

FT 1239

ORGANIZING FOR PUBLIC MINISTRY

January 14–19, 2018
Classroom A

Scott MacDougall, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Theology

smacdougall@cdsp.edu

Parsons Hall 216

Course Description

This course focuses on developing skills, tools, and theoretical/reflective capacity for community organizing around multiple issues within a ministry context. It 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. The course includes 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, are required. The course is open to all members of the seminary community and includes local non-credit participants from community organizing projects.

Curricular Learning Outcomes

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:

- Learning Outcome 1.1.5: Students will demonstrate skill in leading communities of faith in their participation in God's mission.
- Learning Outcome 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.
- Learning Outcome 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.
- Learning Outcome 2.1.3: 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.
- Learning Outcome 2.1.5: 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.

The course also addresses a number of learning outcomes of the MTS curriculum, especially:

- Learning Outcome 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.
- Learning Outcome 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.

- Learning Outcome 2.1.3: 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 participate in God's healing of the world.
- Learning Outcome 2.1.5: Students will demonstrate understanding and practical use of theological reflection in pursuing their own vocations.

Course Learning Objectives

Students who complete this course successfully 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 Readings

All readings are available on the course Moodle site except for the **two books** required for students taking the course for credit, indicated by an asterisk (*), which must be obtained by the student.

Readings Required for the IAF Training (all participants)

- Brooks, David, "Read Buber, Not the Polls!" *New York Times*, November 1, 2016
- Cortés, Ernesto, Jr., "Toward a Democratic Culture"
- Cortés, Ernesto, Jr., "Welcoming the Stranger"
- Easterly, William, "Planners versus Searchers," from *The White Man's Burden*
- Foroohar, Rana, "The Rise of Finance," from *Makers and Takers: The Rise of Finance and the Fall of American Business*
- Gecan, Michael, "Part One: The Tools," from *Organizing for Congregational Renewal*
- Nyberg, David, "The Very Idea of Power," chapter 2 of *Power Over Power*
- Payne, Charles, "Slow and Respectful Work," chapter 8 of *I've Got the Light of Freedom*
- Robinson, Marilynne, "Family," from *The Death of Adam*
- Scott, James C., "Thin Simplifications and Practical Knowledge: Metis," from *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*
- Thucydides, "The Melian Debate," from *History of the Peloponnesian War*
- Turkle, Sherry, "Stop Googling. Let's Talk," *New York Times*, September 26, 2015
- Wolin, Sheldon, "Contract and Birthright," from *The Presence of the Past*

Additional Readings Required for Students Enrolled for Academic Credit

- Bendis, Debra, "No Longer Strangers," *Christian Century*, March 19, 2014
- Bretherton, Luke, "Local: Augustine, Alinsky, and the Politics of the Common Good," from *Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness*
- **Brueggemann, Walter, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001)***
- Francis, Leah Gunning, "Introduction" and "Jesus Is in the Streets!" from *Ferguson and Faith: Sparking Leadership and Awakening Community*
- Posadas, Jeremy, "Community Organizing as Congregational Practice: Social-Scientific and Theological Perspectives," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 12 (2008): 274-294
- Shannahan, Chris, "Introduction" and "A Theology of Community Organizing: Becoming Yeast in the City," from *A Theology of Community Organizing: Power to the People*
- **Stout, Jeffrey, *Blessed Are the Organized: Grassroots Democracy in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010)***

Course Schedule

During the week that we will be together, 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 take place:

Sunday, January 14	3:00–7:30 p.m. (dinner provided)
Monday, January 15	10:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m.
Tuesday, January 16	10:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, January 17	10:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m.
Thursday, January 18	10:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m. (note the evening required activity)
Friday, January 19	10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

IN ADDITION TO THESE TIMES FOR IAF TRAINING, STUDENTS ENROLLED FOR CREDIT WILL MEET MONDAY–THURSDAY FROM 8:30 A.M. UNTIL 9:30 A.M. FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION.

Sunday, January 14

Class meets from 3:00–7:30 p.m., with dinner provided

Monday, January 15

Theological reflection: 8:30–9:30 a.m.

Organizing training: 10:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

Come having re-read and prepared to discuss the readings by **Nyberg** and **Thucydides**

Tuesday, January 16

Theological reflection: 8:30–9:30 a.m.

Organizing training: 10:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

Come having re-read and prepared to discuss the readings by **Robinson**, **Foroohar**, **Turkle**, and **Brooks**

Wednesday, January 17

Theological reflection: 8:30–9:30 a.m.

Organizing training: 10:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

Come having re-read and prepared to discuss the reading by **Wolin**

Thursday, January 18

Theological reflection: 8:30–9:30 a.m.

Organizing training: 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Depart for action: 4:30 (carpools to be arranged, dinner on your own *en route*)

Direct action in Vallejo: 6:45–9:00

St. Vincent Ferrer Catholic Church

Gymnasium in Memorial Hall

925 Sacramento St.

Vallejo, CA 94590

Friday, January 19

Organizing training: 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

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.

Class preparation and active participation: 20%
Pre-course paper: 35%
Post-course paper: 45%

CLASS PREPARATION AND PARTICIPATION

Prior to the first meeting, students must **complete all of the required reading**, both the reading required for the IAF training and the additional reading for students enrolled in the course for credit.

All students must be **present** and **participate actively** in **all training and theological reflection sessions**. Students must come prepared to discuss the texts noted in the syllabus for each day.

PRE-COURSE PAPER

Students must submit a paper of six to eight pages by 5:00 p.m. (Pacific time) on **Wednesday, January 10**.

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 for which Stout and Gecan will provide vital help) 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). 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? A more detailed rubric for this paper is provided on the Moodle site.

This paper is to be six to eight pages in length (1,500–2,000 words, typed, double-spaced, one-inch margins, 12-point font, in Word or Rich Text format *only*). Substantiate your claims by quoting and properly citing the assigned readings. Citations should be in Turabian format using footnotes. A bibliography is not required.

Submit the paper through the link in Moodle provided for this purpose.

POST-COURSE PAPER

Students must submit a paper of 12 pages by 5:00 p.m. (Pacific time) on **Friday, February 9**.

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, one-inch margins, 12-point font, in Word or Rich Text format *only*).

- 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 and properly citing the assigned readings. Citations should be in Turabian format using footnotes. A bibliography is not required.

Submit the paper through the link in Moodle provided for this purpose.

Policies

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 (August 2017, p. 70):

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. 70–72) 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, either in class or privately.

FORMATTING AND SUBMITTING WRITTEN WORK

Assignments in this course should be word-processed (preferably using Microsoft Word), double-spaced, with one-inch margins, using a 12-point font, and must be submitted online at through Moodle, on or before the due date. Pages are to be numbered and the text proofread. Do not include cover sheets. 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 Course 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: <https://www.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 (August 2017, p. 72), 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. 72–73).

GRADING SCALE

Grading in this course is in accordance with the following schedule:

A	100–95	Excellent. Honors-level work, outstanding.
A-	94–90	Still Excellent.
B+	89–87	Very Good. High level of performance.
B	86–83	Good. Solid and above average level of performance.
B-	82–80	Good. Still above average.
C+	79–77	Average level of performance.
C	76–73	Satisfactory. Acceptable level of performance.
C-	72–60	Minimally acceptable.
F	59–0	Failure. Inferior performance.

PASS/FAIL

If you opt to take this course on a pass/fail basis, please note you will earn a “P” only if you: (1) submit every required assignment by the assigned (or extended) deadline; (2) earn a minimum of a C- on each assignment; and (3) earn a minimum of C+ (i.e., a grade of 77) as a final grade in the course.