SYLLABUS
SC 357 SOCIAL CHANGE IN ACTION
Spring 2010
Instructor: Betsy Leondar-Wright
Office hours – Tuesday 11-11:50 in McGuinn 410B; Thursday 1:15-2 in the classroom

Small groups of activists have played crucial roles in a wide range of social movements (for leftwing, rightwing, and other political goals) by waging brief, local, single-issue campaigns. Before movements have begun, mini-campaigns have launched unknown issues onto the public agenda. In early stages of movements, such campaigns have drawn in new activists and made members of the public feel compelled to take sides. And at the height of successful movements, they have extended the scope to new geographic areas and new constituencies and expanded the movements’ victories.

In this course, students will design and carry out a single-issue campaign. The course will both give students real-world experience in activist skills and ask them to think critically about social change methodologies. Cases studies of current and historical campaigns will provide strategic lessons that can be applied to the course campaign, to understanding movements in the news, and to making any future activist involvement more effective.

BOOKS (for sale in bookstore and on reserve):

Other course readings are posted on library course reserve.

SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS

Tuesday January 19 – Overview of course; the power of student activism

Thursday January 21 – The context of mini-campaigns in social movements
    Reading before this class:
    - Moyer, Bill, “Movement Action Plan,” skipping case study sections (posted on online course reserves)

Tuesday January 26 – Running the core group with participatory democracy
    Workshop: Meeting facilitation & consensus decision-making
    Campaign meeting: Decide on two slots/week for meetings; brainstorm possible issues
    Reading before this class:
    - “The No Magic Method of Meeting Facilitation,”
      http://www.reclaiming.org/resources/consensus/Blakey.html
    - Bobo Chapter 12
    - Si Kahn, chapters 8 & 9 (posted on course reserves)

Thursday January 28 - Evaluating possible social problems for the campaign
    What social problem do you care about enough to make sacrifices for?
    Workshop: Persuasive communication I
    Campaign meeting: Set ground rules for group; Decide finalist issues & how to research
Tuesday February 2 - Deciding on the social problem to be addressed by the campaign
Campaign meeting: **DEADLINE #1:** Decision on broad problem
Reading before this class:
- Shaw, pp. 1-26

Thursday February 4 – Beginning to strategize; What’s in a Campaign Action Plan?
Campaign meeting: Planning to research issue, existing & past campaigns, possible sub-issues & targets- who will gather what? Timeline for 2/18 & 3/15 deadlines
Workshop: Strategy tools
Reading before this class:
- Bobo, Chapters 3, 4 and 22
- Si Kahn, Chapters 1 and 2

Tuesday February 9 – Researching campaign options
Campaign meeting: Discuss sub-issue and target options
Reading before this class:
- Bobo, chapter 20
- Shaw, chapter 2

Thursday February 11 – Tactical choices; Creating public drama
Workshop: Direct action skills; expanding group’s tactical repertoire
Reading before this class:
- Shaw, chapter 7
- Bobo, chapters 5 and 7

Tuesday February 16 – Framing the message with a collective action frame
Workshop: Framing skills
Reading before this class:
- Cutting & Themba-Nixon, Chapters 3-5, pp. 23-39; 54-58; 109-111

Thursday February 18 – Using the web & print materials
Campaign meeting: **DEADLINE #2:** All reports on research pooled (current & past campaigns; possible targets; possible sub-issues / cases)
Reading before this class: • Research materials to be reported at meeting

Tuesday February 23 – Media strategy
Workshop: How to get progressive messages into the mainstream media
Reading before this class:
- Cutting & Themba-Nixon, Chapter 6 “In the News” pp. 40-47
- Bobo Chapter 14
- Shaw Chapter 5

Thursday February 25 – Working in coalition
Campaign meeting: Discuss possible coalition partners and other allies
Reading before this class:
  • Bobo, Chapters 9, 17, 18, 19 (pp.100-109; pp. 192-231)

** FRIDAY FEBRUARY 26 - DEADLINE FOR CASE STUDY PAPER
** Spring Break – No class on March 2 or 4 **

Tuesday March 9 – Preparing to write Campaign Plan
  Campaign meeting: What’s missing? Who will read what? Who will write what? Systems for communication and accountability
  Reading before this class:
  • Shaw, Chapter 3

Thursday March 11 – Persuasive writing & visuals
  Reading before this class:
  • Si Kahn, Chapter 7
  • Materials on campaign issue TBA

** DEADLINE #3: Submit Campaign Action Plan by Monday March 15 at 9 am **

Note: From this point on, the sequence of topics and the readings for individual sessions may be changed depending on the needs of the campaign. Please keep track of changes announced in class.

