In democratic countries, knowledge of how to combine is the mother of all other forms of knowledge; on its progress depends that of all the others.

De Tocqueville

Mary Hannah Henderson
Office hours: Thursday 9:30-11:30, Allbritton 213
maryhannahhenderson@gmail.com
413-835-1355 (cell)

COURSE SUMMARY

Fulfilling the democratic promise of equity, accountability and effectiveness requires the participation of an "organized" citizenry that can articulate and assert its common interests effectively. Organizing can make a difference in addressing major public challenges that require civic action, especially by those whose voices will not be heard unless they do act. We define leadership as accepting responsibility to enable others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty.

In this course, each student accepts responsibility for organizing constituents to achieve an outcome by the end of the semester. As reflective practitioners, students learn from critical analysis of their leadership of this campaign. We focus on five key practices: turning values into motivated action through narrative; building relationships committed to common purpose; structuring leadership collaboratively; strategizing to turn resources into the power to achieve outcomes; and turning commitments into measurable action enabling learning, accountability, and adaptation.

The pedagogical framework we use was developed originally by Marshall Ganz, a former civil rights, labor, and community organizer, now on the faculty at Harvard University. Other courses based on this framework are offered at a growing number of colleges and universities throughout this country and abroad.

PARTICIPANTS

This course is intended for students interested in learning how to exercise leadership on behalf of social change through collective action. There are no prerequisites. Students with and without “real world” experience find the class equally useful, although in different ways. Because it is a course in practice, like riding a bicycle, it requires trying new things, learning from failure, and adapting practice to new learning. Be prepared to step outside your comfort zone.

It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Practicing Democracy is led this semester by Mary Hannah Henderson. I graduated from Wesleyan in 1995 with high honors in Religion; I also hold an MDiv. from Harvard Divinity School and an MA/PhD in Anthropology from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. I combine research and writing with experiential teaching/curriculum development for students, activists, and educators. My research interests include but are not limited to:
education for democratic citizenship; narrative and leadership; hope and loss, especially but not only in social justice activism; and engaged research methods. I also write novels, play piano and violin, and have a range of hobbies much too long to list. I am married with two children, and I live in Amherst, Massachusetts.

**REQUIREMENTS**

1. Students base class work on a community action project of their choice, rooted in their own values for a minimum of 6 hours per week (example: consider working on your project 2 evenings or one afternoon per week). **An organizing project requires working with a leadership team to mobilize others to achieve a measurable outcome by the end of the semester.** To facilitate project selection, I will meet one-on-one with students during the first week of class. You may continue an existing project or start a new one. It is possible to collaborate with others in the class, as long as unique responsibilities are clearly articulated.

2. To acquaint students with leadership tools which can help them succeed in their projects, we have the option of conducting a "skills session" on January 30, 2016, or of attending one at Harvard University.

3. Weekly class sessions integrate organizing experience and course readings that combine theory, practice, and history. Readings average approximately 90 pages per week over the 13 weeks we meet. An introductory paragraph to each of the week’s readings helps focus attention and prioritize readings. Marshall Ganz’s organizing notes introduce concepts, explain the charts, and offer a framework for discussion. Students are required to attend all sessions, do the readings, and take an active part in discussions.

4. Students will submit reflection papers of 1 to 2 pages each week, beginning the week of 2/4/2016. At the end of each week’s readings, questions are posed to stimulate reflection. You are required to submit 7 of 9 possible reflection papers responding to these questions. The first two (due 2/2 & 2/9) and the last (4/12) are required. You may skip any two of the remaining reflection papers without excuse. Be strategic about this; pace yourself as there are other due dates throughout the semester. Papers will be posted to the course website by 7:00 pm on the Tuesday before class meets on the week they are due, so other students and I may read them before class. I will respond to papers individually via Moodle each week.

5. Each student will prepare a 10-minute presentation for class sometime during the semester. This presentation will include an introduction of the presenter and project, and a discussion of how the project relates to the topic of the week. The presentation should conclude with questions for class discussion. A sign-up sheet for the presentations will be distributed during the third week of class. I will meet with presenters for coaching in the week before each presentation.

6. At the end of the semester each student will submit a 15 page final paper. An outline of this paper will be due 4/21, a draft will be due 5/4, and the final paper will be due Wednesday 5/11. Students are evaluated not on whether their project is a “success,” but on their ability to analyze what happened, using course concepts and readings as well as specific details from their projects to support their arguments. Final grades will be based on seminar participation (40%), weekly reflections (30%), and final paper (30%).

