Activism

ORGSTUDY 203 / ENVIRON 203

University of Michigan
Winter 2016

Professor: Michael T. Heaney
Office: 2016 Ruthven Museums Building, 1109 Geddes Avenue
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:10pm-5:10pm; and by appointment
Phone: 202-236-3369
E-mail: mheaney@umich.edu
Website: https://canvas.umich.edu/

GSI: Alex Kinzer
Office Hours: By appointment
E-mail: alexkinz@umich.edu

Class Day/Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:30am-1pm
Location: G115 Angel Hall, 435 South State Street

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is about the practice of democracy. It examines the notion that when ordinary citizens work together for a common purpose, they have the potential to bring about intentional changes in their social, political, and environmental reality. Of course, not all citizens get involved in trying to change the world. Sometimes citizens are successful in achieving change and other times they are not. Sometimes change occurs only after decades or centuries of organized struggle. Hence, this class addresses questions, such as (1) Why do some citizens engage in activism, while others do not? (2) Which tactics tend to be most effective and under what conditions are they effective? (3) Why have some movements succeeded, while others have failed? (4) How can an individual citizen engage effectively in activism?

Learning about activism requires reflection on the struggles of movements past, as well as hands-on engagement with the struggles of today. Activism cannot be understood fully only by reading books. At the same time, it cannot be understood fully without reading books. Hence, this class combines a review of writings on activism, while at the same time requiring students to plan and engage directly in activism themselves.

Neither this course, nor its instructional staff, embraces or rejects any ideology, movement, or political project. We will not preach social change from any particular point of view. The working assumption of the course is that the same organizational processes and techniques are useful for a wide range of
causes, issues, and ideologies. The goal of the course is to help empower students as citizens so that they might effect change in the world over the course of their lives.

Students are advised to read the course syllabus carefully, as we will follow it closely this semester.

COURSE GOALS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Students will learn about theories of social movement participation, strategies, tactics, and dynamics. They will learn to apply these theories to historical, current, and hypothetical examples of activism.

2. Students will learn techniques for planning, implementing, and evaluating activist campaigns.

3. Students will strengthen their abilities to plan, implement, and evaluate activist campaigns.

4. Students will strengthen their abilities to work together effectively in team settings.

5. Students will strengthen their abilities to operate in dynamic, uncertain, real-world environments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course requires students to participate in class, complete three individual assignments, participate cooperatively in a team project, and take Midterm and Final exams. Moreover, students are required to show respect for fellow students throughout the course, which is especially important given the potentially incendiary nature of some of the issues discussed. We are certain to disagree with one another about the nature of the public interest, yet we must treat one another in a way that is conducive of a productive learning environment. Individual assignments must be submitted on time in order for students to receive any credit for the assignment. Exams must be taken in class without the aid of notes, electronic devices, or other people. Team projects will be evaluated on the basis of a combination of self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and faculty evaluation. Grades of participation and respect for fellow students will be based on the professor’s observation of student participation in class.

Each of these elements will be weighted as follows in determining final grades:

- Assignment #1 – 10% of final grade
- Assignment #2 – 5% of final grade
- Assignment #3 – 15% of final grade
- Midterm Exam – 25% of final grade
- Final Exam – 25% of final grade
- Team Project – 15% of final grade
- Participation and Respect for Fellow Students – 5% of final grade

Please note that late assignments will not be accepted and make-up exams will not be given. Students who do not complete all assignments/exams will not receive a passing grade for the course. Attendance is required and will be included in the student’s grade as part of cooperativeness on team projects and participation in the class. Being present and cooperative during in-class team work sessions
is an essential component of producing an effective team project. Student performance on assignments and exams will benefit from regular class attendance. Thus, the professor reserves the right to take attendance during any class session.

**Students are strongly encouraged, but not required, to bring laptop computers to class.** Laptops will be especially useful in completing in-class surveys and participating in team projects. However, laptop use should be reserved exclusively for class-related purposes. Laptop use for non-class purposes (e.g., e-mail, Facebook, Twitter) is distracting both to the student using the laptop and students sitting nearby her or him. **Students seen using laptops for non-course-related purposes will be asked by the instructional staff to put the computer away.**

**READING ASSIGNMENTS**

Students should complete assigned readings prior to each class session. Students are strongly advised to bring copies of the required readings to class for their reference during discussions. All articles are available for download on Canvas. The following books are on reserve at the Undergraduate Library and available for purchase online at Amazon.com:

