

# Theorizing Civic Engagement in New York City

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Barnard College  
AMST BC 3201  
Fall 2003  
Monday 6:10-8pm

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## Course Description:

In New York City, poverty, racism, inadequate education, lack of access to health care, unemployment, environmental pollution, and a host of other problems are daily realities for many. At the national level, the federal government has increasingly distanced itself from the struggles facing our city and other American cities. Yet at the grassroots level—in neighborhoods, workplaces, non-profit organizations, and activist community groups—people continue to organize to solve the daunting problems confronting them. In this class we will explore how communities and individuals empower themselves to make change, whether through traditional channels such as voting and supporting political parties and candidates, or through direct action and grassroots demonstrations. We will consider what the roles and responsibilities of individual citizens—as members and leaders of struggling communities and as people from the outside engaged in public service, advocacy, or organizing—should be in this process.

Through a combination of community-based learning, directed reflection, and theoretical readings, we will explore the different meanings of civic engagement in a multicultural society, focusing on the role of the advocate in community organizing and social change. Internships in New York City or participation in campus activism (8-10 hours/week), dialogue with local leaders, and case studies will enrich our reflection upon and analysis of other topics including: individual and community empowerment; public policy at the grassroots; the relationship between funding and social change; communication and coalition-building across differences of race, gender, class; and leadership development.

## Course Objectives:

- \* to integrate theoretical discussions on diversity, social justice, community, and civic responsibility with the practice of leadership and civic engagement
- \* to analyze different models of leadership

- \* to provide opportunities and methods for reflection
- \* to gain an understanding of how the social relations of power – such as race, class, gender, and sexuality – shape perspectives and strategies within organizations
- \* to develop a personal philosophy of civic engagement and leadership through critical analysis of social issues, reflection, and practice
- \* to improve students' ability to work in diverse groups

### **Course Requirements:**

Each student in the course must be involved in an internship with a non-profit organization or campus group that addresses issues of social justice or community development. Students need to have secured a position and started to work at least eight hours per week by the fourth week of the semester. You must volunteer between 8-10 hours with the organization every week (you may, of course, volunteer more hours if you wish). You will need to turn in a form signed by the director of the internship or leader of the group that documents your commitment to the organization. If you do not have a position secured at the beginning of the semester, don't worry. Together with Cara Smith of the Career Development office, we will find a placement that works well for you.

Our seminar-style weekly meetings are designed to encourage exploration of our roles in community-building and democracy. Sessions will include a combination of discussion of the readings, case studies, dialogues with community leaders, and presentations by members of the class. This is an intense and highly participatory class that requires everyone's involvement. Students will be expected to read each week's selections critically and to be active participants in class discussions.

In our discussions, we will integrate scholarly analysis with community "voices" not always heard in academic or public policy debates. We will work together to create an environment in which we express our views and listen to the views of others. This requires a degree of courage and trust; it is sometimes very hard to take a different stand on a controversial or sensitive issue, or to open yourself to a different viewpoint. But learning how to do so in class is good practice for your internships and civic engagement in general.

The primary written work of the course will consist of a private journal and an on-line discussion group. There will be an assigned question for each week that asks you to connect your personal experience to the theoretical issues in the readings. You will need to write a 500-600 word response on line, answering the question as well as reflecting on the experiences of your classmates. In addition, after each session at your organization, you should record the date, times, and a brief description of your activity in your own journal. You should

also reflect on conversations from your organization or an issue raised during class discussions. These records should be at least 2 substantial paragraphs.

In your journal, also feel free to include newspaper articles, photographs, flyers, or other material relevant to your topic, and to be creative. Remember that, although these journal entries are not expected to be polished essays, they should not be purely stream of consciousness either. Writing in your journal will be most valuable if you use it consistently to record, reflect upon, and analyze specific issues and experiences. The journal must be typed or word-processed, and double-spaced. You will turn in the entire journal at the midterm and at the end of the course.

Your final project for the semester is a "stakeholder" analysis of the organization for which you have worked. Many, if not all, of the organizations or programs for which you will work were developed self-consciously in response to a perceived "public problem." This assignment requires you to examine the diverse interests that different organizational stakeholders have in the public problem that underlies the organization. To complete this assignment, you will need to gather information from a wide range of people in the organization as well as the people the organization was created to serve. You will also need to do further research on the public issue of concern. How does your organization's mission "fit" within existing approaches to the problem on campus or in New York City? How does your organization address the larger issues? Does it work in coalition with other groups locally, nationally, or internationally? These papers will be given back to the organization for which you interned as well as turned in for a grade.