Tuesday March 16 – Communicating with potential ally groups
  Workshop: Persuasive communication II – Spokes training
  Campaign meeting: Committee formation; planning to contact potential allies
  Reading before this class:
  • Bobo, Chapters 13
  • Cutting & Themba-Nixon, “Tools” Section 3, pp. 165-171

Thursday March 18 – Communicating with targets
  Workshop: Persuasive communication III – Making demands; negotiations
  Campaign meeting: TBA
  Reading before this class:
  • Bobo, Chapter 8

Tuesday March 23 – Recruiting constituent support
  Workshop: Persuasive communication IV – Face to face constituency recruitment
  Reading before this class:
  • Bobo, Chapter 10

Thursday March 25 – Winning media coverage
  Workshop: Pitch calls
  Campaign meeting: TBA
  Reading before this class:
  • Cutting & Themba-Nixon, “Tools” Sections 2 and 4, pp. 145-161; 175-181

Tuesday March 30 – Strategizing during a campaign
  Campaign meeting: TBA
Reading before this class:
  • Si Kahn, Chapters 12 and 13

** DEADLINE #4: Contact should have been made with target, all potential ally groups, potential constituency/ies, and some members of the public by March 31.
** Students should turn in Individual Participation Logs by March 31.
** EASTER BREAK – No class on April 1 **

Tuesday April 6 – Dynamics of campaigns
  Reading before this class:
  • Shaw, pp.26-44

Thursday April 8 – Working in groups
  Reading before this class:
  • Bobo Chapter 11

Tuesday April 13 – Responding to set-backs and opposition
  Reading before this class:
  • Si Kahn, chapter 5

Thursday April 15 – Avoiding the perception of failure
  Reading before this class:
  • Cutting & Themba-Nixon, pp. 79-82, “Campaign to Free Moreno and Pacheco”

Tuesday April 20 – Staying the course
  Reading before this class:
  • Si Kahn, Conclusion, pp. 191-195

Thursday April 22 – Thinking on our feet
  Reading before this class:
  • Cutting & Themba-Nixon, pp. 97-101, “Yao Ming vs. Shaquille O’Neal”

Tuesday April 27 - Ingredients in unlikely victories
  Reading before this class:
  • Cutting & Themba-Nixon, pp. 90-93, “Snapshots: Activists in Idaho and Los Angeles”

Thursday April 29 – Thinking long-term
  Reading before this class:
  • Bobo, Chapter 25

Tuesday May 4 – Strategic summing up
  Reading before this class:
  • Si Kahn, Epilogue, pp. 197-202

** DEADLINE #5: Complete all campaign activities by May 5

Thursday May 6 – Drawing lessons from the campaign

  ** May 10 deadline for Individual Participation Logs (for April/May) and Reflection paper.
COURSE EXPECTATIONS

1) COLLECTIVE CAMPAIGN

The class will work together to design and carry out a small-scale social change campaign on an social problem of students’ choice.

This course has a light load for both reading and writing compared with most upper-level courses, but that does not mean that the workload outside of class sessions will be easier. Students are expected to take steps on behalf of the class’s collective campaign every week of February, March and April. From the second half of March throughout April, students should expect to attend at least one meeting or event per week in addition to the two class sessions. Please plan in advance to free that time from other courses’ demands.

A portion of many sessions will be spent as a social movement organization would spend its time together, holding planning meetings (facilitated by students) and doing skills workshops.

Just as in a real campaign, students’ success or failure will be collective. Over a third of the grade will be based on the whole class successfully meeting five deadlines:

- February 2: Pick the broad social problem
- February 18: Pool results of research on current and past campaigns on the chosen issue, possible targets and possible sub-issues
- March 15: Written Campaign Action Plan submitted to instructor
- March 31: Contact made with 1) target; 2) all potential ally groups; 3) members of constituency/ies; 4) the public (via media &/or web)
- May 5: All campaign activities completed

The group grade will be based on timeliness, completeness and strategic savvy (using course concepts) of those five steps, including the skill and creativity shown in the campaign and on how well students work together and collaborate.

Campaign success in terms of real-world positive impact cannot be required, but will be rewarded with extra credit.

Every student is expected to take an active role in planning and implementing the campaign: serving on at least one committee, facilitating at least one meeting, doing at least one extra reading for campaign research and giving at least one verbal report to the class, and attending all extra whole-group meetings and events that the group agrees to schedule.

