for themselves in ways which build organizations and develop communities.

**Course Objectives**
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand and analyze the changing context of social and political action;
2. Understand contemporary social and political issues and their relationship to social and political action strategies and tactics;
3. Understand and apply social and political dynamics as they relate to issues of power, privilege, social justice, and resource distribution;
4. Analyze alternative models, strategies, tactics, and modes of social and political action directed towards these goals;
5. Demonstrate skills in community assessment, leadership and organizational development, planning and conducting campaigns, and evaluating their results;
6. Formulate strategies to engage constituencies in social and political action;
7. Identify and incorporate attention to issues related to race, gender, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, and other dimensions which are associated with privilege, discrimination, domination, and oppression;
8. Identify and analyze value and ethical dilemmas that arise in the course of organizing for social and political action;
9. Contribute to developing a climate in the classroom in which everyone can (a) experiment with new skills; (b) explore their own multicultural competence and the implications of one’s own background for developing and implementing social and political action strategies; (c) consult with each other on action projects and assignments; and (d) generate plans and strategies for future learning and development.

**Course Design**
The format of the course will include instructor lecture/class discussion, analysis of assigned readings, class exercises and simulations, and external individual and group activities. Speakers and videos will be used to augment other course materials.

**Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes**

*Multiculturalism and Diversity:* The course will focus on the issues involved in working for social change in a multicultural society and in engaging in social and political action in and with multicultural communities. It will also address the problems and potential of engaging in successful social and political action with diverse populations. Case examples of social and political action within multicultural communities will be used to illustrate strategic and tactical issues.

*Social Justice and Social Change:* An underlying assumption of the course is that the goals of social and political action are to promote social justice and produce positive social change. The course will explore the different meanings of social justice and social change, and their implications for the development of strategies and tactics of social and political action. Historical and contemporary illustrations will be used to analyze these concepts.
**Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation:** Although the course will focus on change at the macro level of intervention, it assumes that the creation of socially just and responsive policies and organizations through social and political action is a pre-condition for the development of effective programs that emphasize prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. In fact, the underlying principles of social and political action complement rather than contradict the objectives of promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation in social service programs.

**Behavioral and Social Science Research:** The course includes the analysis of contemporary and historical research on the application of theoretical models of social action and social change. Case examples of social and political action efforts will be evaluated in terms of the validity of their theoretical premises and their effectiveness in achieving stated ends. Issues for further research will also be identified.

**Relationship of the Course to Social Work Values and Ethics**
The NASW *Code of Ethics* (revised 1996) establishes an ethical imperative for social workers to engage in social and political action on behalf of social justice and in support of the needs of diverse and disadvantaged populations. Since its inception, the pursuit of social justice through a variety of social and political strategies has been a basic feature of social work in the United States. This course reflects that heritage and applies those values in the analysis of contemporary and future social and political action efforts. It also discusses some of the ethical issues involved in pursuing social change through social and political action.

**Relationship of the Course to PODS**

**Privilege:** A critical, if often unacknowledged manifestation of social injustice is the difference in the degree of privilege experienced among individuals and groups in the U.S. on the basis of race, class, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, and physical ability in their efforts to create social and political change. One goal of social and political action is to eliminate or reduce these disparities – through both ends and means. This course will explore how privilege, or its absence, influences the nature of social change at the community and societal levels and what can be done to overcome it.

**Oppression:** Social workers have an ethical obligation to work to overcome oppression in society in all its forms. This course will examine how social and political action can contribute to this goal by altering societal institutions, structures, policies, and processes, and by empowering oppressed communities to work on their own behalf.

**Diversity:** The course will focus on the issues involved in working for social change in a multicultural society and in engaging in social and political action in and with multicultural communities. It will also address the problems and potential of engaging in successful social and political action with diverse populations. Case examples of social and political action within multicultural communities will be used to illustrate strategic and tactical issues.
Social Justice: An underlying assumption of the course is that the goals of social and political action are to promote social justice and produce positive social and political change. The course will explore the different meanings of social justice and social change, and their implications for the development of strategies and tactics of social and political action. Historical and contemporary illustrations will be used to analyze these concepts.

Required Texts
- A course pack of required readings, available for purchase at Excel Coursepacks, 1117 South University Avenue.
- Periodic handouts and web-based reading assignments.
- A daily newspaper (print or online), such as the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, or the Detroit Free Press.