**MATERIALS**

There is one required book for this course, on sale at Broad Street Books and on reserve at Olin library: Bobo, K. A., Kendall, J., & Max, S. (2010). *Organizing for Social Change: Midwest Academy Manual for Activists: Seven Locks Press*. All other readings, websites, and video resources are available via ereserve or on the course Moodle.
INTRODUCTION TO ORGANIZING

The following is the schedule of seminar meetings and reading assignments. The approximate number of pages/week is indicated in italics. Small letters to the right of each reading indicate whether the focus is theoretical (T), practical (P) or historical (H). To find further reading relevant to your specific interests, check out the Lifetime Reading List on the course website.

INTRODUCTION TO ORGANIZING

OVERVIEW OF COURSE (1/21) 0 pages
Welcome! This week we get acquainted, discuss our goals for the course and our strategy for achieving them, and answer questions.

WHAT IS ORGANIZING & HOW WILL WE LEARN IT? (1/28) 150 pages
Today we’ll look deeper at what organizing is and is not, and what that has to do with the practice of democracy. We’ll also get into how we are going to learn it through a pedagogy of “reflective practice.” “What is Organizing” summarizes the conceptual framework that will guide our work. The excerpts from Exodus and De Tocqueville show two of the roots of organizing in the western world: religious and civic traditions. Organizing is about enabling a constituency to assert its voice effectively, not offering services to them as clients or marketing products to them as customers. Making democracy work is a matter more of contention than of consensus and leadership not entrepreneurship, as argued by McKnight. Recent organizing moments – from the Tea Party to Black Lives Matter – provide examples of “Organizing in Action.” Our pedagogy is explained by Kierkegaard, Thich Nhat Hahn, Langer, and Sitkin. Come to class prepared to discuss Ganz’s questions on learning to organize.

WHAT IS ORGANIZING?
2. Exodus 2-6 (H)
3. Tocqueville 1899: Volume II, Part II, Ch. 5 http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/ch2_05.htm (H/T)
4. McKnight 1991: “Services are Bad for People.” Organizing Spring/Summer, 41-44 (T)

ORGANIZING IN ACTION

LEARNING ORGANIZING
2. Langer 2014, Chapter 4: “The Costs of Mindlessness,” pp.43-54 (P)

YOUR ORGANIZING PROJECT: PEOPLE, PROBLEM, POWER, & CAMPAIGNS (2/4) 185 pages

Today, we focus on getting into our projects. Alinsky challenges us to get to the bottom of our reactions to words like interest and power, while Miller challenges us to understand the ways in which our experiences of power shape our understandings and enactments of it. Ganz’s notes discuss the relationship of “power to” and “power over,” and Gaventa urges us to look for power relations below the surface. Thucydides challenges us to think about the relationship between power and right.

We introduce the elements of an organizing campaign in the context of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, a campaign that initiated the modern American civil rights movement. We ask 3 questions: who were the actors, what was the problem, and what was the theory of change? And to put in the context of your projects: Who are my people? What is their problem? How could they turn resources they have into power they need to solve the problem? How could we design a campaign to achieve an outcome within the next 12 weeks? This week you will reflect on and write a “first draft” of your organizing campaign by turning in your Theory of Change Worksheet.

5. Han 2014: “Introduction” (pp. 1-28) (H)

Organizing tools and resources:
- Theory of Change Worksheet

First Reflection Paper Due (Required): Theory of Change Worksheet & Project Proposal
Leadership requires enabling others to respond to challenges to their shared values with purposeful action as opposed to reaction. As Bruner, Davis, and Gergen & Gergen show, public narrative can be a way to access the emotional resources required: mobilizing hope over fear, empathy over alienation, and self-worth over self-doubt. By engaging the “head” and the “heart,” narrative instructs and inspires, teaching us not only how we should act, but moving us to act. It is not public speaking, branding, or image making. As student Jayanti Ravi said, it’s learning how to bring out the “glow” from within, not how to apply a “gloss” from without. The more effectively you can articulate your own sources of value, the better you can make choices about what you want to do and others can make choices about whether to join you. Croft gives us an example and the public narrative worksheet helps us shape our own narratives.