  
  To purchase: [http://www.amazon.com/Organizing-Social-Change-Bobo-Kendall/dp/0984275215/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1420607726&sr=8-1&keywords=organizing+for+social+change](http://www.amazon.com/Organizing-Social-Change-Bobo-Kendall/dp/0984275215/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1420607726&sr=8-1&keywords=organizing+for+social+change)

  To borrow from the library: [http://mirlyn.lib.umich.edu/Record/012612837](http://mirlyn.lib.umich.edu/Record/012612837)

  

  To borrow from the library: [http://mirlyn.lib.umich.edu/Record/012612245](http://mirlyn.lib.umich.edu/Record/012612245)

  

  To borrow from the library: [http://mirlyn.lib.umich.edu/Record/011527968](http://mirlyn.lib.umich.edu/Record/011527968)
- You may be interested in the fact that Amazon.com has a program of 2-day free shipping for college students for a 6-month free trial.


Students are responsible for obtaining copies of the readings through their preferred method prior to the time the reading is assigned in class.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All students are required to abide by the academic honesty guidelines of the University of Michigan. Among other things, this means: (1) Students must submit only their own, original work in fulfillment of course requirements; (2) Consulted works must be cited using an accepted documentation style; and (3) Students must provide truthful representations to the professor on issues such as reasons for missing class. The professor reserves the right to clarify how this policy applies on specific assignments prior to the commencement of those assignments. Students requiring additional clarification are strongly urged to consult with the professor before submitting questionable work. Violating this policy may cause a student to suffer severe grade penalties, failure of the class, academic probation, and/or expulsion.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please notify the professor at least two weeks prior to the time when the accommodation will be needed. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you notify the professor of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; http://www.umich.edu/sswd) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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COURSE OUTLINE

1. Wednesday, January 6 – Introduction to the Course
   - This session will review the requirements and expectations of the course.
   - A brief overview will be given of the course material.
• An in-class survey will be conducted to enable the professor to become familiar with students’ backgrounds, experience, reasons for taking the course, and areas of interest within activism. Students will be asked to complete the Google Form provided by the professor.

2. Monday, January 11 – Fundamentals of Organizing

Guest Speaker: Ginny Rogers, Co-founder and Group Leader of the Ann Arbor Chapter of the Citizens’ Climate Lobby

Read and be prepared to discuss:

• Organizing for Social Change, Preface, pp. iv-x.
• Organizing for Social Change, Chapter 1, pp. 1-3.
• Organizing for Social Change, Chapter 2, pp. 5-19.
• Beautiful Trouble, Introduction, pp. 1-5.
• Beautiful Trouble, Direct Action, pp. 32-34.

3. Wednesday, January 13 – Issues

Read and be prepared to discuss:

• Organizing for Social Change, Chapter 3, pp. 21-27.
• Media coverage of prior years’ projects

• Assignment #1 will be discussed in class.

• Assignment #1. Write an essay of 1,000 to 1,250 words in which you identify a social problem/issue that adversely affects the public interest. Briefly explain what you think are the major causes of that problem/issue and why you think that the public interest is adversely affected. Drawing upon class readings from Organizing for Social Change, Beautiful Trouble, and Saul Alinksy, briefly sketch a campaign to exert political pressure on decision makers who exert control over some aspect of the issue that you (working with a group of five of your fellow students) could actually implement. The campaign may be based entirely in independent action organized by your team or it may rely on cooperation with an already existing organization. The campaign may draw upon one or more of a wide variety of tactics including (but not limited to) a petitions, letter-writing, fund raising, lobbying, or a protest rally. The campaign may NOT include violence, intimidation, trespassing, property damage, intentional arrest, slander, libel, or any tactics that might reasonably be expected to cause injury/damage to students, the public, or property. Essays will be graded on the clarity of formulation of the problem, explanation of linkage to the public interest, and the realism of implementing the proposed campaign. Each campaign should be given a short, descriptive title, so that it is easy for others to understand the topic of the project by simply looking at the title. Please make your title the file name and upload your proposal as Assignment #1 under the Assignments tab on Canvas by 11:55pm on Sunday, January 31. Note that if you do
not make your title the file name, your project may be titled something like “No Title”, which will substantially decrease the chances that anyone looks at it.

4. Monday, January 18 – NO CLASS for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

5. Wednesday, January 20 – Strategies

Read and be prepared to discuss:

- *Organizing for Social Change*, Chapter 4, pp. 29-44.


