THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

COURSE NUMBER: SOWO 491, Spring 2008, Monday 6-8:50 p.m.

COURSE: Community Organizing for Social Change

INSTRUCTOR: Marcie Fisher-Borne, MSW, MPH
School of Social Work
OFFICE #: 402 F
Office Hours: By appointment
919-962-6480

TA/COMMUNITY PARTNER
CO-COORDINATOR Robin Hotard
504-427-0197

If we are going to use the word “community” meaningfully, we must restrict it to a group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to rejoice together, mourn together and to delight in each other, making each other’s conditions their own.

M.Scott Peck, from The Different Drum

Course Description

SOWO 491 offers a “tool-kit” of organizing and leadership skills for both grassroots and agency-based social change efforts. It is designed to encourage active citizen participation through tangible skills-building activities paired with a community partnership in Southwest Central Durham.

Expanded Description

Community change work is, in many respects, messy. Similarly, this course is a work in progress and will require your input, ideas, and knowledge. The course is highly experiential and utilizes popular education and participatory methods. You will be expected to take responsibility for shaping the course and the learning process. Through class workshops, dialogues with local community organizers, and a neighborhood-based community partnership, you will be encouraged to translate ideas about community change and empowerment into action.

Course Objectives

Skills

- Build a learning community that supports active engagement and critical thinking
- Assess the assets and challenges of community organizing
- Situate oneself in the context of community change efforts and determine short and long-term learning goals
- Strengthen one's personal ability with collaborative group work
- Apply models of organizing to specific social change endeavors
- Acquire skills in using specific organizing tools and techniques such as facilitating meetings, public speaking, working with the media, and building strong collaborations
- Acquire ability to critically analyze situations and problem-solve

Knowledge

- Understand the need to analyze the economic, political, social, and cultural contexts in a community when considering approaches to change
- Understand different types of organizing goals, roles, and strategies
- Recognize the value, power, and resource differences that impede community organizing and change efforts

Values

- Appreciate the complexity of and competence needed for the organizer role
- Value citizen, community participation and empowerment
- Value struggles and conflicts inherent in organizing for social and economic justice within an historical context and democratic framework
- Value individual worth and dignity and a person's unique characteristics of race, color, religion, ethnic or national origin, age, veteran status, ability, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or political orientation
- Appreciate professional ethics, and recognize the individual's right to self-determination and active participation in social change

Student Rights

As a student, you have the right to criticize and question what you are hearing and reading, without fear of ridicule or threat of retribution. You also have the right to support and affirm what is being discussed and shared, as well. You have the right to be treated equally and with respect. You have the right to be fully informed of course requirements and grading procedures. You have the right to receive prompt and comprehensible feedback on your assignments.

Teaching Methods and Course Structure

Community-Based/Service Learning Component

Much of your learning during this course will happen outside of the classroom. In order to emphasize the myriad roles, goals, and strategies used by community organizers in effecting social change, you will learn from people who live and work in organizations and neighborhoods in the Triangle. This year we will be working as an entire class with the Quality of Life Project in Durham, NC.

Under the leadership of Mayme Webb-Bledsoe, the Neighborhood Coordinator at Duke’s Community Affairs Office and Cate Elander, the QOL Community Organizer, we will be working with five of the six neighborhoods in Southwest Central Durham.
Collaborative Learning

We all have things to learn and likewise, things to teach. With this in mind, there will be minimal lecture in this class. Primarily we will engage in small group or large group discussions and workshops. These discussions will require you to come prepared having not only read the readings assigned for the week but prepared to engage them within the class community. If you do not complete the required readings each week, it will affect your grade. We will also have a number of trainings/workshops during the course that will involve discussion and skills application.

As we move through the semester if some things don’t work or make sense, say so. You are responsible for your learning. I am responsible for creating a safe, accessible, and resource rich context for your learning.

Learning pairs

Early in the course we will create student learning pairs which will remain together and work together in various ways throughout the course. Some responsibilities include:

- Each pair will facilitate a class discussion for one week, including the readings
- A pair may decide to meet sometimes, perhaps regularly for writing/assignment support
- A pair may decide to take on the public writing task jointly

Community Teams

The service learning for this course is organized in teams. There will be five teams of 3-4 students working with a specific neighborhood in SW Central Durham. You will be responsible for setting goals as a team and accountable collectively for the tasks within the project. Each student will contribute between 40-50 hours of service learning time outside of the classroom in this course.