Course Assignments
1. **Analytic Paper:** This 5-8 page paper focuses on the relationship between the nature of an issue, the action goals, and the change approach selected. It assesses the suitability of different approaches to social or political action in addressing a specific issue that affects a particular multicultural community or oppressed/disadvantaged population. It also includes a discussion of the readiness of an organization or community for the initiation of a social or political action project. The paper briefly describes the organization or community in terms of the need and opportunities for social action organizing. Finally, it discusses what strategies and tactics are most appropriate for initiating and sustaining a social or political action effort in this context. Further details will be discussed in class. **Due: February 9 (20%)**

2. **Advocacy Work** This assignment has three parts. Details will be discussed in class.
   - **Part 1** is a 2-3 page (single-spaced) intra-agency memorandum outlining a proposed advocacy campaign focusing on an issue of concern to an organization and the clients or constituents with which it works (10%). **Due: February 23**
   - **Part 2** is 2-3 pages (double-spaced) of written testimony regarding legislation or budget initiatives that affect this issue, to be presented before a legislative body at the local, state, or federal level (10%). **Due: March 16**
   - **Part 3** is an op-ed piece (of 750-1000 words) on the issue suitable for publication in a newspaper or on-line journal. (10%). **Due: March 30**

3. **Semester Assignment** There are **two options** to complete this assignment.
   - **Option 1 – Group Project.** This option requires students to develop an action project focused on a social or political issue in the community or to become involved – as a group – in an ongoing social or political action effort. At the end of the semester, each group will present its experience to the class and analyze it in a group paper. Groups will be formed and topics selected by January 20. Further details will be discussed in class. **Presentation (TBA): 20%. Paper due: April 13 (20%).**

   - **Option 2 – Individual Term Paper.** Students who select this option will write a journal length paper (15-20 pages, double-spaced) on a topic of their choosing related
4. **Class Participation:** Students are expected to come prepared for class and to engage actively and critically with the course readings and the material presented in class. Students will be evaluated on the quality, not the quantity, of participation (10%).

**Course Outline and Readings**

**Week 1/January 5**

*Introduction and Course Overview*

*The Context of Social and Political Action*

**Reading (in class):**


Lorde, Audre (n.d.). “There is no hierarchy of oppression,” (class handout).


**Week 2/January 12**

*Models of Social and Political Action*

**Reading:**


**Week 3/January 19**

*Identifying Issues in Social and Political Action*

**Reading:**


** Group Topics Selected **

** TV Assignment:** Watch President Bush’s “State of the Union” Address

**Week 4/January 26**

**Direct Action Organizing: Goals & Strategies**

**Reading:**


** TV Assignment:** Watch Governor Granholm’s “State of the State” Address

**Week 5/February 2**

**Issues of Power & Privilege in Direct Action Organizing**

**Reading:**


**Week 6/February 9** Tactics in Direct Action Organizing

**Reading:**


**Assignment #1 Due**

**Week 7/February 16** Legislative Advocacy

**Reading:**


Week 8/February 23 Legal Advocacy

Reading:


** Assignment #2/Part 1 Due **

Week 9/March 2 Semester Break – No Class

Week 10/March 9 Media Advocacy

Reading:


**Week 11/March 16 Coalition Work**

**Reading:**


** Assignment #2/Part 2 Due **

** Week 12/March 23 **

** Electoral Politics I: Ballot Initiatives **

** Reading: **


** Week 13/March 30 **

** Electoral Politics II: Working with Political Parties **

** Reading: **


** Assignment #2/Part 3 Due **
Week 14/April 6  Social Movements

Reading:


Week 15/April 13  The Personal Side of Social & Political Action

Reading:


** Assignment #3 Due **
Recommended Readings (many are on reserve in the library)


**Selected Internet Websites**
(to be augmented throughout the semester)

1. **General Statistical Data**
U.S. Census Bureau: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)


Statistical Abstract of the U.S.: [www.census.gov/stat_abstract](http://www.census.gov/stat_abstract)


Citynet: [www.city.net](http://www.city.net)

Research Engines for the Social Sciences: [www.carleton.ca/~cmckie/research.html](http://www.carleton.ca/~cmckie/research.html)

General Social Survey: [www.icpsr.umich.edu/gss/](http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/gss/)

Welfare Information Network: [www.welfareinfo.org](http://www.welfareinfo.org)

2. **Policy Analysis and Evaluation**
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation Research Department: [www.aspe.os.dhhs.gov/hsp/cyp/cyplist.htm](http://www.aspe.os.dhhs.gov/hsp/cyp/cyplist.htm)

National Association for Welfare Research and Statistics: [www.ucdata.berkeley.edu/NAWRS/index.html](http://www.ucdata.berkeley.edu/NAWRS/index.html)

Urban Institute: [www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org)

American Public Welfare Association: [www.apwa.org](http://www.apwa.org)

