COURSE SYLLABUS
ET/PTP 1721: Theology, Theory, and Practice of Organizing Change
July 12, 13, 14; 20-21 2012
Bangor Theological Seminary, Portland Campus
9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Professor: The Rev. Deborah (Desi) Larson, Ph.D.
phone 632-3784, email: desilarson@yahoo.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course is intended to provide participants with both theoretical understanding and practical guidance to organize members of congregations and local communities to work for social change. We will examine the work and thought of major figures in organizing change (Dorothy Day, M. L. King, Jr., Paulo Freire, Saul Alinsky, Nelson Mandela, etc) and investigate several local, faith- and community-based organizations working for social transformation. Organizing change from a Christian paradigm assumes that the work of the Church is the edification of believers and redemption of the world. Our work is to promote transformation, empowerment, and redemption, restoring creation to health.

The course is organized under four main themes: (1) Building Community; (2) Building Organization; (3) Building Mobilization; and (4) Building Institutions.

The skills required of faith leaders and those in related fields to work with community and human resources working with organizing change are diverse. In addition to being grounded in a Scriptural understanding of organizing change, leaders must understand how to analyze a community and its people, how to assess the community’s needs, how to identify and mobilize community resources, and how to analyze a community’s power structure. We will explore theological and theoretical underpinnings of the practice of organizing change both within congregations and in the community using several case studies.

GOAL
The goal of this course is to expand and develop one’s understanding of organizing change with skill in producing it effectively dealing with congregational and community challenges grounded in Christian faith. We will accomplish this through classroom discussion, dialogue, and interaction. We will examine case studies using films, guest speakers, and field trips. In addition to class discussion, you will carry out an individual study to give you the opportunity to sharpen existing skills and apply newly acquired knowledge and skill at the local congregational and/or community level.
OBJECTIVES

To assist the student to:

- Gain skill in monitoring and interpreting major societal trends and issues for local impact and to determine how faith resources, cooperatively delivered, can facilitate social and community change.

- Develop understanding of congregations, community, community systems, and the organization of its major institutions to find or create a comprehensive approach to change within them.

- Become familiar with the history, current status, and future of organizing change at congregational, community, and global levels through.

- Conduct a study of a specific faith-based organization committed to change to determine ways in which change is developed and delivered within existing resources.

- Design and apply to the student’s chosen field of ministry, the roles, tasks, and ideas discussed in the theology, theory, and practice of organizing change.

RESPONSIBILITIES

My teaching philosophy is based on the premise that teaching adults is different from teaching children. The collaborative learning model has emerged as the model that best involves the learner, and we will strive to promote this model in class. This model has learners actively involved in the learning process and activities.

The instructor/facilitator’s responsibilities are to:

- present an organized overview of topics and issues,
- contribute to the topics each meeting by raising questions, summarizing trends and adding observations,
- organize resources, speakers, and events,
- evaluate and give feedback on student work, and
- be available for questions, concerns, and discussion from participants.

The student’s responsibilities are:

- attend all classes,
- completed assigned readings before class,
- complete assignments on schedule,
- thoughtfully and actively participate in discussions,
- develop a learning partnership with another members of the course,
- actively participate in the development of learning activities and processes, and
- ask questions.
REQUIRED READINGS

Texts:


Your favorite translation of the *Holy Bible*.

Other readings, journal articles as assigned by professor.

RECOMMENDED READINGS


COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of the assignments in this course is to help students develop their intellectual and practical tools for the pursuit of professional excellence.

Students will be evaluated as follows: Participation (25 points) + Organizing Change Program/Project Study (75 points) for a total of 100 points.

