

**City University of New York
HUNTER COLLEGE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

Political Advocacy & Social Work (CO-IV)

Course Description

Seeking social justice is a core value of the social work profession. Social workers who want to influence public policy and legislation to promote social justice and social change must interface with the political system. This course will provide experiential hands-on learning, where students will participate in an already existing legislative or public policy issue campaign. The focus of the course is on identifying and developing practical knowledge and skill so that social workers will be able to construct an issue advocacy campaign and incorporate political activism into their social work practice.

Part one lays the groundwork by exploring the connection between social work and political advocacy, providing general knowledge on NYC and NYS government, examining recent city and state legislative issue campaigns, and providing a conceptual framework for using the political process to affect a social change agenda. Part two offers skill-building opportunities by focusing on the nuts and bolts of different advocacy methods and tactics. Part three focuses on case studies – looking at previous policy and legislative advocacy campaigns as well as the students’ experiences - to evaluate lessons learned.

Objectives

- 1) To understand the political legislative process on the city/state level.
- 2) To strategize how to influence policy and legislation on city/state level.
- 3) To understand the power dynamics of majority politics.
- 4) To appreciate the role of social work in the political arena.
- 5) To obtain skills in empowering social workers and clients/constituencies through political activism.

Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will demonstrate their ability to:

- 1) Identify the stakeholders and key decision-makers on various issues.
- 2) Conduct a power analysis.
- 3) Participate in a policy or legislative issue campaign.
- 4) Analyze and implement various strategies and tactics of issue campaigns.
- 5) Evaluate the processes and outcomes of political advocacy campaigns.

Course Format & Assignments

This is an advanced experiential course designed to offer practical knowledge and skills in influencing public policy and legislation for second year and OYR students. Part One of the

course will provide a conceptual framework for using the political process to affect a social change agenda.

Students will be expected to join an already existing issue campaign organized by an established advocacy group, where students will volunteer 15 semester hours working on a student-selected legislative or budget campaign. Please note that attending a full lobby day in Albany or City Hall will count as 4 student volunteer hours. Whereas other classes assign more written material, this class requires the volunteer time. The instructor holds fast that the experience of the political advocacy campaign is critical to learning.

The instructor will provide a list of such organizations that meet certain criteria from which students can choose. Such criteria include, current active work in a political issue campaign on the City or State level as well as explicit interest in working with social work graduate students. Whether or not students may use their field placements will be treated on a case-by-case basis.

Students will also be expected to be active participants in the class and complete weekly readings and assignments. Weekly assignments will be primarily informal brief student presentations updating the class on their involvement in the issue campaigns. There will be a final, and more formal, student presentation at the end of the class along with a short final paper analyzing and evaluating the advocacy campaign experience.

Course grade will be based on attendance and class participation (35%) campaign participation and weekly assignments (30%) and final presentation and paper (35%). Absence from more than 2 classes is grounds for failure. The course utilizes guest speakers as available – to be chosen from New York politicians, government staff, leaders from advocacy organizations and political consultants.

Readings (Selected chapters and articles are required throughout the ten sessions. Required reading is available either online, at HCSSW library or from the course pack.)

Books

Haynes, Karen S. & Mickelson, James S., Affecting Change: Social Workers in the Political Arena. Pearson Education Inc., 5th edition, 2003.

HV40.8.U6 H39 2003 – *on reserve*

Hick, Stephen P. & McNutt, John G., Advocacy, Activism and the Internet. Chicago: Lyceum Books Inc, 2002. – *on reserve*

Hofer, Richard, Advocacy Practice for Social Justice. Chicago: Lyceum Books Inc, 2006.

Jansson, Bruce, Becoming an Effective Policy Advocate. California:

Brooks/Cole/Thomson Learning Inc., 2003. HV40.J36 2003 – *on reserve*

Kivelson, Adrienne, What Makes NYC Run? League of Women Voters Publication, 3rd edition, 2001. – *on reserve*

Mahaffey, Maryann & Hanks, John, eds., Practical Politics: Social Work and Political Responsibility. Maryland: NASW, 1982. HV91.P698 1982 – *on reserve*

Meredith, Judith, Lobbying on a Shoestring. Massachusetts: Auburn House Publishing Company, 1989.