Economic Policy Institute: [www.epinet.org](http://www.epinet.org)

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: [www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org)

Center for Law and Social Policy: [www.epn.org/clasp.html](http://www.epn.org/clasp.html)

Families USA: [www.epn.org/families](http://www.epn.org/families)
Cato Institute: www.cato.org

Empower America: www.empower.org

Institute for Research on Poverty: www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp

Brookings Institution: www.brook.edu

National Conference of State Legislators: www.ncsl.org

Agency for Health Care Policy and Research: www.ahecpr.gov

National Center for Children in Poverty: www.cait.cpmc.columbia.edu/dept/nccp

National Child Care Information Center: www.ericpos.ed.uiuc.edu/nccic/nccichome.html

Dept of HHS Central Database: www.os.dhhs.gov

Progressive Policy Institute: www.dlcppi.org

Center for Child and Youth Policy, University of California-Berkeley: www.csr.berkeley.edu/CCYP

3. Legislative Information and Updates
American Public Welfare Association: www.apwa.org

National Association of Counties: www.naco.org

National Association of State Budget Officers: www.nasbo.org

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: www.cbpp.org

Center for Law and Social Policy: www.epn.org/clasp.html

National Conference of State Legislatures: www.ncsl.org

Children’s Defense Fund: www.childrensdefense.org

Child Welfare League of America: www.cwla.org

The Library of Congress (Thomas): www.thomas.loc.gov

Department of HHS: www.os.dhhs.gov

Administration for Children and Families: www.acf.dhhs.gov
4. **Organizations of State and Local Officials**
National League of Cities: [www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org)

U.S. Conference of Mayors: [www.usmayors.org/home.html](http://www.usmayors.org/home.html)

American Public Welfare Association: [www.apwa.org](http://www.apwa.org)

Council of State Governments: [www.csg.org](http://www.csg.org)

National Association of Counties: [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org)

National Conference of State Legislatures: [www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org)

5. **National Research and Policy Organizations**
Cato Institute: [www.cato.org](http://www.cato.org)

Institute for Research on Poverty: [www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp](http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp)

Joint Center for Poverty Research: [www.spc.uchicago.edu/PovertyCenter/](http://www.spc.uchicago.edu/PovertyCenter/)

Brookings Institutes: [www.brook.edu](http://www.brook.edu)

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation: [www.mdrc.org](http://www.mdrc.org)

Urban Institute: [www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org)

Hudson Institute: [www.hudson.org/hudson](http://www.hudson.org/hudson)

Heritage Foundation: [www.heritage.org](http://www.heritage.org)

American Enterprise Institute: [www.aei.org](http://www.aei.org)

Alliance for Justice: [www.afj.org/fai/nonprof.html](http://www.afj.org/fai/nonprof.html)


6. **Selected Federal Agencies**

Department of Health and Human Services: [www.os.dhhs.gov](http://www.os.dhhs.gov)

Administration for Children and Families: [www.acf.dhhs.gov](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov)

Agency for Health Care Policy and Research: [www.ahcpr.gov](http://www.ahcpr.gov)
National Child Care Information Center: www.ericps.ed.uiuc.edu/nccichome.html

Department of Labor: www.dol.gov

US Department of Labor Employment & Training Administration: www.doleta.gov

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning & Evaluation: www.aspe.os.dhhs.gov

Department of HHS Database: www.os.dhhs.gov

General Accounting Office: www.gao.gov

Administration for Children and Families Fact Sheet: www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/opa/facts

Centers for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov

Department of Justice: www.usdoj.gov

Department of Housing & Urban Development: www.hud.gov

HUD Library Page: www.hud.gov/toolkit.html

HUD Research Site: www.huduser.org

Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community Program: www.ezec.gov

7. Newspapers

8. Generic Search Sites
Yahoo: www.yahoo.com

Altavista: www.altavista.digital.com

Google: www.google.com

Northern Light: www.nlsearch.com

9. Social Policy and Social Services Networks
Linking the Human Services Community Online: www.handsnet.org

Electronic Policy Network: www.epn.org

The Policy Community On-Line: www.policy.com
Townhall: [www.townhall.com](http://www.townhall.com)

Contacting the Congress: [www.visi.com/juan/congress](http://www.visi.com/juan/congress)

Action without Borders (volunteering): [www.ideal.org](http://www.ideal.org)

List of Nonprofits: [www.nonprofits.org](http://www.nonprofits.org)

Children, Youth, and Family Consortium: [www.cyfc.umn.edu](http://www.cyfc.umn.edu)