Read and be prepared to discuss:

- *Beautiful Trouble*, Advanced Leafleting, pp. 8-9
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Creative Petition Delivery, pp. 22-23.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Flash Mob, pp. 46-47.

7. Wednesday, January 27 – Brief Case Studies

Read and be prepared to discuss:

- *Beautiful Trouble*, Prefigurative Intervention, pp. 82-83.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Environmental Justice, pp. 228-229.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, The Couple in the Cage, pp. 312-313.
- Students are required to bring their copies of *Beautiful Trouble* to class.

Reminder: Assignment #1 must be uploaded to Canvas by 11:55pm on Sunday, January 31.
8. Monday, February 1– Organizing Models

Read and be prepared to discuss:

- *Organizing for Social Change*, Chapter 6, pp. 61-68.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Beware the Tyranny of Structurelessness, pp. 102-103.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Consensus is a Means, Not an End, pp. 116-117.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Enable, Don’t Command, pp. 132-133.

Assignment #2 will be discussed in class.

- Assignment #2. Access the “Proposals” folder on the Canvas web site. There you will find copies of proposals written by all of the other students in the class. Briefly peruse the titles of all proposals in order to determine which ones match your general interest areas. Read FIVE of these proposals and write 100 words about EACH proposal in which you briefly explain the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, from your perspective. Evaluations will be graded on clarity and coherence of the short statements. Please rate each proposal as falling into one of the following five categories: (5) Definitely want to work on this project; (4) Could be interested in this project; (3) Don’t have a strong feeling about this project one way or the other; (2) Would probably want to avoid this project; or (1) Definitely do not want to work on this project. Please upload one document with your five 100-word evaluations and ratings as Assignment #2 under the Assignments tab on Canvas by 11:55pm on Sunday, February 7.

9. Wednesday, February 3 – Coalitions

Read and be prepared to discuss:

- *Beautiful Trouble*, Shift the Spectrum of Allies, pp. 172-173.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Delegate, pp. 122-123.

Reminder: Assignment #2 must be uploaded to Canvas by 11:55pm on Sunday, Feb 7.

10. Monday, February 8 – Presentation of Selected Project Proposals

- The requirements for team projects will be explained in class.
• The authors of the most-highly-rated projects will be asked to make short, three-minute pitches to the class as to why their projects are worth undertaking. If your project is not among one of the most-highly-rated projects, that in no way reflects negatively upon your project. Projects may not receive a high rating for any of a number of reasons, such as your proposal was very similar to another proposal.

• Using the Google Form provided by the professor, students rank the top 5 projects that they would like to work on. Every effort will be made to place each student in one of her/his top 3 projects.

11. Wednesday, February 10 – Developing a Team Strategy

• Based on the ratings provided by students through the Google Form, the top projects will be announced in class. If your project is not among one of the most-highly-rated projects, that in no way reflects negatively upon your project. Projects may not receive a high rating for any of a number of reasons, such as your proposal was very similar to another proposal.

• Each student will be assigned as a member of a team. Please note that it is essential that you work closely and cooperatively with the members of your team all semester. Among other things, working “cooperatively” means that you treat your team members with respect, you attend class on days when in-class team assignments are scheduled, you are available to meet your teammates outside of class when necessary, you are well prepared for meetings, and that you provide ideas and leadership to the team when necessary. It is important for all team members to recognize that, even though one member of the team proposed the project, all members of the team equally “own” the project. No one person is “in charge.” Cooperation will be evaluated at the end of the semester by yourself, your peers, and the professor.

• Teams select team names and report the names to the professor.

• In-class Team Assignment: Each team sketches a strategy chart (see Organizing for Change, p. 44) and uploads it to its team folder on Canvas.

• Teams schedule their first meeting with GSI Alex Kinzer.

12. Monday, February 15 – Research

Read and be prepared to discuss:

• Organizing for Social Change, Chapter 17, pp. 199-229.
• Beautiful Trouble, Do the Media’s Work for Them, pp. 124-125.
• Beautiful Trouble, Team Up with Experts, pp. 184-185.

• In-class Team Assignment: Each team makes a plan for research and uploads it to its team folder on Canvas.
• Teams commence research outside of class.
13. Wednesday, February 17 – Messaging

Read and be prepared to discuss:

- *Beautiful Trouble*, Detournement/Culture Jamming, pp. 28-31
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Identity Correction, pp. 60-61.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Media-jacking, pp. 72-75.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Brand or Be Branded, pp. 104-105.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Lead with Sympathetic Characters, pp. 146-147.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Play to the Audience that Isn’t There, pp. 160-161.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Think Narratively, pp. 186-188.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Society of the Spectacle, pp. 266-267.