The students in the class are free to choose the social problem to be addressed by the campaign, the goal, the target and the tactics -- within certain parameters, intended to keep this campaign fairly low-risk. Why low-risk? In a typical campaign waged by voluntary activists, individuals can vote with their feet, declining to participate in a certain tactic or quitting entirely. However, in this situation, once the drop/add period has passed, a student can’t drop the course without penalty; and grades would be affected by lack of participation in campaign activities. Also, the course goal of learning about social movement strategy requires keeping participants’ level of anxiety from spiraling into the panic zone, as it might in a high-risk campaign.
First parameter: The campaign activities won’t knowingly break any laws or put participants at risk of arrest.

Second parameter: The campaign’s target will not be the BC administration or any part of the BC community. The public to be educated and the constituency to be mobilized may include anyone at BC, but not the target decision-maker from whom change is demanded. One reason for this parameter is to encourage students to broaden their viewpoint and to increase their sense of empowerment and influence on public affairs.

2) ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION

The readings are a very important part of the course. Readings are due on the date they are listed. Please come to class ready to discuss them. You may be called on and asked to summarize the main points of a reading whether or not you raise your hand.

Both speaking in class and focused listening will be valued; either too much silence or too much over-participation (interrupting others or dominating) could negatively affect your grade.

If you miss a class session, you are responsible for getting notes from a classmate. More than two unexcused absences will lower your grade by 2 points per absence. A doctor, school administrator, or other certified official must verify an absence in order for it to be excused on the basis of illness, death or hospitalization in the family or other emergency (defined as an unforeseen and unavoidable crisis). Notes from family members will not be accepted. If you have a special circumstance that makes a non-medical excused absence likely (e.g., if you are a single parent with no back-up in case of childcare cancellation; if you have a required trip for an internship), please let me know at the beginning of the semester; don’t wait until you actually miss a class. Arriving more than 10 minutes late counts as an absence.

3) WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

1. Case study paper – due by noon on Friday February 26
   2,000 to 3,000 words excluding citations (8- to 12-page double-spaced)

Each student will choose a current or historical single-issue campaign and analyze it using the strategic frameworks offered by the readings and class sessions to date, critically evaluating the campaign’s impact on the target, on the core group of activists, on the constituency and ally groups, and (if different) on those affected by the social problem.

A sign-up list of possible campaigns and sources on them will be provided. All sources are in the library reserves (mostly books on reserve stacks, a few posted on online course reserves). At least one other rigorous, analytical source must be cited, in addition to any informal sources (such as organizational websites, Wikipedia and other reference materials).

2. Individual Participation Log – due by 9 am on March 31 (for February & March) and May 10 (for April & May)

Students will keep an ongoing log of all activities they do outside of class time towards the success of the campaign. A form will be provided.
3. **Final reflections on the campaign** – due by 9 am on May 10

The reflection paper of at least 6 pages (1500 words) should cast a critical eye on the campaign, using concepts from the readings and class sessions to assess its impact 1) on the student individually and on other students in the course; 2) on the target; 3) on the constituency/ies and ally groups; and 4) on those affected by the social problem. What were the best and worst aspects of this collective endeavor? What would have made the campaign more effective? If the campaign continues, what should happen next?

**COURSE GRADING**

Each student will be individually graded on these components:
- In-class presentations, meeting facilitation, and participation in discussions – 15%
- Participation outside of class time in campaign planning and implementation, as documented on Individual Participation Logs – 20%
- Case study paper – 15%
- Final reflections on the campaign – 15%

All students will get the same group grade on these components of their final grade:
- Written Campaign Action Plan - 15%
- Campaign implementation - 20%

**Grading Scale:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>78-81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>74-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>66-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>62-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>58-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>54-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>50-53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>00-50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity standards are of utmost importance in this course. Guidelines for academic integrity in written work are posted on the BC website at:

http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#integrity

Outright plagiarism of a written assignment will result in failing the course and notification of the dean. Lesser degrees of noncompliance with BC’s policies on academic integrity will result in a lower grade on the assignment in question. It is your responsibility to know the rules of citation. If you have any questions pertaining to the academic integrity guidelines, please talk with the professor.

**Disability accommodation**

Students needing any disability accommodation should inform the professor at the beginning of the semester. For more information, please see http://www.bc.edu/offices/ods/disabilityservices.html or call the Dean for Students with Disabilities at 617-552-3470.