Organizing tools and resources:
- Public Narrative Worksheet
- NOI “Story of Self” Resources: http://neworganizing.com/content/toolbox/story-of-self

Public Narrative Worksheet: Come to class having completed the worksheet & prepared to tell your story (3 minutes).
Second Reflection Paper Due (Required): Your public narrative.

MOBILIZING RELATIONSHIPS TO BUILD COMMUNITY (2/18)

Organizers build relationships among members of a constituency to create commitment to a common purpose. Through relationships we can come to understand our common interests and mobilize the resources to act upon them. The first Gladwell piece shows the power of relational networks in everyday life – with people “like us” and people “not like us” – while Christens addresses the role of relationships in organizing. Rondeau and Simmons describe how organizers do relational work. Wellman, the second Gladwell piece, and Brandzel explore differences in “online” and “offline” relationships. The two video clips describe the role of “house meetings” in the 2007-8 Obama campaign.


9. Reflections on how “one on one” meeting can turn into “house meetings” and what they are from the 2007 Obama primary campaign in South Carolina, organizer Jeremy Bird and local leader Grace Cusack.

Organizing tools and resources:
- 1:1 Worksheet
- Ganz 2015c: Relationship Building Guide
- NOI Relationship Building Resources http://neworganizing.com/content/toolbox/building-relationships

First Student Presentations; bring 1:1 worksheet to class
Third Reflection Paper Due: Building Relationships

CREATING STRUCTURE: YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM (2/25) 85 pages
What is leadership? A position? A person? Or a practice? We argue we can structure the practice of leadership to better enable a constituency to achieve its goals, not only personal goals of whoever is in charge. Exodus shows this question has been asked for a while and poses one structure that avoids “being a dot,” addressing the challenge of earning leadership by letting others earn it. Freeman and King challenge us to examine our assumptions about leadership so we can lead more effectively. The Orpheus Chamber Orchestra Video is a case study of an orchestra with leadership, but no conductor. Nasstrom and Ransby compare relational with charismatic leadership and present us with an important critique of how history remembers leaders.

2. Exodus 18 (H)

Organizing tools and resources:
- Ganz 2015a: Designing Effective Teams.
- NOI Team Building Resources: http://neworganizing.com/content/toolbox/building-teams

Fourth Reflection Paper Due: Structuring Leadership

MANAGING YOUR TEAM/ORGANIZATION (3/3) 80 pages
Creating teams and organizations that continue to respond, change, and adapt requires learning how to manage the dilemmas of unity and diversity, inclusion and exclusion, responsibility and participation, and leadership and
accountability. Smith and Berg identify these dilemmas. Janis points to the danger that “too much” unity can suppress needed dissent. Kahn focuses on the nuts and bolts of effective organization. Bobo provides practical advice on how to run a good meeting, while Maxton addresses the challenge of building organizations across social lines, such as race. Coaching as Leadership Practice offers an alternative to “telling people what to do.”

6. Maxton 2011: “Diversity is Inefficient,” from the New Organizing Institute blog
7. Leading Change Network 2013: Coaching as Leadership Practice

Organizing tools and resources:

Fifth Reflection Paper Due: Managing Teams/Organizations

SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS 3/10 & 3/17

STRATEGY: TURNING RESOURCES INTO POWER (3/24) 80 pages
Strategy is how we turn what we have into what we need to get what we want. It is both analytic and imaginative, figuring out how to use our resources to achieve our goals. We reflect on a “classic” tale of strategy recounted in the Book of Samuel: the story of David and Goliath, a tale that argues resourcefulness can compensate for lack of resources by developing “strategic capacity.” Mintzberg’s view that strategy is a “verb” is drawn from business while Kahn’s view comes from organizing. The NYTimes article explores the use of FB by activists in the Arab world, and the Grist article uses environmental and immigration rights movements to examine the difference between working within existing power relations and strategically shifting the fulcrum of power. Bobo and Sharp offer “how to’s.”

When you designed your project at the beginning of our class you began to strategize. Since then, you have learned a great deal about your people, the change you seek, and your sources of power – so now it’s time to re-strategize! What has worked, what hasn’t, what has changed, what has not? And where do you go from here?

