Community organizing is a form of social work practice to address social problems and for the social development of national states. Community organizers use theories and technologies to help citizens join together to bring their values and beliefs into action. The social work goal is that they reach for and realize fully their individual and collective human potential.

The particular methods of community organizing in the social work tradition implicitly or explicitly reflect a belief in the possibility for greater “goodness” to emerge in the world. This goodness can be summed up in a set of social conditions that are serially connected: that without righteousness (i.e., morally justifiable action), there is no truth; that without truth, there is no justice; that without justice, there is no freedom (i.e., opportunities for directly participating in governance); that without freedom, there is no peace; and that without peace, there is no humanity.

SW 482, Community Organizing, is a methods course aimed at surveying the knowledge and skill base of community organizing practice, to familiarize students with the specifics of the organizer’s role and the dynamics of the arena in which the organizer works.

Professional practice is based on praxis, that is, on the dialectic of organizing experience and systematic reflection (theorizing) on it, leading to conscious strategic and tactical action.

Community organizing, as a practical matter, involves four primary tasks: building community, building organization, building mobilization, and building institutions.

Except in the most superficial way, this course does not include study of religious and political movements or social development of national states.

**Required Texts**


Bibliography

1. Required readings are indicated by “>>”.

2. Within any section of the syllabus, for readings that are marked “>” it is recommended that you select one of the two entries.

3. Readings marked “[ONLINE]” at the end of their entry are available online at http://www.gatherthepeople.org/Pages/CSULA-CO.htm as Adobe Acrobat files in pdf format.

4. Other readings marked “[RES]” at the end of their entry are available on a reserve basis at the Kennedy Library.

Assigned Reading

Class One

GETTING STARTED

A. Introductions
B. Definitions
C. Character of Organizing
D. Organizer Roles
E. Knowledge Base
F. Class Structure, Requirements & Goals

>> Moshe ben Asher, “GTP Organizer Training, Training Guide #3, The Organizer’s Roles” (Gather the People, c. 2000). [ONLINE]


Class Two

I. FORERUNNERS & PRECURSORS

A. Related Practitioners
   1. Prophets


   2. American revolutionaries
   3. Settlement and social work organizers
   4. Adult educators

A. Institutional Antecedents

1. Labor movement
2. Women’s movement
3. Populist movement
4. Civil rights movement
5. Anti-war movement
6. Welfare rights movement
7. Gay rights movement

Class Three

8. Alinsky tradition


Class Four

II. PRACTICE THEORY

A. Values in Organizing


Class Five

B. Field of Social Action


Class Six

C. Unified Theory

>> Moshe ben Asher, “GTP Organizer Training, Training Guide #6, Community Organizing Theory” (Gather the People, c. 2000). [ONLINE]


1. Learning
2. Exchange
3. Reality-construction
4. Development and social infrastructure

D. Theory-Based Practice Roles

Class Seven

III. PRACTICE KNOWLEDGE

A. Definitions of Community
1. Relationships


2. **Power structure theories**


**B. Organizational Structure**
1. Contingencies of learning and exchange
2. Purposes/goals
3. Institutional and legal forms
4. Resource bases
5. Membership types
6. Tax status options
7. Decision-making
   a. structural
   b. policy
   c. management
   d. supervision
   e. judicial
   f. strategic

>> __________, “A to Z of Strategic Planning Process” (source unknown, n.d.). [ONLINE]


**C. Organizational Culture**
1. Ideological realities
2. Objectives
3. Tasks
4. Labor division
5. Transitions
6. Leader roles
7. Member/constituent/client/citizen roles

>> Moshe ben Asher, “GTP Organizer Training, Training Guide #7, Organizational Structure & Culture.”