### **Grading:**

Class participation:	25%
Weekly reflections on internship experience:	50%
Stakeholder analysis of organization (15-17 pages):	25%

### **Required Readings:**

(Books – marked with an asterisk – may be purchased at Labyrinth Bookstore. There will also be copied readings available on my door.)

\*Saul Alinsky, Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals (1986, reprint).

Robert Bellah, et. al., Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (1985)

\*Robert Coles, The Call of Service: A Witness to Idealism (1993).

\*Temma Kaplan, Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movements (1996).

J. Kotter, "Successful Change and the Force that Drives It" 1996.

"Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Scale" - take this, but do not score it

J. Lipman-Blumen, "Women Leaders: An Oxymoron? Or Does Gender Make a Difference" 1996.

Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital" in Journal of Democracy 6, no. 1 (1995): 65-78.

Judy Rosener, "Ways Women Lead," Harvard Business Review, (Nov/Dec. 1990).

Joseph Rost, "Leadership Development in the New Millennium," Journal of Leadership Studies 1993.

Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry Brady, "Civic Participation and the Equality Problem" in Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina, eds., Civic Engagement in American Democracy (1999).

Theda Skocpol, "How Americans Became Civic" in Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina, eds., Civic Engagement in American Democracy (1999).

Theda Skocpol, "Advocates Without Members: The Recent Transformation of American Civic Life" in Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina, eds., Civic Engagement in American Democracy (1999).

Randy Stocker, "Community Development and Community Organizing: Apples and Oranges? Chicken and Egg?" in Benjamin Shepard and Ronald Hayduk, eds., From ACT UP to the WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization (2002)

Robert Wuthnow, "Mobilizing Civic Engagement: The Changing Impact of Religious Involvement" in Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina, eds., Civic Engagement in American Democracy (1999).

### **Syllabus of Weekly Assignments:**

Mon. 9/8

#### **INTRODUCTIONS**

Guest speaker on internships: Cara Smith, Career

Development

Mon. 9/15

#### **CATEGORIES OF ENGAGEMENT**

Coles, The Call of Service

- Mon. 9/22                   **THE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT DEBATE**  
 Bellah, Habits of the Heart, 167-195  
 Putnam, "Bowling Alone"  
 Schlozman, Verba, and Brady, "Civic Participation and the Equality Problem"  
 Skocpol, "How Americans Became Civic" & "Advocates Without Members"  
 Wuthnow, "Mobilizing Civic Engagement"
- Mon. 9/29                   **GENDER AND LEADERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS**  
 Guest speaker: Will Simpkins, Associate Director, College Activities  
 "Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Scale" – please take this, but do not score it  
 Kotter, "Successful Change and the Force that Drives It"  
 Rost, "Leadership Development in the New Millennium"  
 Lipman-Blumen, "Women Leaders: An Oxymoron? Or Does Gender Make a Difference"  
 Rosener, "Ways Women Lead"
- Mon. 10/6                   **NO CLASS – YOM KIPPUR**  
 Instead, please attend Sonia Alvarez's lecture on Latin American Feminism(s), Oct. 9, 7pm in the James Room
- Mon. 10/13                   **GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING AND FEMALE LEADERSHIP**  
 Kaplan, Crazy for Democracy
- Mon. 10/20                   **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION**  
 Alinsky, Rules for Radicals
- Mon. 10/27                   **FREEDOM SUMMER: A CIVICS CASE STUDY**  
 Video: *Eyes on the Prize, part 5*  
 Documents from Freedom Summer **WEB**
- Mon. 11/3                    **NO CLASS—ELECTION DAY HOLIDAY**
- Mon. 11/10                   **STUDENT DEFINE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**  
 The Port Huron Statement **WEB**  
 The New Student Politics: The Wingspread Statement on Student Civic Engagement
- Mon. 11/17                   **WHO FUNDS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT?**

Guest Speaker: *Lee Winkleman, Jewish Fund for Justice*  
Stoecker, "Community Development and Community Organizing"  
Henry Allen, "Organizing, Power, & Public Policy: One Foundation's Road to Supporting Community Organizing" **WEB**  
Peter Dreier, "Social Justice Philanthropy: Can We Get More Bang for the Buck?" **WEB**  
The Jewish Fund for Justice – please look carefully over the website **WEB**

Mon. 11/24

**IDEAS INTO ACTION: STARTING AN ORGANIZATION**

Guest speaker: *Maura Minsky, Scenarios USA*  
Readings to be announced

Mon. 12/1

**LOCAL ACTIVISM IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT**

Guest speaker: *Carrie Lee Teicher, Peace Corps*  
Readings to be announced

Mon. 12/8

**STUDENT PRESENTATIONS ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEORY AND PRAXIS**

*Final paper due*