2. Evans 2010: “Strategizing Handout” (T/P)
4. I Samuel 17: 4:49 (H)

Organizing tools and resources:
- The New Tactics in Human Rights Organization makes a very useful website of both online and offline tactical ideas available at https://www.newtactics.org/toolkit/strategy-toolkit
- NOI Strategizing Resources:
  - http://neworganizing.com/content/toolbox/theory-of-change
  - http://neworganizing.com/content/toolbox/tactics-and-timing

Sixth Reflection Paper Due: Crafting strategy

MOBILIZING RESOURCES: ACTION (3/31)

Organizers mobilize and deploy resources to take action based on commitments they secure from others. Some draw most of their resources from a single constituency, while others draw from multiple constituencies. McKenney shows how action requires courage, and can motivate further action, and HoSang discusses the difference between taking action or not. Bobo provides practical advice for a specific kind of action, reminding us of the importance of metrics. In taking action, we shift the parameters of power that shape our worlds, and may find ourselves telling new stories that build on the old ones about who we are, individually and in community, and what we stand for – we see this unfolding in the video on marriage equality.


Organizing Tools:
- NOI Action Resources: http://neworganizing.com/content/toolbox/getting-commitments

Seventh Reflection Paper Due: Taking action

BECOMING A GOOD ORGANIZER

INTEGRATING OUR LEARNING: CASES & PROJECTS (4/7)

This week, we devote class to integration of the five leadership practices, which we'll explore by looking at cases, including your projects. We'll focus on cases that can offer us insight into how the five practices are integrated in an organizing campaign.

3. McAlevey and Ostertag 2012, Chapter 4: "Round One" pp. 110-141 (H)

Eighth Reflection Paper Due: Project Report on progress towards goals, failures, successes, key learning, and challenges for consultation with your classmates and teacher.

BECOMING A GOOD ORGANIZER (4/14)  
90 pages

This week we reflect on organizing as a craft, art, and vocation: why do it, what can make a person good at it, what to do about the rest of our lives, and how we can make sure we continue to grow. Addams articulates how easy it is to get stuck before we begin. Heifetz discusses the challenge of accepting responsibility for leadership. Chavez and Williamson describe how they came to terms with these challenges, and Bobo offers tips on “the long haul.” Payne’s writing points to the importance of community – and of music – in keeping people going for the long haul. Ganz’s questions guide us in reflecting on our own future activism.


Ninth Reflection Paper Due (required): Becoming a Good Organizer

CONCLUSIONS & EVALUATIONS

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? (4/21)  
100 pages

So what does organizing contribute to public life? Reed describes his organizing successes and compels us to think about the role of organizing to support different visions of government, while Fisher suggests some explanations underlying differences in political organizing between the right and left. Etling, Faris, and Palfrey look at the opportunities and challenges of digital organizing. Sassen urges us to look beyond the local to consider the role of organizing and organizers in global politics, while Isquith brings us back to the question of how democracy and capitalism relate. Skocpol suggests future directions for democracy. Your final paper outlines are also due.

1. Reed 1994, Chapter 13: “Miracle at the Grassroots,” pp.189-202 (H)
http://www.salon.com/2015/06/15/democracy_cannot_survive_why_the_neoliberal_revolution_has_freedom_on_the_ropes/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=socialflow (T)


*Final Paper Outline Due on Moodle by midnight*

**CONCLUSION & EVALUATION (4/28)**

Today the focus is on us. We’ll take the time to hear from everyone about what they learned from their participation in the course. What have we learned about ourselves as observers, organizers? What have we learned about organizing, how well did we meet goals we set at the beginning of the semester? Did we meet individual and group goals? How could the course be improved? What’s next for each of us?

**FINAL PAPER DRAFTS DUE: WEDNESDAY 5/4**

Hand in your drafts to Moodle, no later than midnight. Earlier than today is good, too!

**FINAL PAPER DUE: Wednesday, May 11**

Final papers are due in hardcopy by noon.

You can hand in a SASE if you want your paper mailed back to you, or pick it up at the Allbritton Center after 5/23.


dom_on_the_ropes/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=socialflow


Skocpol, T., & Williamson, V. (2012). *The Tea Party and the remaking of Republican conservatism*: Oxford University Press, USA.


Tocqueville, A. d. (1899). Democracy in America. Transl. Henry Reeve (Creation of machine-readable version: Electronic edition deposited and marked-up by ASGRP, the American Studies Programs at the University of Virginia, June 1, 1997. Freely available for non-commercial use provided that this header is included in its entirety with any copy distributed. ed.).