Minkler, Meredith, ed., Community Organizing and Community Building for Health. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005. RA427.8.C64 2005- *on reserve*

Richan, Willard, Lobbying for Social Change. New York: Haworth, 2nd Edition, 1996.- *on reserve*

Sen, Rinku, Stir It Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy. California: Jossey-Bass, 2003. – *on reserve*

Articles/Reports/Manuals

Alliance for Justice Handbook: *Worry-Free Lobbying for Nonprofits*, 1999. – *on reserve*

Brennan Center for Justice Report: *The New York Legislative Process: An Evaluation and Blueprint for Reform*, July 2004. – *internet*

Brennan Center Report: *Unfinished Business: New York State Legislative Reform*, October 2006 - *internet*

Center for Community Change Publication: *How and Why -- to influence Public Policy: An Action Guide for Community Organizations*, 1996. - *internet*

Creech, Veronica, Wernet, Stephen & Wunrow, Jeff “Hate Crimes Legislation: Legislative Advocacy for the GLBT Community”. In Fauri, Wernet & Netting Eds Cases in Macro Social Work Practice Boston: Pearson Education Inc, 2nd edition, 2004.

Homeless Outreach and Prevention Project of the Urban Justice Center Report: *A Better Recipe for New York City: Less Red Tape, More Food on the Table* (Released January 2006). - *internet*

Manhattan Institute Report: *Albany Inc: The Special Interest Conglomerate That Runs New York*, January 2006. - *internet*

Mary, Nancy L., “Political Activism of Social Work Educators.” *Journal of Community Practice*, Vol. 9(4) 2001.

Reisch, Michael, “Legislative Advocacy to Empower Vulnerable and Oppressed Groups”. In Roberts, A.R & Greene, G.G. Eds Social Workers Desk Reference. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Rosenthal, Beth, & Mizrahi, Terry, *Strategic Partnerships: How To Create and Maintain Interorganizational Collaborations and Coalitions*, NYC: Education Center for Community Organizing, 1994.

Additional Reading

Information is power. Get into the habit of being informed. Daily newspapers and news magazines report on politics and social justice issues every day. Read one or more regularly, but always be aware of the political orientation of the news source you choose.

COURSE OUTLINE

Part I: Background for Social Workers Engaging in Political Activism

#1) Introduction: Social Work and Political Advocacy

Political activism is influencing policies and legislation. Social workers can engage in political activism to achieve social change and justice. This course will provide a conceptual framework for using the political process to affect a social change agenda.

What is political advocacy? Why is it important? What are the many faces of advocacy? What is the relationship between power, politics and policy? How are social workers uniquely qualified to engage in political activism?

2) NYC Government

How can social workers navigate government and influence public policy in NYC? How does NYC government work? Who are the players? What does the City Council control? The Mayor? How does a bill become a law? What do social workers need to know to mount successful legislative and budget campaigns in NYC?

Assignment Due: 1. Email your top 3 campaign choices by January 30th
2. Complete NYC bill search (handout)
3. Required reading

Required Reading:

Kivelson, What Makes NYC Run? (3 sections: What Makes NYC Run?, Who Makes NYC Run? & How NYC Plans Its Spending: The Budgets) - handout

NYC Government Websites:

Council Member Mendez

www.rosiemendez.com

NYC Council

www.council.nyc.ny.us

NYC.gov

www.nyc.gov/

Gotham Gazette - Searchlight on City Council

www.gothamgazette.com/city

Other Local Legislature Websites:

Nassau County Legislature	www.co.nassau.ny.us/legislat
Rockland County Legislature	www.co.rockland.ny.us/legislature/default.html
Suffolk County Legislature	www.co.suffolk.ny.us/legislat
Westchester County Board of Legislators	www.westchestergov.com/bol
Yonkers City Council	www.cityofyonkers.com/council/index.htm

#3) NYS Government

Why is NYS rated one the most dysfunctional state governments in the nation? Why is it important to understand the roles of majority and minority parties-in-government? Who controls the state budget- in reality? How does a bill become a law- in reality? What do social workers need to know to mount successful legislative advocacy campaigns in NYS?

