

Course Description

Organizing for Public Ministry focuses on developing skills, tools, and theoretical/reflective capacity for community organizing around multiple issues within a ministry context, and is taught by a team of experienced trainers from IAF (the nation's oldest network of faith-based and community organizations) with additional theological reflection and context provided by CDSP faculty. The format will include lectures, discussion, role-play, small group work, and reading. For those taking the course for academic credit, additional reading and writing, including pre-reading and a pre-course paper as well as a final paper, will be required. The course is open to all members of the GTU community and will also include local non-credit and continuing education participants.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify basic tools and processes involved in broad-based community organizing
- Articulate a theologically grounded warrant for engaging (or choosing not to engage) in broad based community organizing in a ministry context
- Identify appropriate and practical ways in which to engage a congregation in community organizing work, as well as potential pitfalls
- Engage in one-on-one conversations of deep listening to learn about the needs and strengths of a ministry context

Course Requirements

Organizing for Public Ministry is an intensive course and participants should be present and engaged at all sessions. During the daytime, students will take part in the community organizing training provided by IAF leaders; on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday evenings students participate in theological reflection sessions, and on Wednesday evening the students will attend an off-campus action (location TBD).

- January 17: 3 PM-7:30 PM (IAF training)
- January 18: 10 AM-5:30 PM (IAF training); break for dinner; 6:30-7:30 PM theological reflection
- January 19: 10 AM-5:30 PM (IAF training); break for dinner; 6:30-7:30 PM theological reflection with guest faculty Dr. Shauna Hannan, Professor of Homiletics at PLTS
- January 20: 10 AM-5:00 PM (IAF training); depart for evening IAF action
- January 21: 10 AM-5:30 PM (IAF training); break for dinner; 6:30-7:30 PM theological reflection
- January 22: 10 AM-3 PM

Because the course is so intensive, students are expected to complete all readings **before** the first day of class. Certain readings will be re-read during course week, but they should already have been completed before arrival in order to get the most out of the sessions.

In addition, to earn a three-credit course completion, students must submit a **pre-course paper** and a **post-course paper**.

Pre-course paper: due before January 16.

In a seven page paper based on the readings and your own social, scriptural and theological knowledge, discuss what theological justification you see for engaging (or not engaging) in broad-based community organizing as a faith leader. “Theological justifications” include practical theology – that is, the needs of people or communities for a response grounded in God. In particular, address two of the following themes and their relationship to faith and broadbased community organizing:

- Anger
- Treatment of opponents
- One on one conversations
- Leaders
- Social fragmentation
- Democracy
- The sacred
- Justice
- Liberty/freedom
- Self-interest
- Compassion
- Lifestyle liberalism

Include an explanation of why you chose the two themes you did. Cite your sources, and submit the paper in .doc or .docx format to jsnow@cdsp.edu prior to January 16.

Post-course paper: due before February 18.

The post-course paper is based in a hands-on project. Identify a ministry context and engage in one-on-ones with four people within that context. These can be church members or community members, in whom you see leadership possibilities or with whom you imagine organizing could be fruitful. In a 12- page paper, use nine pages to describe the people and ministry context (using pseudonyms), why you chose them, and what you learned in the interviews. Reflect on these interviews using the tools and processes learned in the course and from the readings, searching for themes, potential power analyses, and imagining further connections or next steps. Identify potential strategies to engage people within the ministry context in an organizing project, and identify potential difficulties. In the final three pages, return to your pre-course paper and consider your theological insights. How has the experience of the training and engaging in these interviews changed, challenged, or deepened your original theological understanding? Of the list of original themes, do you now see others as more or less important?

How does broad-based community organizing as a process speak to your own understanding of God, self, and community?

Grading: 35% pre-course paper, 20% participation, 45% final paper

Textbooks and readings:

Other than the books, all readings for this course are available online through Moodle or as links.

- **For all students:**
 - Pre-reading:
 - *Organizing for Congregational Renewal* by Mike Gecan
 - “Toward a Democratic Culture” by Ernesto Cortés, Jr.
 - “Melian Dialogue” from *History of the Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides
 - Daily Reading:
 - “The Very Idea of Power” Chapter 2 from *Power Over Power* by David Nyberg (Sun)
 - “On Disappointment” by Albert O. Hirschman (Mon)
 - “Slow and Respectful Work” by Charles Payne (Tues)
 - “Stop Googling. Let’s Talk” by Sherry Turkle (Tues)
 - “Family” from *The Death of Adam* by Marilynne Robinson (Wed)
 - “Contract and Birthright” from *The Presence of the Past* by Sheldon Wolin (Thurs)
- **Students taking the course for credit will also read:**
 - *Blessed are the Organized: Grassroots Democracy in America* (Jeffrey Stout, 2010), entire
 - *The Prophetic Imagination* (Walter Brueggemann, any edition), entire. **This book is grounded in a Christian context. Students from other faith backgrounds are invited instead to use a secondary or primary source on theology and justice from their own context in conversation with the other course readings and particularly in their paper. Please contact the instructor directly at jsnow@cdsp.edu with questions or suggestions.**
 - “Church Organizing in Michigan,” Ericka Parker-Kilbourne
 - “Furthering the Freedom Struggle: Racial Justice Activism in the Mainline Churches since the Civil Rights Era,” Bradford Verter in *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Churches* (ed. Wuthnow and Evans, 2002).
 - We will have a guest lecture from Dr. Shauna Hannan, who teaches Homiletics at PLTS, on preaching and activism. In preparation, students are invited to investigate their denominational documents for any explicit guidance on the need to “preach justice,” and bring whatever they find to share with the group.

Course norms:

All class communication will be grounded in mutual respect. Both the students and the instructor must be open to academic discourse, which can include challenges to and critiques of ideas. This is different from personal attacks (bullying or “cyber-bullying”), which will not be tolerated. In keeping with the inclusive language policies of CDSP and the GTU, students are required to use inclusive language for human beings in all of their coursework.

Students whose first language is other than English and who need accommodations with regard to completing class assignments should communicate their needs to the instructor. All students, especially those with documented learning disabilities, should communicate to the instructor any limitations and challenges they face in class participation and the completion of assignments.

From the CDSP Academic Handbook (revised Jan. 2013, p. 47): Plagiarism is the presentation of another’s ideas, methods, research or words without proper acknowledgment. It runs the gamut from failing to cite a reference (sloppy scholarship) to passing off another’s work as one’s own. It includes close paraphrasing as well as lifting of entire lines nearly verbatim without acknowledgment. As the effects of the plagiarism will be the same regardless of intent, intent will not be construed as essential to the act, although it may be considered in determining whether the charge of plagiarism should be pursued or what the penalty may be.