Organizing Change Program/Project Study (75 points)
The purpose of this assignment is to help you to develop and/or hone skills and knowledge in an area relevant to you and your work. This project is divided into sections:

- Study Proposal (10 points)
- Goals, Methods, and Plan (10 points)
- Annotated Bibliography (10 points)
- Completed Study (30 points)
- Class Presentation (15 points)

This project will take on highly individualized forms since each of you will have a unique program context and learning goals. Some approaches you could take to this assignment include (but are not limited to):

- A thorough theological and theoretical analysis related to faith-based approaches to organizing change.
- A retrospective study of a completed program of social change, improvement and/or development. Include specific implications/recommendations for practice.
- Compare and contrast several models, theologies, and/or theories of organizing change, at congregational, local, national, or global levels.
- Develop and implement a change project where you in some way activate the change in a congregation or community.
- Choose a faith-based organizational change program/project in which you can be an active participant and/or observer, conducting a mini-ethnographic study of this organization, evaluating communication, hierarchies, needs, models, techniques, methods of intervention, etc.
- Negotiate some activity of your own choosing.

**Study Proposal (10 points)**
Define theological, theoretical, and/or practical questions that examine an issue facing a local congregation or community. Proposal must be approved by the professor.

**Goals, Methods, and Plan (10 points)**
Given the agency and research problem, present study goals. Choose methods and a plan for implementing your study. Include a rational for your methods and plan. How will this study contribute to your own skills and knowledge? How will this study contribute to the organization or agency that you are working with? A time line could be a helpful tool.

**Annotated Bibliography (10 points)**
Select a problem or issue that is addressed by the congregation or agency that you study. Develop an annotated bibliography of materials in the professional literature dealing with how organizing for change from a faith-based has addressed this problem or issue. This bibliography should help formulate the theoretical framework for your final project paper. You may select one of the following problems/issues or propose another, subject to approval of the professor:

- Homelessness
- Refugees/Newcomers
- Hunger/malnutrition
- Welfare reform
Illiteracy - Joblessness
Inadequate health care - Substance abuse
Abuse/neglect - Human rights violations
Environmental issues - Safety/crime prevention
Hate Crimes - Worker Justice

Bibliography guidelines:
- The bibliography should include at least 8 references from the professional literature (books, journals research reports, etc). Newspaper or magazine articles will not be accepted.
- Each annotation should be no more than 80 words.
- The bibliographies should be clear, succinct, well-written, typed, and well-formatted.
- No reference may be more than five years old.

Completed Study (30 points)
- Your proposal, goals, and annotated bibliography will all contribute to this part of the study.
- Your completed study should include:
  - Description of the context
  - Description of the issue or problem
  - Description of relevant research or literature
  - Description of your goals and methods
  - Overview of findings
  - Reflections on what you learned
  - Implications for this or other organizations
  - Plans for sharing this study with your church, community, or other organization.

Class Presentation (15 points)
Your final study presentation will take place during the final class meeting. The presentation should resemble a conference presentation or workshop. You may use visual aids and handouts. Include an abstract or overview of your presentation to share with classmates.

Class participation includes attending all classes and contributing to discussions both in class and electronically. Participants will take turns acting as topic leader. Topic leaders will facilitate conversation and inquiry by presenting questions or comments about the readings/topics.

POLICY ON ATTENDANCE
Attendance is required in this course. Students are to attend every class meeting. Missing more than 3 hours of class time will adversely impact the student’s final grade. It is not possible to pass this course if the participant misses 5 hours of more of class time.
TOPIC SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

The topic schedule listed here provides a framework for our discussions and learning. However, additional topics or changes are possible based on your personal learning needs and the developmental learning that will occur through our various exchanges. In addition to the topics listed below, course participants will identify topics relevant to your own learning and skill development needs. The course is divided into six sections: 1) Introduction, 2) Building Community; 3) Building Organization; 4) Building Mobilization; and 5) Building Institutions. and 6) Conclusions and Synthesis.