Assignment Due:

1. Report progress on *first contact* with your campaign
2. Complete NYS bill search (handout)
3. Required reading

Required Reading:

Brennan Center Report - Executive Summary (pgs 9-16) - *The New York Legislative Process: An Evaluation and Blueprint for Reform* (July 2004)

http://www.brennancenter.org/dynamic/subpages/albanyreform_finalreport.pdf

Manhattan Institute Report: *Albany Inc: The Special Interest Conglomerate That Runs New York* (Released January 2006) www.albanyinc.com

(3 Sections: “Overview”, “Public Servants”& “Prospects for Reform”)

Additional Reading:

Brennan Center Report - *Unfinished Business: New York State Legislative Reform* (October 2006)

http://www.brennancenter.org/dynamic/subpages/download_file_37893.pdf

Good Government Websites:

Brennan Center for Justice	www.brennancenter.org
Citizen Action of NY	www.citizenactionny.org
Common Cause	www.commoncause.org
League of Women Voters/NYS	www.lwvny.org
NYPIRG	www.nypirg.org
Project Sunlight	www.sunlightny.com

State Government Websites:

Council of State Governments	www.csg.org
Governing Magazine	www.governing.com
Inside Albany	www.insidealbany.com
National Conference of State Legislatures	www.ncsl.org

NJ State Legislature
NYS Assembly
NYS Senate

www.njleg.state.nj.us
www.assembly.state.ny.us
www.senate.state.ny.us

#4) U.S Government

How do the three branches of government operate? What is the role of majority politics? How has the Supreme Court shifted in composition and rulings in the last century? How do think tanks and institutes inform public debate and influence policy?

Assignment Due:

1. Complete US Government Bill Search (handout)
2. Choose one the think tanks listed below. Review its website and report your findings to class.
3. Readings

Required Reading:

Selected articles from instructor

Do think tanks and institutes inform political activism?:

Brookings Institute

www.brookings.edu

"...a private nonprofit organization devoted to independent research and innovative policy solutions... Research at the Brookings Institution is conducted to inform the public debate, not advance a political agenda."

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

www.cbpp.org

"...conducts research and analysis to inform public debates over proposed budget and tax policies and to help ensure that the needs of low-income families and individuals are considered in these debates... develop policy options to alleviate poverty, particularly among working families."

Demos

www.demos-usa.org

"...combines research with advocacy - melding the commitment to ideas of a think tank with the organizing strategies of an advocacy group"

Drum Major Institute

www.drummajorinstitute.org

"... is a non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to challenging the tired orthodoxies of both the right and the left. The goal: progressive public policy for social and economic fairness"

Fiscal Policy Institute

www.fiscalpolicy.org

"...works to increase public and governmental understanding of issues related to the fairness of New York's tax system and the stability and adequacy of state and local public services."

Heritage Foundation

www.heritage.org

"...research and educational institute - a think tank - whose mission is to formulate and promote conservative public policies"

Institute for Policy Studies

www.ips-dc.org

"...strengthens social movements with independent research, visionary thinking, and links to the grassroots, scholars and elected officials...IPS works with but is independent of political parties and movements"

Manhattan Institute

www.manhattan-institute.org

“...has been an important force in shaping American political culture. We have supported and publicized research on our era’s most challenging public policy issues: taxes, welfare, crime, the legal system, urban life, race, education, and many other topics. We have won new respect for market-oriented policies and helped make reform a reality.”

OMB Watch

www.ombwatch.org

“a nonprofit research and advocacy organization dedicated to promoting government accountability, citizen participation in public policy decisions, and the use of fiscal and regulatory policy to serve the public interest.”

Urban Institute

www.urban.org

“A nonpartisan economic and social policy research organization...we analyze policies, evaluate programs, and inform community development to improve social, civic, and economic well-being. We work in all 50 states and abroad in over 28 countries”

#5 and #6) Political Advocacy Campaigns: Components, Strategies & Tactics

What are the components of a political advocacy campaign? How do organizers determine the targets – and identify the stakeholders and key decision-makers? Who sets the agenda? Who gets left out? Why is it critical to develop strategies and goals for each campaign – different paths to influence? What advocacy methods & tactics have been/will be part of your issue campaigns?