AIDS Clearinghouse: [www.cdcnac.org](http://www.cdcnac.org)

Social Work Access Network (SWAN): [www.csd.sc.edu/swan](http://www.csd.sc.edu/swan)

Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Information: [www.health.org](http://www.health.org)

Child Prevention Network: [www.child.cornell.edu](http://www.child.cornell.edu)

Violence and Abuse Clearinghouse: [www.umn.edu/mincava](http://www.umn.edu/mincava)

World Wide Web Resources for Social Workers: [www.nyu.edu/socialwork/wwwrsw](http://www.nyu.edu/socialwork/wwwrsw)

National Association of Social Workers: [www.naswdc.org](http://www.naswdc.org)

Council on Social Work Education: [www.cswe.org](http://www.cswe.org)

League of Women Voters: [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

Michigan League of Women Voters: [www.mi.lwv.org](http://www.mi.lwv.org)

Research Engine for the Social Sciences: [www.carleton.ca/~cmckie/research.html](http://www.carleton.ca/~cmckie/research.html)

PRAXIS: [www.ssw.upenn.edu/oth.html](http://www.ssw.upenn.edu/oth.html)

Influencing State Policy (based at Virginia Commonwealth University): [www.statepolicy.org/](http://www.statepolicy.org/)

Center for Child and Youth Policy, University of California-Berkeley: [www.cssr.berkeley.edu/CCYP](http://www.cssr.berkeley.edu/CCYP)

**10. Community Network Resources**

From the UM School of Information & Library Sciences: [www.sils.umich.edu/Community/Community.html](http://www.sils.umich.edu/Community/Community.html)

From the WWW Virtual Library: [www.rmsd.com/comnet/wwwvl_comnet.html](http://www.rmsd.com/comnet/wwwvl_comnet.html)

Freenets & Community Networks from Peter Scott: www.duke.usask.ca/~scottp/free.html


11. Social Security and Elderly Information Sites
Social Security Administration: www.ssa.gov

National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare: www.spry.org/nc.html

Benefits: www.benefitscheckup.org

National Council of Senior Citizens: www.ncsinc.org

12. Political Parties
Democratic Party: www.democrats.org/index.html

Republican Party: www.rnc.org

Green Party: www.greens.org

Libertarian Party: www.lp.org

Natural Law Party: www.natural-law.org

Socialist Party: www.sp-usa.org

Democratic Socialist Party: www.dusa.org/dsa.html

Social Democrats: www.idsonline.org/sdus

Reform Party: www.reformparty.org

Communist Party: www.hartford-hwp.com/cp-usa/

13. General Voting Relating Sites
Project Vote Smart: www.vote-smart.org

E-The People: www.e-thepeople.com

Democracy Net: www.dnet.org

Web, White & Blue 2004: www.webwhiteblue.org
League of Women Voters: www.lwv.org
Rock the Vote: www.rockthevote.org

14. Other Health Issues
Initiative to Eliminate Racial & Ethnic Disparities in Health: www.raceandhealth.hhs.gov

15. Criminal Justice
FBI Crime Reports: www.fbi.gov/ucrpress.htm

16. Political Commentary
TomPaine.Com: www.tompaine.com
The Progressive: www.progressive.org
Eat the State: www.earthstate.org
Grassroots.com: www.grassroots.com
The Nation: www.thenation.com
Gallup Poll: www.gallup.com

17. Reproductive Rights
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of Michigan: www.miplannedparenthood.org
Planned Parenthood Federation of America: www.plannedparenthood.org
The Alan Guttmacher Institute: www.agi-usa.org

18. Legal Cases
Jenkins: www.jenkinslaw.org

19. Comprehensive Sites
How to Effectively Locate Federal Government Information: www.library.ucsb.edu/universe/dedecker.html
FedWorld: www.fedworld.gov
FedStats: www.fedstats.gov
U.S. Census Bureau: www.venus.census.gov/cdrom/lookup

20. Regulations
National Archives and Records Administration: www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/cfr-table-search.html

National Center for Children in Poverty:
www.cpmcenet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/roleCDC.html

21. State of Michigan Sites
State of Michigan: www.michigan.gov/

Michigan House of Representatives: www.house.state.mi.us/

Michigan Senate: www.senate.state.mi.us/

Michigan Legislature: www.michiganlegislature.org/

Michigan Legislative Council: www.milegislativecouncil.org/

Library of Michigan: www.libofmich.lib.mi.us/

22. General U.S. Government Websites

The White House: www.whitehouse.gov/

U.S. Senate: www.senate.gov

U.S. House of Representatives: www.house.gov/

Library of Congress: www.loc.gov/