

SYLLABUS
SOC307 ACTION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE
Spring 2022
Professor Betsy Leondar-Wright • Lasell University

OVERVIEW: In this course, all the students together will design and carry out a brief activist campaign to move towards a better future.

Can a small group make a difference in just three months? Yes, history shows that brief, single-issue campaigns waged by small groups of students have contributed to the success of many social movements. The course will give you real-world experience in activist skills *and* invite you to think critically about social change strategies.

REQUIRED BOOKS (for sale in the bookstore and on reserve in the library):

- Bobo et al, *Organizing for Social Change*, Seven Locks Press, **4th** edition, 2010
(NOTE: page numbers and chapter numbers vary from edition to edition)
- Myers-Lipton, *Change! A Student Guide to Social Action*

If the cost of the books poses a hardship for you, please talk with the professor.

Other readings are online, with links from Canvas.

SUMMARY OF DEADLINES

(Individual deadlines in **bold**; *committee and whole group deadlines in italics*)

January 27 - Your issue proposal

February 3 - Committees research and present issues (post on OneDrive before class)

February 6 - Group decision on issue

March 1 by 8 am: Results of research on campaign options; present on March 3

March 9 - Committees upload draft sections of Campaign Action Plan

March 22 to 31 - Committees present about extra reading in their area

*March 23 - ****MAJOR DEADLINE**** Group submission of Campaign Action Plan by noon*

April 6 - Individual participation log for February and March

May 4 - Complete all campaign activities

May 6 - Turn in individual participation logs for April; and committee activity reports

May 7 - Final reflection paper

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

This course has a light load for reading and writing compared with other 300-level and 4-credit courses, but that does not mean that the workload will be easier. The Thursday session has an extra hour for campaign meetings. An important assignment will need work around or during spring break. At least two off-campus trips will require leaving campus at 2 pm and returning at 6:30. In March and April, students should expect to attend at least one committee meeting, event, work session or other commitment per week, in addition to the two T/Th class sessions. Each committee must find a mutually convenient time to meet regularly. Please plan in advance to free this time from other courses' demands in April. It is important to read the assigned readings before the class when they're listed, as the readings contain ideas and how-to advice essential for that day's class.

THE GROUP CAMPAIGN

The class will design and carry out a small-scale activist campaign on a social problem, chosen by consensus of all students.

Just as in a real campaign, students' success or failure will be collective. Almost half the grade will be based on the whole class successfully writing a Campaign Action Plan, on committees carrying out their roles, and on the whole group successfully implementing the plan.

The students in the class are free to choose which problem will be addressed by the campaign, which sub-issue and which goal, which target and what tactics - within certain parameters. While social justice campaigns have been effective with a wide range of riskiness, from high-risk to low-risk, these parameters are intended to keep this campaign fairly low-risk, for student safety and to enhance learning.

First parameter: The campaign activities won't break any laws or put participants at risk of arrest or danger.

Second parameter: The campaign's targets may not include the Lasell administration or any part of the Lasell community. The constituency to be educated and recruited may include anyone at Lasell, but not the target decision-maker to be pressured for change. (For example, if the problem chosen were natural gas leaks, the campaign could pressure a gas company, a local government or the state legislature, but not Lasell to change its gas appliances.) This parameter is intended to encourage students to broaden their worldview, their sense of empowerment and their belief in their potential influence on off-campus public affairs.

WHOLE GROUP ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES

1. The Campaign Action Plan – due March 23 - same grade to each student, up to 15 points

Before you carry out the campaign, you will write down what you plan to do. This is a crucial step for campaign success, so please treat this as the most important writing deadline of the semester.

The written Campaign Action Plan will be graded on timeliness, thoroughness, incorporating lessons from the readings and classroom activities, and realistic chance of success. An A-level (14 or 15 point) plan will specify a coherent sub-issue, a clear target, a winnable goal, a coherent strategy towards the goal, creative and realistic tactics including a public demonstration, plan for constituency outreach and recruitment, a media plan, a social media plan, a timeline and a diagram using the campaign strategy template and many terms from the course.

