

ORGANIZING FOR PUBLIC MINISTRY
FT 1239, January Intersession 2017
Church Divinity School of the Pacific
January 15-20, 2017

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course 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 the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF; the nation's oldest network of faith-based and community organizations) with additional theological reflection and context provided by a CDSP professor. 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 seminary community and will also include local non-credit participants from community organizing projects.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

A student successfully completing this course 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

This course is required for students who began the M.Div. program in summer 2016 or later. It addresses the following learning outcomes for the M.Div. program:

- 1.1.5 Students will demonstrate skill in leading communities of faith in their participation in God's mission.
- 1.2.2 Students will demonstrate the capacity to articulate and use a Scripturally, theologically, and historically grounded Christian ethic that encompasses interpersonal relations, wider social issues, and the church's participation in the common good.
- 1.2.3 Students will demonstrate the ability to identify and offer a Christian critique of the ways in which various forms of moral thinking shape our current culture.

- 2.1.4 Students will demonstrate the capacity to cultivate in themselves and others the habits, dispositions, and imaginative capacities needed for faithful public action in order to lead communities of faith that participate in God's healing of the world.
- 2.1.7 Students will demonstrate understanding and practical use of a variety of methods of theological reflection in their own practice of ministry leadership, and in relation to the life of Christian communities.

COURSE FORMAT

During the week that we will be together (January 15–20), the majority of the course will be led by leaders from the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), who will conduct an intensive training in community organizing. This portion of the course will include non-credit participants from community organizing projects. The training will be held

Sunday, January 15	3:00 – 7:30 PM (dinner provided)
Monday, January 16	10:00 AM – 5:30 PM
Tuesday, January 17	10:00 AM – 5:30 PM
Wednesday, January 18	10:00 AM – 9:00 PM
Thursday, January 19	10:00 AM – 5:30 PM
Friday, January 20	10:00 AM – 3:00 PM.

In addition to these times for IAF training, students enrolled for credit will meet Monday-Thursday, 8:30-9:30 am, for theological reflection.

READINGS

Required of all students, credit and non-credit:

Available on Moodle

- "Part One: The Tools" from *Organizing for Congregational Renewal* by Mike Gecan
- "Toward a Democratic Culture" by Ernesto Cortés, Jr.
- "Melian Debate" from *History of the Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides
- "The Very Idea of Power" Chapter 2 from *Power Over Power* by David Nyberg
- "Family" from *The Death of Adam* by Marilynne Robinson
- "The Rise of Finance" Chapter 1 from *Makers and Takers: The Rise of Finance and the Fall of American Business*, by Rana Foroohar (optional reading: Chapter 2)
- "Slow and Respectful Work" Chapter 8 from *I've Got the Light of Freedom* by Charles Payne
- "Stop Googling. Let's Talk" by Sherry Turkle, *New York Times*, Sep. 26, 2015
- "Read Buber, Not the Polls!" by David Brooks, *New York Times*, Nov. 1, 2016
- "Contract and Birthright" from *The Presence of the Past* by Sheldon Wolin

Required of students enrolled for academic credit:

Books

- Walter Brueggemann. *The Prophetic Imagination*. Second edition. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001.
- Jeffrey Stout. *Blessed Are the Organized: Grassroots Democracy in America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Articles/ book chapters (available on Moodle)

- Debra Bendis, "No Longer Strangers," *Christian Century* (March 19, 2014), 22-25
- Luke Bretherton, "Local: Augustine, Alinsky, and the Politics of the Common Good," in *Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 71-125
- Leah Gunning Francis, Introduction and "Jesus Is in the Streets!" in *Ferguson and Faith: Sparking Leadership and Awakening Community* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2015), pp. 55-77
- Jeremy Posadas, "Community Organizing as Congregational Practice: Social-Scientific and Theological Perspectives," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 12 (2008): 274-294
- Chris Shannahan, Introduction and "A Theology of Community Organizing: Becoming Yeast in the City," in *A Theology of Community Organizing: Power to the People* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1-5, 139-63

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course is offered for three academic credits, the same amount as a typical semester-length course, and the workload will be commensurate.