Resources for Team Work

Please see Blackboard for various resources that may be useful to you as you begin your team process. The following links may be of interest:

APPLES paperwork:  
http://www.unc.edu/student/orgs/apples

Quality of Life Project  
http://www.durhamqualityoflife.org/

Building Blocks for Team Learning  
http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/teams/student/index.html

Course Framework

Inherent within the context of community organizing is the recognition of structural inequalities. With this in mind, special attention will be paid to issues of gender, gender identity, class, race and ethnicity, and sexual orientation throughout the course. While specific course sessions will focus on
understanding privilege and power within community organizing, guest facilitators, agency selection, course readings and content throughout the course will reflect the diversity of our community members and issues within the state. The class framework is intended to build bridges between your unique stories and experiences and those of other cultural groups within the communities you will support.

Learning Needs

If you have any specific learning needs, please let me know at the beginning of the semester so we can make appropriate accommodations.

Required Texts


Suggested Texts


Other readings for the course are available on Blackboard under “assignments.” Since the course will be responsive to particular interests and discoveries of the students in the course and to the needs and concerns of the Quality of Life project, *reading assignments may change* as the course develops.

Miscellaneous

Attendance

Class activities, discussions, and presentations constitute a major portion of the learning experience in this course. In other words, this course does not exist in textbooks and lecture notes; it exists in the experiences and contributions of the students. Therefore, missed classes cannot be "recovered" by reading the text or borrowing class notes. Attendance and participation are expected for all class days. Because of the emphasis on collaborative learning, any absence interferes with each student’s performance and of the entire class.

Two excused absences are allowed during the semester. Excused absences include: family emergencies, illness (with doctor’s note), conference presentations, and graduate school appointments. *Let me know in advance if you have anticipated absences during the semester.*
Punctuality

As many of the classes will be actual training workshops led by community leaders and activists, students are expected to arrive at class on time. If you are unable to meet this expectation please notify me well BEFORE CLASS.

Note-taking

Students will work in pairs to help guide the discussion and to capture important points/issues raised by taking “minutes” each week. If you want to take additional notes during class my preference is that these are written. Open laptops are disturbing to the discussion process and to our facilitators. If you need accommodations for laptop use related to disability, please let me know.

Assignments

Weekly Action/Reaction Discussion Post (15%) —12 posts: 6 postings/6 responses

These posts should demonstrate engagement with the readings, your community experience, and our class discussion. Creative posts that demonstrate authentic engagement with the course materials, the community process, and your peers are highly encouraged.

Each post should be the equivalent of approximately one double-spaced typewritten page and should connect your readings/thoughts to your organizing experience and your team projects. Posts that are too short, do not exhibit good writing, do not carefully discuss the readings will receive reduced or no credit. You will be expected to post for twelve weeks. Six should be initial postings of your own original thoughts and the other six should respond to points/issues raised by your classmates. See Blackboard “Course Documents” and “Grading” for specific evaluation criteria for online postings. ORIGINAL POSTS should be posted by 5 p.m. on each Sunday before class. RESPONSE POSTS should be online by midnight on Sunday night.

Reflection Assignments (10%)

For some classes and trainings, you will be asked to bring written preparation; other times you will be asked to complete a short writing assignment in class as an opportunity to reflect and assess your needs, strengths, and progress with our tasks.

Community Organizing In Context: Studies of People and Movements (10%)

All change efforts have a history. Understanding this history deepens the potential for your own “change work.” For this assignment, you will select a biography or movement history from a pre-approved list that will be distributed after the first few weeks of class.

In addition to reading the book, you should create a clear, concise one-page description of the movement, individual, or individuals you are researching. You will have 10 minutes to engage your classmates around the content of your study.
Community Meeting (5%)  

Attend a community organization or a local government meeting (e.g., community planning board), civic body, or neighborhood organization (e.g. block association, tenant association, women's group) concerned with a neighborhood or issue--preferably an organization that is working to improve conditions, policies, or services in DURHAM. This meeting/event should NOT be directly related to your team project. You will submit a one page write-up analyzing the meeting/issue in the class following your attendance.