2. Campaign implementation – completed by May 4 - same grade to each student, up to 15 points

Campaign implementation will be graded on timely completion of the Campaign Action Plan; on skill and creativity shown in carrying out all components; on flexibility (responding creatively to the unexpected); and on how well students work together and collaborate. Victory on the goal is not required, but will be rewarded with extra credit.

COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Each student will belong to one committee, which will take charge of one aspect of the campaign. All members are expected to attend committee meetings and actively participate in committee activities. The committee grade of up to 20 points will be based on meeting the following 4 deadlines, fulfillment of the committee job description, creativity, flexibility, collaboration within and between committees, and documentation of activities in the committee report.

- Each committee will gather information about possible issues, upload it and present it to the class on February 3 – up to 3 points
- Each committee will write a draft section of the Campaign Action Plan by March 9 – up to 5 points
- Each committee will read and report on an extra reading on the date assigned between March 22 and 31 – up to 2 points
- Each committee will do their part to implement the campaign, including reaching out to enough people outside the class to complete at least 12 connections by April 2, and will report on committee functioning and fulfillment of the job description by May 6 – up to 10 points

INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Issue proposal** – 100 to 300 word persuasive essay for other students to read. Due January 27. Post in OneDrive folder and present in class on January 27. – 5 points

2. **Report on research into campaign options** - due March 1 in writing and verbally - 5 points
In campaign planning meetings, you will sign up for at least two avenues to explore. Besides following online links and making initial contacts, for each promising idea, make at least 2 follow-up phone calls and personal emails, persisting until you get responses. Keep digging until you can give a strategic recommendation for or against possible sub-issue(s), target(s), goal(s), etc. In your write-up, describe what you learned and the reasons behind your recommendations pro or con. (No minimum length, but write enough detail that other students can understand the sub-issue and follow your reasoning. No maximum length, but please summarize any long documents; don't just give links or overwhelm the other students; just write pithy explanations.)

3. **Logs of individual participation in campaign planning and implementation** – due by April 6 for February and March, by May 6 for April – 15 points

Each student is expected to take an active role in planning and implementing the campaign: serving on a committee, facilitating at least one meeting, giving at least two verbal reports to the class, attending campaign events and putting in at least 2 hours per week outside class in March and April. Only activities and hours of work outside class sessions and documented in log will be credited, @ approximately a point per hour.

4. **Final paper: Reflections on and evaluation of the campaign** – 1200 to 2000 words - due May 7 – 10 points

Please cast a critical eye on the campaign, using concepts from handouts and at least two readings to assess its impact 1) on themselves individually and on other students in the course; 2) on the target; 3) on the constituency; and 4) on the future of the social problem. What were the best and worst aspects of this collective endeavor? What would have made the campaign more effective? If the campaign continues, what should happen next?

An A-level (9.5 or 10-point) paper will show thought and critical thinking to multiple aspects of the campaign; will apply course concepts including some from both books; will cover all questions listed above; and will be well-organized and clearly written.

COURSE GRADING

Grades will be calculated on a 100-point scale, with up to 50 points for group grades and up to 50 points for individual performance:

WHOLE GROUP GRADES - up to 30 points:

- Written Campaign Action Plan – due March 23 – up to 15 points
- Campaign implementation by May 4 – 15 points

COMMITTEE GRADES - up to 20 points:

- Committee reports on research into options - due February 3 - 3 points
- Committee drafts of Campaign Action Plan – due March 9 – 5 points
- Each committee read and reported on an extra reading between March 22-31 - up to 2 points
- Committee functioning and accomplishments, including 12+ contacts completed and reported on, as documented in report due May 6 – 10 points

INDIVIDUAL GRADES - up to 50 points:

- Issue proposal due January 27 - 5 points
- Research write-up on campaign options due March 1 - 5 points
- Individual participation in campaign planning and implementation outside of class sessions, as documented in logs due April 6 and May 6 – total 15 points
- Final reflection paper – Due May 7 – 10 points
- Class attendance & participation, including meeting co-facilitation; at least two in-class presentations (including issue proposal); evidence of reading – 15 points