- **In-class Team Assignment**: Each team develops a set of messages/slogans for its campaign. For each message slogan, the team identifies the underlying frame(s) that are in use and assesses how potential supporters, targets, and the media might respond. The team uploads this analysis to its team folder on Canvas.


Read and be prepared to discuss:


- **Students will have the opportunity to ask questions during class about the upcoming Midterm Exam.**

- **4:10pm – Optional Review Session for Midterm Exam**

15. Wednesday, February 24 – In-class Midterm Exam

16. Monday, February 29 – NO CLASS for Spring Break

17. Wednesday, March 2 – NO CLASS for Spring Break
18. Monday, March 7 – Leadership and Teamwork

Read and be prepared to discuss:


- **In-class Team Assignment**: Teamwork exercise.

19. Wednesday, March 9 – Nonviolent Direction Action and Potential Legal Consequences

Read and be prepared to discuss:

- *Beautiful Trouble*, Occupation, pp. 78-81.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Strategic Nonviolence, pp. 88-89.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Use the Law, Don’t be Afraid of It, pp. 196-197.

- **In-class Team Assignment**: Each team outlines potential tactics, makes an assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of these tactics, and uploads it to its team folder on Canvas.

20. Monday, March 14 – Planning an Activist Campaign

While participating in any activist event, students are expected to adhere to the standards of conduct expected of University of Michigan students. In order to familiarize yourself with these standards, please read and be prepared to discuss:

- *The Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities*. Available online: http://www.oscr.umich.edu/statement/
- *Guidelines for Implementing the Proper Use Policy of the University of Michigan: Responsible Use of Technology Resources*. Available online: http://www.itcs.umich.edu/itcsdocs/r1103/
• Each team will work together during class to plan an activist campaign that it will actually implement before the end of the semester. The campaign may be run entirely as an independent action organized by your team or it may rely on cooperation with an already existing organization. However, if the campaign is planned in conjunction with an existing organization, the team must play a central role in planning and executing the campaign. The campaign may draw upon one or more of a wide variety of tactics including (but not limited to) a petition drive, online letter writing, fund raising, lobbying, or a protest rally. The campaign may NOT include violence, intimidation, trespassing, property damage, intentional arrest, slander, libel, or any other tactics that might reasonably be expected to cause injury/damage to students, the public, or property. The team is responsible for mobilizing supporters and raising any funds necessary to undertake the event. **Teams are required to meet outside of class with Professor Heaney to discuss the plan for the activist campaign BEFORE implementing it (and no later than April 6). The event must take place no later than Sunday, April 10.** Each team will make a presentation to the class on its event on **Wednesday, April 13 or Monday, April 18.**

• **In-class Team Assignment:** Teams will be given time in class to work on planning the campaign.

• **Assignment #3** will be discussed in class.

• **Assignment #3.** Write an essay of 1,500 to 1,750 words in which you evaluate the outcome of your team’s work on the activist campaign. Which aspects of the event were successful? Which aspects did not work as well as you had hoped? Were you able to mobilize the necessary resources? Why or why not? How effective/ineffective were the arguments and frames that your team used? What kind of reactions (if any) did you receive from your intended audiences? If you were to continue this campaign, what would be the logical next steps? Please note that your essay will **NOT** be graded based on how successful your event was. Rather, your essay will be graded on the extent to which you draw on the readings and the lessons of the course to skillfully evaluate the event. If your event is a “success,” the goal is to explain why it succeeded. If your event “fails,” the goal is to explain why it failed. (Remember that even a “failed” project can be an outstanding learning experience.) Very importantly, your essay should demonstrate explicitly that you see general lessons – applicable to activism broadly – as a result of participating in your project. That is, you should articulate how your case speaks to some of the general theoretical propositions discussed in the class. Strong papers should demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between theory and the practice of activism. **Please upload your essays to the Assignment #3 tab on Canvas by 11:55pm on Tuesday, April 12.**

21. Wednesday, March 16 – Power

Read and be prepared to discuss:

• *Beautiful Trouble,* Challenge Patriarchy As You Organize, pp. 108-111.
• *Beautiful Trouble,* Chose Your Target Wisely, pp. 114-115.
• *Beautiful Trouble,* Put Your Target in a Decision Dilemma, pp. 166-167.
• *Beautiful Trouble,* Turn the Tables, pp. 190-191.
• Beautiful Trouble, Use the Jedi Mind Trick, pp. 194-195.
• Beautiful Trouble, Use the Power of Ritual, pp. 198-199.
• Beautiful Trouble, Cultural Hegemony, pp. 222-225.
• Beautiful Trouble, Intellectuals and Power, pp. 240-241.
• Beautiful Trouble, Narrative Power Analysis, pp. 244-245.
• Beautiful Trouble, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, pp. 246-247.
• Beautiful Trouble, Pillars of Support, pp. 248-249.
• Beautiful Trouble, Political Identity Paradox, pp. 254-255.
• Students are required to bring their copies of Beautiful Trouble to class.

• In-class Team Assignment: Students will be assigned to teams and will be asked to teach the class one of the required readings for the day. Students are STRONGLY encouraged to read all the readings prior to class. It is not that much, really.

22. Monday, March 21 – Imagining Your Event and Preparing for the Day

Read and be prepared to discuss:

• Beautiful Trouble, Anger Works Best When You Have the Moral High Ground, pp. 96-97.
• Beautiful Trouble, Bring the Issue Home, pp. 106-107.
• Beautiful Trouble, Don’t Dress Like a Protester, pp. 126-127.
• Beautiful Trouble, Don’t Mistake Your Group for Society, pp. 130-131.
• Beautiful Trouble, Escalate Strategically, pp. 134-135.
• Beautiful Trouble, Kill Them with Kindness, pp. 140-141.
• Beautiful Trouble, Know Your Cultural Terrain, pp. 142-145.
• Beautiful Trouble, Make Your Actions both Concrete and Communicative, pp. 154-155.
• Beautiful Trouble, No One Wants to Watch a Drum Circle, pp. 156-157.
• Beautiful Trouble, Show, Don’t Tell, pp. 174-175.
• Beautiful Trouble, Take Leadership from the Most Impacted, pp. 180-181.
• Beautiful Trouble, Take Risks, But Take Care, pp. 182-183.
• Beautiful Trouble, We Are All Leaders, pp. 202-203.

• In-class Team Assignment: Work on planning activist campaign.

• Teams schedule their second meeting with GSI Alex Kinzer.

23. Wednesday, March 23 – Artistic Approaches to Activism

Read and be prepared to discuss:

• Beautiful Trouble, Artistic Vigil, pp. 10-11.
• Beautiful Trouble, Electoral Guerrilla Theatre, pp. 40-43.
• Beautiful Trouble, Human Banner, pp. 56-59.
• Beautiful Trouble, Guerrilla Projection, pp. 52-53.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, Don’t Just Brainstorm, Artstorm!, pp. 128-129.
- *Beautiful Trouble*, This Ain’t the Sistine Chapel, pp. 188-189.

- **In-class Team Assignment**: Creativity exercise.

24. Monday, March 28 – Activist Archives

   Meet at the Joseph A. Labadie Collection (Hatcher Graduate Library, 913 S. University Avenue)

25. Wednesday, March 30 – Fundraising and the Business Side of Activism

   Read and be prepared to discuss:


   - **In-class Team Assignment**: Work on planning activist campaign.

26. Monday, April 4 – Case Study: The Stop Climate Change Movement

   - Film in Class: *Disruption* (http://watchdisruption.com)

27. Wednesday, April 6 – Making Presentations

   Read and be prepared to discuss:

   - *Organizing for Social Change*, Chapter 13, pp. 139-158.

   - **In-class Team Assignment**: Work on Team Presentations.

   **Reminder**: Wednesday, April 6 is the absolute deadline for each team to meet with Professor Heaney about the team’s plans for its activist event. If you do not meet with Professor Heaney, your team will not be allowed to proceed with its campaign.

28. Monday, April 11 – Case Study: The Tea Party

   Read and be prepared to discuss:

• **In-class Team Assignment**: Work on team presentations.

  **Reminder**: Assignment #3 must be uploaded to Canvas by 11:55pm on Tuesday, April 12.

29. Wednesday, April 13 – Team Presentations in Class

30. Monday, April 18 – Team Presentations in Class and Final Reflections on Activism

   Read and be prepared to discuss:

   • *Organizing for Social Change*, Chapter 26, pp. 357-364.

31. Wednesday, April 20 – 4:10pm – **Optional Review Session for Final Exam**

32. Tuesday, April 26, 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm – **Final Exam**