PRELIMINARY TOPIC AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE
(SUBJECT TO REVISION)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Content</th>
<th>Readings for Discussion Assignments Due</th>
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| BEFORE FIRST CLASS MEETING | **Please prepare for this class by reading:**  
Alinksy’s *Rules for Radicals*  
O’Connor’s *Journey Inward, Journey Outward*  
Peck’s *The Different Drum*, Chs 1-7 | |
| July 12               | **Introductions**  
Class Overview  
Our learning community  
Identify topic leaders, roles in our learning community | Alinksy  
Bobo, et al, Part I  
O’Connor  
Peck, Chs 1-7 |
|                       | **Building Community/  
Foundation for Organizing Change**  
Concept and construct of community  
Learning and community development  
Building healthy communities  
Individualism versus community  
Power and the community  
Genesis of community  
Stages of community-making  
Key tenets of organizing change  
Church and transformation of the world  
GUEST SPEAKERS: Revs Merrill-Ewing  
FIELDTRIP: Hope.Gate.Way UMC on High Street, | *Holy Bible* (I'll email specific readings before class) |


Portland, Maine. Revs Allen and Sara Merrill-Ewing, co pastors. (1 p.m.)

Reflection questions: What is a community? What do we, change agents, need to know about communities? What are some of the roles can we play in organizing community change and/or development? What are some key and important aspects of organizing change?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>July 13</th>
<th><strong>Building Organization – In the Congregation and in the Community</strong></th>
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<td>GUEST SPEAKERS: Rev. Linwood Arnold (and Rev. Meg Quieor?) – Natural Church Development, organizing change in the congregation</td>
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<td>Reflection questions: What is the role of the Church in the community and community change? What role relationships play within a community and models of organizing change? What do we need to know about power within a community? What are some ways that we can analyze a community’s problems? What do we need to know to assess a community’s strengths, weaknesses, resources, and educational needs? What are some examples of organizing change that could address these needs? What are the social change and transformation roles of some of the various community agencies, churches and organizations in your community?</td>
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<td>Reflection questions: What is the role of the church in community transformation and organizing change? Reflection questions: What are some of the roles of higher education in community education?</td>
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<td>GUEST SPEAKERS: Karen Hessel, Fr. Mike Seavey, Interfaith Worker Justice</td>
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<td>VIDEOS: From the <em>Quiet Revolution</em> Series: India: Literacy and Social Reform;</td>
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<td>Bobo, et al, Part II Peck Chs 8-12</td>
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<td>Readings from Mott and Niebuhr</td>
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<td><em>Holy Bible</em> (specific scriptures TBA)</td>
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<td><strong>DUE: Organizing Change Program/Project Study Proposal, Goals, Methods, and Plan</strong></td>
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<td>July 14</td>
<td><strong>Building Mobilization, Part 1</strong></td>
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<td>Highlander School, Popular Education, Participatory Action Research, Cultural Programming</td>
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<td>Sustainability</td>
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<td>Needs for community education</td>
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<td>Community and the future</td>
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<td>Social transformation</td>
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<td>Evaluation of community education</td>
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<td>VIDEO: Bill Moyers interviews Miles Horton; <em>Quiet Revolution</em> series films</td>
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<td>GUEST SPEAKERS: Mike and Vanessa Sylvester, Labor Organizers</td>
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<td>Reflection questions: <em>How can we support organizing for social change? Where can we best find resources?</em></td>
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<tr>
<th>July 20</th>
<th><strong>Building Mobilization, Part 2</strong></th>
<th>Bobo, et al, Part III</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Working with labor unions, environmental, social and other local change organizations</td>
<td>Bobo, et al, Chs 13, 14 (review)</td>
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<td>GUEST SPEAKERS: Christine Ming, Clark Carter, Root Cellar Rev. Priscilla Dreyman, Spiral Arts</td>
<td>Peck, Chs 13 – 17</td>
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<td>FIELDTRIP: The Root Cellar, Washington Ave, Munjoy Hill</td>
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<td>VIDEO: <em>Spiral Arts</em></td>
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<td><em>DUE: Community Study Annotated Bibliography</em></td>
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<th>July 21</th>
<th><strong>Building Institutions</strong></th>
<th><em>DUE: Community Study</em></th>
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<td><strong>Toward the Future</strong></td>
<td><em>In-Class Presentations</em></td>
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<td>Facilitating social change</td>
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<td>Community mobilizing</td>
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<td>Virtual communities and On-line organizing</td>
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In-Class Presentations

Conclusion and Synthesis
Course review and evaluation

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES


