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 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 comprehendible 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 Southern Coalition for Social Justice in Durham, NC.

The Southern Coalition for Social Justice promotes justice by empowering minority and low-income communities to defend and advance their political, social and economic rights. They use the combined skills of lawyers, social scientists, community organizers and media experts to help underrepresented people develop strategies to achieve their visions for themselves and their communities, incorporating
an international human rights perspective and linking their efforts to broader processes of political, legal, social and economic change in the South.

**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. 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:

- **Southern Coalition for Social Justice**
  [http://www.scsj.org](http://www.scsj.org)

- **Create the Change**
  [http://ctcdurham.blogspot.com](http://ctcdurham.blogspot.com)

- **Building Blocks for Team Learning**
  [http://ltl.its.psu.edu/suggestions/teams/student/index.html](http://ltl.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 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%
  15% Online Discussion Posts
  10% Other mini assignments

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 12, 2009

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.

Week 2: January 19, 2009- NO CLASS- DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY

Week 3: January 26, 2009

Topic: Meet Our Community Partner: Southern Coalition for Social Justice

Readings due:

On Blackboard:


Online:

Southern Coalition for Social Justice- Review Website
http://www.scsj.org

Durham, The Making of an Image
http://www.indyweek.com/gyrobase/Content?oid=oid%3A31990

What I love about Durham, Posted May 24, 2006 (Focus on 10 comments/posts)
http://www.indyweek.com/gyrobase/PrintFriendly?oid=oid%3A31991

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:

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 31ST—Durham Civil Rights Walking Tour (Details TBA)**
This exciting tour focuses on many of the sites in downtown Durham that were important during the 1950s and 60s Civil Rights movement, including the Durham County Courthouse, the Arts Center (originally Durham High School and later City Hall), and the Kress and Woolworth buildings, sites of sit-in protests. Learn about the contributions of ordinary Durham residents to the struggle for equality as well as local leaders like Floyd McKissick and national figures like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who brought America's attention to the campaign for civil rights in the Bull City.

**Week 3: February 2, 2009**

**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/crrreporta.htm

Community Development and Community Organizing: Apples and Oranges? Chicken and Egg?
http://comm-org.wisc.edu/drafts/orgdevprr2c.htm

**Assignment:** Neighborhood Tour and Durham Field Notes (See Blackboard under assignments for detailed description)
Week 4: February 9, 2009

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

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14TH - HK ON J People’s Assembly March, Raleigh, NC
The third annual HKONJ is scheduled for February 14, 2009. More than 5,000 people gathered on Jones Street in Raleigh Feb. 9, 2008 for the second annual massive People's Movement in support of a Progressive Agenda. So far, more than 75 organizations have joined together and thousands marched and rallied in support of a 14-point agenda. In 2009, we will commit even more vigorously to this agenda, as well as to reform the criminal justice system to prevent prosecutorial misconduct against any citizen, regardless of race. For more details, see www.hkonj.com.

Week 5: February 16, 2009

Topic: The Role of Money in Organizing

Readings due:

Kahn, Chapter 14

The Ten Most Important Things You Can Know About Fundraising, Klein, K.
http://www.grassrootsfundraising.org/howto/v23_n1_art03.pdf

Other Readings, ONLINE BLACKBOARD PACKET
SOWO 491- Community Organizing
For Review:

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

Week 7: February 23, 2009

*Topic*: Leadership and Strategy in Context—Power, Privilege and Participatory Methods

**Readings due**:  
Kahn, Chapters 2, 7  
Sen, Chapter 5  
Leondar-Wright, p. 64-87

*On Blackboard*:

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

*Online*:

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

**Asking Strategic Questions**  

Week 8: March 2, 2009

*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  

Rethinking Nonprofit Partnerships: Lessons learned help groups do better job of collaborating,  

*Other readings, TBA*

March 9th Spring Break- Have Fun!
Week 9: March 16, 2008

*Topic:* Values and Faith in Organizing

*Readings due:*

- Horowitz, C. Spiritual Activist, Excerpts


Week 10: March 23, 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](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.netaction.org/training/)

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

Week 10: March 30, 2008—*Partnership Planning*

Activities/Content TBA

SOWO 491- Community Organizing
Week 11: April 6, 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:**


Week 12: April 13, 2008

*Topic:* Regroup/Reflection/Presentation Planning

Week 13: April 20, 2008

*Topic:* Community Presentations

Week 13: April 27, 2008

*Topic:* Evaluation and PARTY!
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 12</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 16th</td>
<td>*Strengths Assessment</td>
<td>Strengths Assessment (in digital drop box) 5 p.m. on Jan. 16th</td>
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<td>Jan 19</td>
<td><strong>MLK HOLIDAY</strong></td>
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<td>Jan 26</td>
<td>Community In Context: Durham and the Southern Coalition for Social</td>
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<td>Justice</td>
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<td>Jan 31st</td>
<td><strong>Tour of Durham’s Civil Rights History</strong></td>
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<td>Feb 2</td>
<td>History of Organizing Group Work and Teambuilding</td>
<td>*First online post— Online reflection post on Neighborhood tour</td>
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<td><strong>Learning Pair Facilitation Begins</strong></td>
<td>Durham Tour Field Notes (See Blackboard under assignments for detailed description)</td>
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<td>Feb 9</td>
<td>Neighborhood Organizing and DSNI: Holding Ground</td>
<td>Online Reflection: Streets of Hope</td>
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<td>Feb 14</td>
<td><strong>Historic Thousands on Jones Street (HK on J)</strong></td>
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<td>Feb 16</td>
<td>The Role of Money in Organizing Training</td>
<td>Team Goals and Timeline Due</td>
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<td>Feb 23</td>
<td><strong>Leadership and Strategy in Context—Power, Privilege and Participatory Methods</strong></td>
<td>Revised goals due online</td>
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<td><strong>Community Writing Assignment Proposal Due</strong></td>
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<td>March 2</td>
<td>Mobilizing Relationship, Building Community Collaboration and Conflict</td>
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<td>March 9</td>
<td><strong>SPRING BREAK</strong></td>
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<td>March 16</td>
<td>Values and Faith in Organizing</td>
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<td>March 23</td>
<td>Organizing, the Media and Advocacy Strategies</td>
<td>Writing Projects Due</td>
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<td>March 30</td>
<td>Regroup: Project Check In, Community Partners Meeting</td>
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<td>April 6</td>
<td>Long Haul and Generational Issues in Organizing</td>
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<td>April 13</td>
<td>Reflection and Community Presentation Planning</td>
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<td>April 20</td>
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<td>April 27</td>
<td>Evaluation/PARTY</td>
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- Indicates required meetings beyond scheduled class time