PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY
TOULAN SCHOOL OF URBAN STUDIES AND PLANNING

USP 316 COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Winter 2017: Tues/Thurs 12:00 – 1:50 pm
Fifth Ave Cinema 92

Doug Timmer – Instructor
Office: 370B Urban Center
Office Hours: Thurs 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Steve Marotta – Graduate Assistant
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Note: Contact Steve – preferably via email – with any questions or problems you may have regarding the course.

Course Description:

This course explores and analyzes community organizing that uses collective and direct action to address inequality and injustice in American society. It will identify and describe several examples – both past and present – of community organizations and organizing campaigns that have pressed for greater social and economic justice and equality. Finally, various parts of the organizing process will be discussed so that students will know how successful and effective organizing is done.

The course will be held in a lecture/discussion format. Films/videos and guest speakers will also be used when available. IF IT PROVES DISTRACTING, COMPUTER USE WILL NOT BE ALLOWED IN CLASS.

Course Requirements:

Attending and participating in class sessions and doing the required reading will contribute to each student’s successful completion of the two graded projects/reports required for the course.

1. In the first project/report, each student will research and describe a current or past community organization (or community-labor organization) and one or more of its organizing campaigns. You will choose the community organization and/or organizing campaign from a list that will be provided in class. More details on completing this report will also be distributed in class. This project/report is due by 5:00 pm on February 14 in the Urban Studies Office/350 Urban Center. It must be turned in on-time and in hard copy only. No emailed reports are permitted.

2. The second graded project/report requires each student to read Runaway Inequality (see Required Readings below) and to choose a current problem or issue in the U.S. as described in one of the book’s chapters. You will describe how you would build a community (or community-labor) organization and develop an organizing campaign and strategy to address the problem/issue. You will also describe at least one action you would employ to assist your community organization in reaching its goal(s). More details on completing this report will be distributed in class. This project/report is due by 12:00 noon on March 23 in the Urban Studies Office/350 Urban Center. It must be turned in on-time and in hard copy only. No emailed reports are permitted.
Grades:

First project/report  =  40% of final course grade
Second project/report  =  60% of final course grade

Required Readings:

There is one required book for the course:


Other required readings are on electronic reserve in the PSU Library and are listed in the Course Outline below. Some other required readings may be distributed in class.

Course Outline:

1. Organizing for Social Justice: the Course and the Instructor

2. What is Community Organizing?
   - Direct Action
   - Power and Community Organizing
   - Neighborhood Involvement vs Community Organizing


3. Defiance and Disruption: Protest and Electoral Politics
   - Raising Minimum and Living Wages
   - Reforming the Police


4. Community Organizations, Community-Labor Organizations, and Organizing Campaigns: Some Examples Past and Present
   - Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council and the Industrial Areas Foundation

   FILM: Alinsky & His Legacy

   - ACORN: Another Model for Anti-Poverty Community Organizing
• Low-Wage Worker Organizing: “Fight for $15 and a Union”


• Organizing for Affordable Housing: Portland Tenants United

READ: Rachel Monahan. The Most Dangerous Woman in Portland: Margot Black is Harnessing the Power of Renters to Change This City. Willamette Week. December 7, 2016. 12-16

• “Black Lives Matter”


• Organizing to Fight Trump

READ: Zack Exley. We Need a Political Revolution Now More Than Ever. In These Times. December 2016. 14-17

5. Organizing: How It’s Done

• Building an Organization
• Cutting and Framing an Issue
• Planning a Campaign: Strategy and Tactics
• Research
• Planning and Doing an Action
• Media
• Outside-Inside Strategy: Moving from Organizing to Policy Change