Assignment Due: Required reading

Required Reading:

Center for Community Change Publication: How and Why -- to influence Public Policy: An Action Guide for Community Organizations, 1996. (handout)

Reisch, “Legislative Advocacy to Empower Vulnerable and Oppressed Groups”

Richan, Lobbying for Social Change (Chpt 5: Understanding Policymakers)

Part II: Advocacy Methods & Tactics - Paths to Influence

#7 and #8) How To Lobby

What do social workers need to know to lobby effectively? What is the difference between direct lobbying and grassroots lobbying? What are various lobbying tactics? What are best practices in meeting with a legislator, testifying before a legislative body, organizing a lobby day, developing legislative report cards, etc?

Assignment Due:

1. Campaign update
2. Required reading

Required Reading for both Lobbying classes:

Haynes & Mickelson, Affecting Change: Social Workers in the Political Arena (Chpt

7: Influencing Through Lobbying)

Mahaffey & Hanks, Practical Politics (Chpt 5: Lobbying and Social Work; Chpt 6: How to Testify Before a Legislative Committee)

Richan, Lobbying for Social Change (Chpt 8: Lobbying One-on-One)

Alliance for Justice Handbook: Worry-Free Lobbying for Nonprofits, 1999.
<http://www.afj.org/assets/resources/resources2/Worry-Free-Lobbying-for-Nonprofits.pdf>

Tracking Money in Politics Websites:

Center for Responsive Politics	www.opensecrets.org
Citizen Action of New York	www.citizenactionny.org
Common Cause	www.commoncause.org
Democracy 21	www.democracy21.org
Federal Election Commission	www.fec.gov
National Institute on Money in State Politics	www.followthemoney.org
News Meat	www.newsmeat.com
NYC Campaign Finance Board	www.vote.nyc.ny.us
NYS Board of Elections	www.elections.state.ny.us
NYS Temporary Lobbying Commission	www.nylobby.state.ny.us
Political Money Line	www.tray.com
Public Campaign	www.publiccampaign.org
White House for Sale	www.whitehouseforsale.org

#9) How to Construct Message and Use the Media & Internet

Why is developing a communication strategy important for an issue campaign? What do social workers need to know to construct the most effective message? What are best practices in terms of selling the message to the press? How do advocates organize a press conference, write press releases & advisories, write letters-to-editor, use the internet as a tool?

Assignment Due: Required reading

Required Reading:

Fenton Communications Report:

Now Hear This: The Nine Laws of Successful Advocacy Communications
http://www.fenton.com/pages/5_resources/pdf/Packard_Brochure.pdf

Sen, Stir It Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy (Chpt 8: Speaking Truth to Power)

#10) How to Strengthen Political Influence: Building Alliances, Partnerships, & Coalitions

This topic builds on the foundation laid in CO III. What is the value of mobilizing a broad base of support? How is membership determined and maintained? What are strategies to develop a cohesive coalition leadership structure? What are the tensions in managing differences among groups? How are social work skills a perfect match to handle both the obstacles and opportunities of this work?

Assignment Due:

1. Campaign update (handout)
2. Required Reading

Required Reading:

Rosenthal & Mizrahi, *Strategic Partnerships: How To Create and Maintain Interorganizational Collaborations and Coalitions* (Section III, Chpt 14-16: Collaboration Success, Failure and Assessment)

Sen, Stir It Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy (Chpt 7: United We Stand)

Part III: Political Advocacy Campaigns – Case Studies

#11 & 12) Case Studies: What Works and What Doesn't

What does a winning political advocacy campaign achieve? Are there multiple ways to define success? What are the criteria for evaluation of advocacy campaigns? What are the next steps if win - if lose? How do we assess the steps along the path to influence social justice?

Required Reading Due:

Creech, Wernet & Wunrow, "Hate Crimes Legislation: Legislative Advocacy for the GLBT Community". In Cases in Social Work Macro Practice

Selected articles/literature on various winning and losing advocacy campaigns

Assignment Due:

1. Required readings
2. Class Evaluation due

#13 and 14) Student Campaigns - Lessons Learned

How do social work students evaluate their successes of political advocacy? What are the implications of a political activist social work practice?

Assignment Due:

1. In-class Student Presentations
2. Final Paper due