Discussion Facilitation (5%)  

In order to increase facilitation and leadership skills, two students will be selected each week to open the class with announcements, current events relevant to community organizing, highlights from our online posts for the week, and introduce the week’s topic. If appropriate, student facilitators will take notes and write a one-page synopsis to be distributed the following week to classmates. Co-facilitators will also close the class with a relevant thought, quote, or discussion to synthesize the content of the week. Class facilitators should touch base with me the week prior to their session to review the upcoming materials.

Community Writing Assignment (15%)  

Writing is a powerful change tool. As such, your major writing assignment for this course will be public. You may choose to write a letter to the editor, a letter to your congressional representatives about an issue that is meaningful to you. Other examples include: updating websites for neighborhood agencies, grant applications or abstracts for an agency that is doing social change work, a column for a local magazine, a training manual, a performance piece, or other creative writing piece relevant to a social change issue and submitted for publication or public view. Your writing idea should be approved by the instructor and/or TAs beforehand. This does not have to be directly related to your work in Durham but can reflect any social issue of concern to you.

Team Projects  

As a team you will submit goals and a timeline at the beginning of the semester. You will be evaluated based on your ability to complete these goals and work together as a team, as well as synthesize your work in a final presentation which will take place at the end of the semester. You will be expected to work an average of 3-5 hours each week on your community project. A minimum of TWO hours each week should be completed as an ENTIRE TEAM. At the end of the semester you will present a final presentation and report on the work you have accomplished.
Grading System
Grades for this course will be broken down as follows:

- Reflection Assignments 25%
- Online Discussion Posts 15%
- Other mini assignments 10%

- Community Writing Assignment 15%
- Biography 10%
- Discussion Facilitation 5%
- Community Meeting 5%

**Participation** 40%
- 10% Self-Evaluation
- 20% Instructor/Partner Evaluation
- 10% Team Evaluation

Total 100%

Late Assignments Policy
I will be available both via email and in person to help clarify assignments prior to their due dates. **Assignments are due at the beginning of class.** Assignments that are late will lose one letter grade for each day it is late, extensions will be granted prior to the due date by special consideration of the instructor – do not come to class and ask for an extension for something due that day.
SOWO 491 Week by Week

Week 1: January 14, 2008

*Topic: Community Organizing Overview*

- What is community organizing?
- What communities are we a part of now?

*In class:*
Discussion of course goals, semester structure, class community

*Homework: Strengths Assessment—This should be submitted by midnight on Friday January 18th at 5 p.m.*

*Bus Tour of SW Durham will be held on Saturday January 26th from 10-1 p.m. ALL STUDENTS MUST ATTEND.*

Week 2: January 28, 2008—CLASS IN DURHAM, Lyon Park Community Center

*Topic: Community In Context: Durham and the Quality of Life Project*

*We will leave in carpools from UNC at 5:30 p.m. If you cannot leave campus at this time, you will need to talk with me in advance.*

*Readings due:*

*On Blackboard:*


*Online:*

Quality of Life Project, Review Website
http://durhamqualityoflife.org

Durham, The Making of an Image
http://www.indyweek.com/gyrobase/PrintFriendly?oid=oid%3A31991

What I love about Durham, Posted May 24, 2006 (Focus on 10 comments/posts)
http://www.indyweek.com/gyrobase/PrintFriendly?oid=oid%3A31990
Optional:

North Carolina Voices: Understanding Poverty choice
http://www.wunc.org/special/poverty/descriptions.html

Not Making It: North Carolina Voices on Jobs and Unemployment
http://www.ncjustice.org/media/library/178_ncaejncvoices.pdf

NC Justice Center—Working Hard is Not Enough:

Week 3: February 4, 2008

Topic: Organizing Tradition: A Historical Overview

Readings due:

Textbooks:

Kahn, Chapter 1
Sen, Introduction, Community Organizing Yesterday and Today

On Blackboard:


Szakos & Szakos (2007). We Make Change: Community Organizers Talk about What They Do and Why, Chapter 1: What is Community Organizing?

