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 different approaches to 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 under-represented 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 thought about organizing 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 groups advocate 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 role of 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 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 PODS (Privilege-Oppression-Diversity-Social Justice)**

**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 progressive 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.
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 the emergence of the social work profession in the U.S., the pursuit of social justice through a variety of social and political strategies has been one of its fundamental tenets. This course reflects that heritage and applies those values in the analysis of contemporary social and political action efforts. It also discusses some of the ethical issues involved in pursuing social justice through social and political action.

Required Texts (Available for purchase at Ulrich’s Bookstore)

- *A course pack of required readings*. Available for purchase at Excel Test Preparation, 1117 South University Avenue.
- Periodic handouts and web-based reading assignments.
- It is highly recommended that students read a daily newspaper (print or online), such as the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, or the *Detroit Free Press*.

Course Assignments (Further details will be discussed in class)

1. **Analytic Paper (20%)**: This 5-8 page paper (double-spaced, with a 12-point font) focuses on the relationship between the framing of an issue, the specific social/political action goal desired, and the change approach(es) selected. The paper should assess the suitability of different approaches to effect change regarding a specific issue that affects a particular multicultural community or oppressed/disadvantaged population. It should also include a discussion of the readiness of an organization or community for the initiation of the proposed social or political action. Finally, it should discuss what strategies and tactics are most appropriate for initiating and sustaining a social or political action effort in this context. **Due: October 13.**

2. **Creating a Social/Political Action Plan (30%)**: This assignment has three parts.
   - **Part 1** is a 2-3 page intra-organizational memorandum (single-spaced, double-spaced between paragraphs) outlining a proposed campaign to address an issue of concern to the clients or constituents with which it works. **Due: October 27.**
   - **Part 2** is the development of a proposed media strategy to generate awareness of and support for the issue identified in Part 1. This should be in the form of a press release of ~500-750 words from the organization. **Due: November 10.**
   - **Part 3** is an op-ed piece (of 750-1000 words) on the above issue suitable for publication in a newspaper or on-line journal. **Due: November 23.**

3. **Social/Political Action Project.** There are two options to complete this assignment. **Option A – Group Project/Paper (40%).** This option requires students in groups of 3-5 to develop an action project focused on a social or political issue in the
community or to become involved – as a group – in an existing 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 September 15. **Presentations: TBA. Paper Due: December 8.**

**Option B – Individual Project/Term Paper (40%).** Students who select this option will write a journal length paper with appropriate citations and sources, based on their analysis of a social or political project in which they were involved or which they researched during the semester (15-20 pages). Possible topics include issues in: - Electoral politics - Advocacy - Coalition building/maintenance - The ethics of social and political action - Social movement organizing

**Paper Due: December 8**

4. **Class Participation (10%):** Students are expected to come prepared for class and to engage actively and critically with the course readings and the materials presented in class. Students will be evaluated on the quality, not the quantity, of participation.

**Course Outline and Readings**

**Week 1/September 8**

**Introduction & Course Overview**

**The Context of Social and Political Action**

**Readings (To be distributed and read in class):**


**Video:** “Defeat of a Dictator”

**Week 2/September 15**

**Models of Social and Political Action**

**Readings:**


**Video:** “Democratic Promise”

**Week 3/September 22  Direct Action Organizing: Identifying Issues**

**Readings:**


**Video:** “The Ravendale Project”

** **Group Topics Selected**

**Week 4/September 29  Developing Goals & Strategies**

**Readings:**


**Video:** “A Force More Powerful: South Africa”

**Week 5/October 6 Building & Sustaining Organizations Issues of Power and Privilege**

**Readings:**


• Mondros, J. and Wilson, S. (1994). Social action organizations and power, in *Organizing for power and empowerment* (pp. 1-10), New York: Columbia University Press.


