

Organizing: People, Power and Social Change
RC SSci 461 / Soc 489 (Seminar) &
Soc 488 (Study Off-Campus)
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Many social science courses help you to understand the underlying causes of social injustices that cause enormous suffering in our societies. Some also consider the kinds of policies that would reduce, if not eliminate, these injustices, implying that this suffering is not inevitable or necessary. But how do we turn the potential for a better world into reality, given the powerful forces that defend the *status quo*? The answer, often, is organizing a lot of people into organizations that are, in turn, part of a broader social movement.

This course introduces you to the theory and practice of organizing for social justice. Topics covered include: the nature of organizing; the role of the organizer; motivating collective action through appeals to narratives, values and interests; resources and power; leadership development; building community capacity; strategy and tactics; campaigns; organizational structure and governance. Course readings provide theoretical, historical, and practical frameworks for developing knowledge and skills in these domains, drawing on scholarship in history, political science, sociology, organizational studies, and social, developmental and cognitive psychology.

Academic analysis is not enough, however. Organizing is a practice that must be, to a significant degree, be learned by doing. Each student will intern for 10 hours a week with a SE Michigan non-profit organization that is using organizing as a tool for promoting social change. *A list of the community organizations we'll be working with is on the reverse side of this page.*

Experience – just doing it -- is not enough either, though. To learn the craft of organizing, you need to engage in sustained, critical reflection on what you are seeing, feeling and doing in your internship. Weekly journals, course assignments and classroom discussions and activities are designed to help you practical lessons for future civic engagement from current experience.

You will not be evaluated on the success or failure of your organizing projects. Rather, the focus is on how well you understand the concepts, your ability to apply them in discussions of the organizing work, and your commitment to the work at site. The course is worth four credits: three of those credits are graded; the fourth credit (which corresponds to the 10 hours per week in the field) is credit/no credit. Students enrolling in the 3-credit graded class (either RC SSci 461 or Soc 489) will also register in the 1-credit course (Soc 488). A “lab” fee of \$100 may be assessed with tuition, to cover the cost of transportation to organizing sites, depending on the Center for Engaged Academic Learning’s transportation budget. The seminar will meet on a T/TH 4-5:30pm schedule in East Quad 1505.

To register, contact the course instructor at ian@umich.edu, get a copy of the syllabus, and read it carefully. Then go to http://umichlsa.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_4YnGmJa8OeyoJPD and fill in the short on-line application form. I’ll set up an interview with you and grant an override if our conversation indicates that you would be a good fit for the course. The course is capped at 18.

Community Organization Partners for Fall 2015

The course will probably have internship opportunities at seven community organizations this Fall. The precise nature of the organizing work you will be doing, along with the schedules for this work, will be determined this summer. However you may wish to check out each organization's web site to get an idea of the work they do.

- 1. Washtenaw Regional Organizing Coalition (WeROC)**
<https://www.facebook.com/werocMI>
- 2. Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength (MOSES)**
<http://mosesmi.org/>
- 3. Washtenaw Community Action Team (WCAT)**
<http://washtenawcat.org/>
- 4. Huron Valley Central Labor Council (HVCLC)**
<http://hvclc.org/>
- 5. Detroit Action Commonwealth (DAC)**
<http://www.detroitaction.org/>
- 6. Southeast Michigan Jobs with Justice (JwJ)**
<http://semjwj.org/index.php>
- 7. Michigan United**
<http://www.miunited.org/>