Online:

Brief History of Community Organizing
http://www.nfg.org/cotb/09historyco.htm

Report to the West Bank CDC: Primer on Community Organizing, Stoecker, R. http://comm-org.wisc.edu/cr/crreporta.htm

Community Development and Community Organizing: Apples and Oranges? Chicken and Egg?
http://comm-org.wisc.edu/drafts/orgdevppr2c.htm

Week 4: February 11, 2008

Topic: Neighborhood Organizing

Readings due:

Leondar-Wright, pages 1-63

Community Toolbox: Assessing Community Needs and Resources
Read all of the following sections: 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10
http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/chapter_1003.htm

Researching Your Neighborhood
http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/1_02_research.html

Robert Fisher, "Neighborhood Organizing: The Importance of Historical Context"
http://comm-org.wisc.edu/papers96/fishercon.htm

Neighborhood Strengthening through Community Building, Singh, S.

In class: Team Building Activity
    Holding Ground, DNSI Film

Assignment: Neighborhood Tour and Durham Field Notes (See Blackboard under assignments for detailed description)

Week 5: TRAINING: February 18, 2008

Topic: Leadership and Strategy in Context—Understanding Power and Privilege

Readings due:
Kahn, Chapters 2 and 8
Sen, Chapter 5
Leonard-Wright, p. 64-87

On Blackboard:

Gladwell, M. Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking, Chapter 3, 72-98

McKnight, J. Introduction, Building Communities From the Inside Out

Online:
Delgado, J. The Last Stop Sign
http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/102/stopsign.html

Week 7: February 25, 2008
**Week 8: March 3, 2008**

**Topic:** Relationship Building/Conflict and Collaboration

**Readings due:**

- Kahn, Chapter 15
- Sen, Chapter 7
- Leondar-Wright, p. 88-145

Feedback that Works: Ten Common Mistakes in Giving Feedback, Center for Creative Leadership


Other readings, **TBA**

In class: Calvin Allen, Southern Rural Development Initiative

**March 10th Spring Break--Have Fun!**

**Week 9: March 17, 2008**

**Topic:** Values and Faith in Organizing

**Readings due:**

- Horowitz, C. Spiritual Activist, Excerpts

What Makes Community Organizing Succeed? Comparing Church and Neighborhood Based Initiatives,
http://www.nonprofitresearch.org/usr_doc/Community_Organizing_Snapshots.pdf

In class: Claudia Horwitz, Executive Director, Stone House/Stone Circles and Panel

Week 10: March 24, 2008

Topic: Organizing and the Media

Readings due:

Textbooks:
Kahn, Chapter 13
Sen, Chapter 8

Blackboard:
The Activist’s Handbook, Chapter 5--The Media: Winning More than Coverage

Online:
Using the Internet for Outreach and Organizing
http://www.netaction.org/training/reader.pdf

For Review:
The Virtual Activist 2.0: A Training Course. Audrie Krause, Michael Stein, Judi Clark, Theresa Chen,
Jasmine Li, Josh Dimon, Jennifer Kanouse, and Jill Herschman.
http://www.netaction.org/training/

http://www.progressivetech.org/Resources/Research/PTP%20From%20Exclusion%20to%20Inclusion.pdf

In class: Marisol Jimenez, Former Director of Advocacy Programs, El Pueblo

Week 10: March 31, 2008—This will possibly become a training earlier in the semester

Topic: Fundraising for Social Change

Readings due:
Kahn, Chapter 14

Foundation Funding of Grassroots Organizations, Bothwell, R.
http://comm-org.wisc.edu/papers2001/bothwell.htm
The Ten Most Important Things You Can Know About Fundraising, Klein, K.
http://www.grassrootsfundraising.org/howto/v23_n1_art03.pdf
**Other Readings, TBA**

**For Review:**

General Funding Resources:  
http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/4fcelec.htm

**In class:**  Tema Okun, Consultant, ChangeWork

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**Week 11: April 7, 2008**  
**Topic:** Long Haul and Generational Issues in Organizing  

**Readings due:**

The Changing of the Guard: What Generational Differences Tell Us about Social-Change Organizations, Kunreuther, F.  

**Other readings, TBA**  
**For Review:**  

**In class:**  Organizers Panel

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**Week 12: April 14, 2008**  
**Topic:** Regroup/Reflection/Presentation Planning

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**Week 13: April 21, 2008**  
**Topic:** Community Presentations (Tentative—p.m.)