**Video:** “Poletown Lives”

**Week 6/October 13 Developing Effective Tactics**

**Readings:**


Video: “Las Madres: Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo”

** Assignment #1 Due **

Week 7/October 20 Ethical Issues in Social & Political Action

Readings:


Week 8/October 27 Coalition Work

Readings:


**Video:** “Reflections, Resistance, (Re)Solutions”

**Assignment #2/Part 1 Due**

**Week 9/November 3 Using the Media Effectively**

**Readings:**


**Video:** “Accessing the Media”
Week 10/November 10  Advocacy & Social/Political Action

Readings:


Videos: “Stand Up, Speak Out”/ “Advocating for the Invisible”

** Assignment #2/Part 2 Due **

Week 11/November 17  Working with Political Parties & Social Movements

Readings:


**Video:** “Social Work Advocacy: State Budget”

** Note: Assignment #2/Part 3 Due by November 23 **

Week 12/November 24  
Thanksgiving Holiday: No Class

Week 13/December 1  
**Ballot Initiatives**

**Readings:**


**Video:** “Ballot Measure 9”

Week 14/December 8  
**Conclusion: Personal Issues in Social & Political Action**

**Readings:**


**Video:** “Sustainable Activism”

** Assignment #3 Due **
Additional Recommended Readings on Social & Political Action
(to be augmented during the semester)


### 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](http://www.cato.org)
- Empower America: [www.empower.org](http://www.empower.org)
- Institute for Research on Poverty: [www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp](http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp)
- Brookings Institution: [www.brook.edu](http://www.brook.edu)
- National Conference of State Legislators: [www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org)
- Agency for Health Care Policy and Research: [www.ahcpr.gov](http://www.ahcpr.gov)
- National Center for Children in Poverty: [www.cait.cpmc.columbia.edu/dept/nccp](http://www.cait.cpmc.columbia.edu/dept/nccp)
- National Child Care Information Center: [www.ericpos.ed.uiuc.edu/nccic/nccichome.html](http://www.ericpos.ed.uiuc.edu/nccic/nccichome.html)
- Dept of HHS Central Database: [www.os.dhhs.gov](http://www.os.dhhs.gov)
- Progressive Policy Institute: [www.dlcppi.org](http://www.dlcppi.org)
- Center for Child and Youth Policy, University of California-Berkeley: [www.csr.berkeley.edu/CCYP](http://www.csr.berkeley.edu/CCYP)

3. **Legislative Information and Updates**

- American Public Welfare Association: [www.apwa.org](http://www.apwa.org)
- National Association of Counties: [www.naco.org](http://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

U.S. Conference of Mayors: www.usmayors.org/home.html

American Public Welfare Association: www.apwa.org

Council of State Governments: www.csg.org

National Association of Counties: www.naco.org

National Conference of State Legislatures: www.ncsl.org

5. **National Research and Policy Organizations**

Cato Institute: www.cato.org

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

Joint Center for Poverty Research: www/spc.uchicago.edu/PovertyCenter/

Brookings Institutes: www.brook.edu

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation: www.mdrc.org

Urban Institute: www.urban.org

Hudson Institute: www.hudson.org/hudson
Heritage Foundation: www.heritage.org
American Enterprise Institute: www.aei.org
Alliance for Justice: www.afj.org/fai/nonprof.html
National Academy of Sciences: www.nas.edu/news.nsf

6. Selected Federal Agencies
Department of Health and Human Services: www.os.dhhs.gov
Administration for Children and Families: www.acf.dhhs.gov
Agency for Health Care Policy and Research: 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/opafacts
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

Contacting the Congress: www.visi.com/juan/congress

Action without Borders (volunteering): www.idealist.org

List of Nonprofits: www.nonprofits.org

Children, Youth, and Family Consortium: www.cyfc.umn.edu

AIDS Clearinghouse: www.cdcnac.org


Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Information: www.health.org

Child Prevention Network: www.child.cornell.edu

Violence and Abuse Clearinghouse: www.umn.edu/mincava

World Wide Web Resources for Social Workers: www.nyu.edu/socialwork/wwwrsw

National Association of Social Workers: www.naswdc.org

Council on Social Work Education: www.cswe.org

League of Women Voters: www.lwv.org
Michigan League of Women Voters: www.mi.lwv.org

Research Engine for the Social Sciences: www.carleton.ca/~cmckie/research.html

PRAXIS: www.ssw.upenn.edu/oth.html

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

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

10. Community Network Resources
From the UM School of Information & Library Sciences: www.sils.umich.edu/Community/Community.html

From the WWW Virtual Library: 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.dsausa.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.cpmcnet.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.milegislativencouncil.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/