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND MEETINGS

PHASE ONE: PICKING THE ISSUE AND PLANNING THE CAMPAIGN

Thursday January 20 – The history of student campaigns for social justice; Overview of class and campaign

5-6 pm - Looking ahead to student-led meetings; Discussion of broad issue areas

Tuesday January 25 –What social problems do you care about most? Issue development and persuasive communication

Reading: Myers-Lipton Chapter 1 (arrive prepared to summarize examples of student campaigns in the book)

**** INDIVIDUAL DEADLINE:** Post a brief issue proposal on Canvas by Thursday January 27.

Thursday January 27 – Power; Participatory democracy and ground-rules for working together; Committee formation

Readings: Myers-Lipton pp. 21-26 and Chapters 4 and 8; Bobo, Chapters 2

“Fundamentals” and Chapter 12 “Planning and Facilitating Meetings.” There will be a quiz on Bobo Chapter 2 and Myers-Lipton Chapter 4.

Weekly Campaign meeting facilitated by 2 students 5-6 pm: Student presentations on issues under consideration; Issue discussion; divide research tasks among committees

Tuesday Feb 1 – Introducing Campaign Strategy Template; Researching issue options

Readings: Other students’ issue proposals; • Bobo Chapter 3 Choosing an Issue

Thursday Feb 3 - Issue development

Committee deadline: Committees present research results on finalist issues

Weekly campaign meeting 5-6: Decide on broad social issue for campaign

**** GROUP DEADLINE #1** – Decide on broad social issue no later than Sunday February 6 **

Tuesday February 8 – Strategy skills

Readings: Bobo Chapter 4 Developing a Strategy; Handouts on Campaign Action Plan sections; Myers-Lipton chapter 6

Thursday February 10 – Picking a target

Readings: Myers-Lipton Chapter 5 “Research” and “Legislative Advocacy Guide” and browse <https://malegislature.gov/Bills>

Weekly campaign meeting: Target options and strategy options to pressure target

Tuesday February 15 - Developing vision and tactics

Readings: Bobo, chapter 5 Tactics and chapter 7 Meetings to Pressure Officials;

• Browse these websites [Beautiful Trouble](#) and [Global Nonviolent Action Database](#) and come to class ready to show and tell about one tactic that inspires you

Thursday February 17 - Researching options for goals, targets and tactics

Reading: Myers-Lipton Chapter 7

Weekly campaign meeting: Divide up sub-issues, bills/regulations, others' campaigns, nonprofit efforts, etc, on issue to research for March 1 deadline

Tuesday February 22 - Campaign planning

Reading: Myers-Lipton, chapter 9, Bobo Chapter 17 Tactical Investigations up to "Timing" (pp. 199-206 in 4th edition)

Weekly campaign meeting will be part of Tuesday's class this week; Go over options for sub-issues, target, goal, tactics, event; Prepare to decide among options next week

Thursday February 24 – Hold for possible field trip– Please clear your schedule from 2 to 6:30 pm

Tuesday March 1 – Present campaign options - Please arrive prepared to present your report and respond to others' reports

Reading: Other students' reports on OneDrive

**** INDIVIDUAL DEADLINE** – Tuesday March 1 by 8 am: Written report on your research on options for sub-issues, bills, tactics and other groups' efforts – Upload to OneDrive and present in class

Thursday March 3 – Making informed decisions on campaign options

Weekly campaign meeting: Discuss campaign options for all committees' components of plan, make decisions

**** Committees must schedule at least one extra meeting between March 3 and March 9 to write draft sections of Campaign Action Plan ****

Tuesday March 8 – Campaign messaging and face-to-face persuasion

Reading: Bobo Chapter 13 "Public Speaking" (skip the last part on PowerPoint); and Myers-Lipton pp. 90-95 and 111-113

**** COMMITTEE DEADLINE – Upload drafts of sections of Campaign Action Plan to OneDrive by Wednesday March 9 at 6 pm ****

Thursday March 10 – Campaign meeting: Discuss draft campaign components

Reading: Other committees' draft sections of Campaign Action Plan

Weekly campaign meeting: Deciding on options and improving plan sections

**** Committees must schedule at least one extra meeting between March 10 and March 20 to work on their sections of the Campaign Action Plan ****

**** SPRING BREAK – No classes on March 15 or 17 ****

PHASE 2: PREPARATION FOR ACTION

Tuesday March 22 — Ally outreach

Reading: Bobo chapters 9 Building Coalitions and 10 Recruiting

Extra reading for the Allies and Constituencies Committee: Bobo Chapter 11

Developing Leadership; (also skim Bobo chapters 20 (Religious) and 21 and 22

(Labor) to see if there's anything relevant to the campaign); Please come to class ready to present what you learned with a visual aid.