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**Week 13: April 28, 2008**  
**Topic:** Evaluation and PARTY!
### SOWO 491: Spring 2008 Syllabus Summary

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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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<td>Jan 14</td>
<td>Introduction to Community Organizing: Theory and Models for Change</td>
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<td>Community Learning Goals</td>
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<td>Jan 18th</td>
<td><em>Strengths Assessment</em></td>
<td>Strengths Assessment (in digital drop box)</td>
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<td>5 p.m. on Jan. 18th</td>
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<td>Jan 21</td>
<td>MLK Holiday</td>
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<td>Jan 26th</td>
<td>Neighborhood Tour</td>
<td>Begins at Center for Documentary Studies in Durham</td>
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<td>10-1 p.m.</td>
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<td>Jan 28</td>
<td>Community In Context: Durham and the Quality of Life Project—Possibly</td>
<td>*First online post—Online reflection post on Neighborhood tour</td>
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<td>Lyon Park</td>
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<td>Stacey Craig, QOL Community Organizer</td>
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<td>Brett Cook, Community Artist in Residence (Groups Assigned)</td>
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<td>Jan 31st</td>
<td>Face Up Fundraiser</td>
<td>(Representative from each team)</td>
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<td>Feb 4</td>
<td>History of Organizing Group Work and Teambuilding (Facilitation</td>
<td>Durham Tour Field Notes (See Blackboard under</td>
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<td>Begins)</td>
<td>assignments for detailed description)</td>
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<td>Feb 11</td>
<td>Neighborhood Organizing and DSNI: Holding Ground</td>
<td>Online Reflection: Streets of Hope</td>
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<td>The Role of Money in Organizing Training</td>
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<td>Feb 18</td>
<td>Power and Privilege Training Applied Goal Setting</td>
<td>Goals and Timeline Due—In class</td>
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<td>Feb 25</td>
<td>Organizing Nuts and Bolts: Facilitation 101/Nuts and Bolts</td>
<td>Revised goals due online</td>
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<td>March 3</td>
<td>Mobilizing Relationship, Building Community Collaboration and Conflict</td>
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<td>March 10</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
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<td>Values and Faith in Organizing</td>
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<td>March 24</td>
<td>Organizing and the Media and Advocacy Strategies</td>
<td>Writing Projects Due</td>
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<td>Regroup: Project Check In, Community Partners Meeting</td>
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<td>April 7</td>
<td>Long Haul and Generational Issues in Organizing Panel</td>
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<td>Reflection and Community Presentation Planning</td>
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<td>TBA</td>
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<td>April 28</td>
<td>Evaluation/PARTY</td>
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- Indicates required meetings beyond scheduled class time
Southwest Central Durham ~ Quality of Life Project
2008 Important Dates:

QOL Economic Development Committee Meeting
Tuesday January 8, 2008; 12pm
Ar-Razzaq Islamic Center
1009 W. Chapel Hill St Durham

QOL Steering Committee Meeting
Wednesday January 16, 2008; 6:30pm
Community Family Life and Recreation Center at Lyon Park
1313 Halley St. Durham; Health and Wellness Room

QOL Housing Committee Meeting
January 14, 2008; 6pm
Community Family Life and Recreation Center at Lyon Park
1313 Halley St. Durham; Health and Wellness Room

QOL Steering Committee Meeting
Wednesday February 6, 2008; 6:30pm
Community Family Life and Recreation Center at Lyon Park
1313 Halley St. Durham; Health and Wellness Room

QOL Economic Development Committee Meeting
Tuesday February 12, 2008; 12pm
Ar-Razzaq Islamic Center
1009 W. Chapel Hill St Durham

QOL Housing Committee Meeting
Monday February 18, 2008; 6pm
Community Family Life and Recreation Center at Lyon Park
1313 Halley St. Durham; Health and Wellness Room

QOL Economic Development Committee Meeting
Tuesday March 11, 2008; 12pm
Ar-Razzaq Islamic Center
1009 W. Chapel Hill St Durham

QOL Housing Committee Meeting
Monday March 17, 2008; 6pm
Community Family Life and Recreation Center at Lyon Park
1313 Halley St. Durham; Health and Wellness Room

QOL Steering Committee Meeting
Wednesday April 2, 2008; 6:30pm