Preparation

Prior to the first meeting, students must **complete all of the required readings** for credit and non-credit students and **submit a 6-8-page paper by 5:00 pm (Pacific Standard Time) on Wednesday, January 11.**

Pre-Course Paper

Drawing substantively and consistently upon the assigned readings, write a theological appreciation of the goals and tactics of broad-based community organizing. The paper should identify the goals and tactics of such organizing (a task in which Stout and Gecan will prove vital) and show where these goals intersect with key elements of Christian scriptures and traditions (a task in which Bretherton, Brueggemann, Posadas, and Shannahan will be especially helpful). In other words, what themes, doctrines, stories, or examples of the faith might prompt Christians to get involved in broad-based community organizing? What, if any, divergences or tensions do you see between Christian faith and broad-based community organizing? Are there possible ways of bridging those divides?

This paper is to be **6-8 pages in length** (1500-2000 words, typed, double-spaced). Be sure to substantiate your claims by quoting from and citing the assigned readings. Citations should be in Turabian format using footnotes. A bibliography is not required.

Submit your paper to the assignment drop-box on Moodle by 5:00 pm Wednesday, January 11. It will be returned to you there.

Participation

All students must be present and **participate actively** in **all training sessions** and **theological reflection sessions**. Each night during the course students will be asked to review relevant readings in preparation for the next day.

Post-course project and paper: due Friday February 10, 5:00 pm Pacific Standard Time

Identify a ministry context in which you are active, 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. Report and reflect on these meetings in a 12-page paper (typed, double-spaced):

- Begin the paper with a brief description of the persons with whom you met (using pseudonyms). Explain why you chose them, making reference to assigned readings and what you learned in the course. This section of the paper should comprise 3-4 pages.
- Reflect on these interviews using the tools and processes learned in the course and from the readings, searching for themes and imagining further connections or next steps. Identify potential strategies to engage people within the ministry context in an organizing project of **manageable scope**, and identify potential difficulties. This section should be 5-6 pages.
- In the final 2-4 pages, return to your pre-course paper and consider your theological insights. How has the experience of the training, the theological reflection, and engaging in these interviews changed, challenged, or deepened your original theological understanding? How does broad-based community organizing as a process speak to your understanding of God, self, and community?

The paper should substantively engage **no fewer than five (5) of the assigned readings** (including articles). Substantiate your claims by quoting from and citing the assigned readings. Citations should be in Turabian format using footnotes.

Submit your paper to the assignment drop-box on Moodle by 5:00 pm Friday, February 10. It will be returned to you there. A bibliography is not required.

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

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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.

Inclusive Language

From the CDSP Academic Handbook (June 2016 Handbook, p. 62):

The policy at CDSP is that gender-inclusive language, i.e., language which strives to include both sexes equally, should be regarded as standard in public discourse, and that gender-exclusive language should be avoided as much as possible.

Students are expected to be familiar with the applications of this policy as detailed in the Academic Handbook (pp. 62-63) and to follow these guidelines in both oral and written discourse. Students with questions about how to use gender-inclusive language are encouraged to request guidance from the professor or teaching assistant, either in class or privately. Students who continue to use gender-

exclusive language repeatedly after correction and explanation are subject to a reduction of one-third of a letter grade or more.

Formatting and submitting written work

Major assignments in this course should be word-processed (preferably using Microsoft Word), double-spaced, with no more than one-inch margins, using a 12-point font, and submitted online at the Moodle site on or before the due date. Pages are to be numbered and the text proofread. Work that contains multiple errors of grammar, spelling and/or punctuation is subject to reduction in grade. Work may not be resubmitted for consideration for a higher grade.

Deadlines

All work is due as specified above, in the section on Requirements. Apart from dire circumstances or serious illness, late papers will not be accepted and the instructor will not grant an “incomplete” for this course.

Accommodations for Students with Documented Disabilities

A student who anticipates any trouble in completing the assigned work in this course due to documented disability should initiate a request for accommodations with the GTU Dean of Students, following the procedures detailed on the GTU website: <http://gtu.edu/admissions/life-at-gtu/students-with-disabilities>. The GTU Dean of Students will notify the instructor of accommodations, and the student should be prepared to discuss the specific accommodations needed for this course with the instructor.

Students for whom English is a second language should likewise speak with the instructor well in advance of the course concerning any challenges anticipated in meeting the course requirements in a timely manner.

Plagiarism

Sources must be referenced accurately and according to standard academic practice (Kate Turabian, *Manual for the Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* or *The Chicago Manual of Style*).

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. The GTU plagiarism policy, quoted in the CDSP Academic Handbook (June 2016 Handbook, p. 64), defines plagiarism in this way:

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.

In accord with the CDSP policy on plagiarism, evidence of plagiarism and any other form of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs, who will consult the student’s advisor and determine appropriate consequences. Details of the seminary policy on plagiarism can be found in the Academic Handbook (pp. 63-65).