**** GROUP DEADLINE #3 – UPLOAD CAMPAIGN ACTION PLAN TO CANVAS BY WEDNESDAY MARCH 23 AT NOON ****

Thursday March 24 – Public art as activism

Reading: “The Art of Demonstration”

*Extra reading for the **Public Demonstrations Committee**: Five sections from Beautiful Trouble website below. Please come to class ready to present what you learned with a visual aid.*

<http://beautifultrouble.org/principle/dont-just-brainstorm-artstorm/>

<http://beautifultrouble.org/principle/show-dont-tell/>

<http://beautifultrouble.org/tactic/artistic-vigil/>

<http://beautifultrouble.org/principle/use-the-power-of-ritual/>

<http://beautifultrouble.org/theory/ethical-spectacle/>

Weekly campaign meeting: Campaign implementation timeline, including setting date(s) for group event(s); Committee next steps

Tuesday March 29 – Target outreach

Reading: TBA depending on the target

*Extra reading for the **Target Committee**: (if state legislative target, read Meredith Chapter 2, and browse pp. 59–145 to find other parts relevant to the campaign; if a different target, TBA). Please come to class ready to present what you learned with a visual aid.*

Thursday March 31 - Media outreach

Reading: Bobo Chapter 14 Using the Media

Weekly campaign meeting - Event planning

PHASE 3: PUTTING THE PLAN INTO ACTION

Tuesday April 5 - Campaign meeting, work session or committee meetings, as needed

**** INDIVIDUAL DEADLINE – Turn in logs of February and March participation by April 6****

Thursday April 7 - Campaign meeting, work session or committee meetings, as needed

Weekly campaign meeting: Committee reports on outreach progress

Tuesday April 12 - Campaign meeting, work session or committee meetings, as needed

**** COMMITTEE DEADLINE #2: Contact should have been made with all priority targets, all priority media, all authorities in charge of event spaces, all potential ally groups, and all potential constituencies by April 12 before class. ****

Thursday April 14 - Campaign meeting, work session or committee meetings, as needed

Weekly campaign meeting: Committee reports on outreach progress; Event planning

Tuesday April 19 – Campaign meeting, work session or committee meetings, as needed. (Please keep 2 pm - 6:30 pm open in case a campaign event is scheduled.)

Thursday April 21 – Campaign meeting, work session or committee meetings, as needed
Weekly campaign meeting: Planning
(Please keep 2 pm - 6:30 pm open in case an event is scheduled.)

Tuesday April 26 – Prepare for Symposium; Campaign meeting, work session or committee meetings, as needed. (Please keep 2 pm - 6:30 pm open in case an event is scheduled.)

*** Symposium on Thursday April 28 – Campaign booth 12-1:30 ***
(Please keep 1:30 pm - 6:30 pm open in case an event is scheduled.)

Tuesday May 3 – Learning from this experience; Farewells and appreciations
Reading: Myers-Lipton, Chapter 11
Last campaign meeting: Final campaign activities (Please keep 2 pm - 6:30 pm open in case an event is scheduled)

**** GROUP DEADLINE #5: Complete all campaign activities by May 4 ****

Deadline for individual and committee logs - May 6
Final paper due May 7

Policy on student opinions

The final paper, campaign planning and class discussions will require you to put forward opinions. All opinions communicated in a respectful way are welcome. If you disagree with the professor or the author of a reading, you will not be graded more strictly for that; if you agree, you will not be graded more leniently. All positions you take will be evaluated only by whether you present evidence and whether you make a reasoned argument.