**Class Eight**

8. Staff and cadre roles

9. Consultant roles

D. Problem-Solving Processes
1. Values development
2. Leadership development

>> Moshe ben Asher, “GTP Organizer Training, Training Guide #13, Leadership Development” (Gather the People, c. 2000). [ONLINE]


3. Decision-making
4. Problem/goal specification

Class Nine

5. Action style


>> Moshe ben Asher, “GTP Organizer Training, Training Guide #33, Conflict and Cooperation” (Gather the People, c. 2000). [ONLINE]

6. Issue, strategy, and tactic development


7. Change barriers

Class Ten

E. Technologies
1. Fundraising

2. Community research and analysis

> Will Collette, “Research for Organizing,” in (Lee Staples) Roots to Power (New York: Praeger, 1984), pp. 142-51. [RES]


3. Intelligence

4. Community entry

5. Doorknocking

6. Housemeetings

7. Role-playing (“Rehearsing”)

Class Eleven

8. Organizing (founding) meetings

9. Meeting management

>> Moshe ben Asher, “GTP Organizing Training, Organizing Guide #18, “Meetings” (Gather the People, c. 2000). [ONLINE]


Class Twelve

10. Campaigns


11. Mobilization


>> Moshe ben Asher, “GTP Organizer Training, Training Guide #8, Planning An Action” (Gather the People, c. 2000). [ONLINE]

12. Media and publicity
Class Thirteen

13. Negotiations

Class Fourteen

14. Volunteers

15. Training
16. Budgeting
17. Evaluation

Class Fifteen

IV. ORGANIZATION-BUILDING

A. Developing or Adopting a Model
>> Moshe ben Asher, “GTP Organizer Training, Training Guide #31, Modeling a New Organization” (Gather the People, c. 2000). [ONLINE]

1. Personal agenda
2. Organizational agenda
3. Sponsorship and funding
4. Input and output targets
5. Recruiting strategies


6. Decision-making structures and processes
7. Action style
8. Pitch
9. Internal and external communications

B. Organizing Sponsorship
C. Documentation and Legal Groundwork

Class Sixteen

D. Getting Started
1. Targeting a community or constituency
2. Community analysis

>> Moshe ben Asher, “GTP Organizer Training, Training Guide #2, Casing the Community” (Gather the People, c. 2000). [ONLINE]

3. Legitimators and gatekeepers
4. Entry
5. Organizing drive

>> Moshe ben Asher, “GTP Organizer Training, Training Guide #15, Door-knocking” (Gather the People, c. 2000). [ONLINE]

>> Moshe ben Asher, “GTP Organizer Training, Training Guide #46, One-to-One Congregational Visiting” (Gather the People, c. 2000). [ONLINE]

>> Moshe ben Asher, “GTP Organizer Training, Training Guide #47, One-to-One Guide” (Gather the People, c. 2000). [ONLINE]

>> Moshe ben Asher, “GTP Organizer Training, Training Guide #48, Quick One-to-Ones” (Gather the People, c. 2000). [ONLINE]

E. Organizing Meeting
1. Timing
2. Groundwork
3. Organizer’s role
4. Committee preparation
5. Agenda
6. Chairing
7. Meeting management
8. Follow-up

Class Seventeen

F. Campaigns and Actions

>> Shel Trapp, “Building Power & Victories,” in Dynamics of Organizing (Chicago: National Training and Information Center, 1976), pp. 16-18. [RES]

1. Strategic context
2. Action principles


3. Organizational mileage
4. Issue criteria and development


5. Targets
6. Coalitions

>> Moshe ben Asher, “GTP Organizer Training, Training Guide #39, Coalitions” (Gather the People, c. 2000). [ONLINE]


7. Tactics


8. Media

Class Eighteen

G. Survival


>> Moshe ben Asher, “GTP Organizer Training, Training Guide #24, Organizational Survival” (Gather the People, c. 2000). [ONLINE]

1. External threats
2. Internal threats
3. Succession
4. Termination

H. Pitfalls and Pratfalls

1. Fear and anxiety
2. Over-confidence
3. Under-estimation
4. Insufficient resources
5. Insufficient energy
6. Morale collapse
7. Personal life strains

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