

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

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Fall 2019

790:368:01: Topics in Political Theory: Democracy and Citizenship

T 2:30-5:20 pm

Bradley Hall 311

COURSE GOALS:

This is a special topics course in political theory. The primary focus of this class is on the contemporary practice of democracy at the local level. You will meet and work with community leaders who are trying to act on their values to make life better and more democratic for everyone in Jersey City. We will read texts related to engaging citizens in public policymaking and democratic life, and you will learn how a broad-based community organization understands the practice of democracy through participating in the work of the organization.

This course will provide you with an experience of how your knowledge and expertise in political science might find a place in the world as it might be. We will do some background and some hands-on work in partnership with our community organization and its leaders, and through this work we will reflect on democracy and what it means.

These are the expected learning outcomes for this course:

- Students will understand, through class discussion, reading, class activities and presentations, and by writing about readings and experiences, the basic ideas of broad based community organizing as a grassroots democratic practice.
- Students will participate in assigned hands-on projects. These include Group Action Projects as listed in the syllabus, and in-class activities such as class exercises and guest speakers.
- Students will learn and practice the skills required to engage in broad based community organizations: how to conduct an individual relational meeting, how to plan and lead a small group issue meeting, how to prepare a public autobiography, how to build public relationships with classmates and with Jersey City Together organizational leaders.
- Students will learn the skills involved in building and implementing an issue campaign through collecting original data from community members, participating in the planning and carrying out of an action, and assessing the results of the issue campaign.

- Students will understand the basic concepts and practices used by broad based community organizations, such as power, accountability, the differences between social movement and broad-based organizing, power analysis, relational and house meetings, public relationships, issue campaigns, and recognition and respect.
- Students will have a basic understanding of local government in New Jersey, and of how community organizations interact with public officials in an effort to hold them accountable for policy goals, processes, and outcomes.
- Students will reflect on their experiences and how the work of the class and of broad based community organizations contribute to civil society and the functioning of democracy, through readings and class discussion, evaluation and reflection exercises, and through writing about class activities in reaction/reflection papers, and a final paper.

This syllabus may be subject to change. Changes to the syllabus will be announced in class and a new version of the syllabus (with relevant date) will be posted on Blackboard.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS/REQUIREMENTS:

General:

Students are expected to attend scheduled class sessions and to complete all assignments. Because of the “hands-on” nature of this class, during some weeks we will do action projects. Sometimes these action projects will take place in Jersey City, and sometimes they will take place in the classroom. Please refer to the syllabus for the specific schedule as this will vary over the course of the semester.

Lectures, class discussions, and class activities will provide material in addition to the reading material, and students should be acquainted with the material from both the readings and the material discussed in class, as well as the action project experiences. Students will also be expected to contribute to class sessions through informed and relevant participation in class discussions, class exercises, and group action projects. Each student will also provide a summary of one class reading, that will be posted in the class Blackboard site. I will be taking attendance just for my records both of class meetings and of attendance at group activities.

Students are also expected to conduct themselves with honesty and integrity in all academic work, and to conduct themselves in the classroom and in the community in a manner in keeping with a professional educational environment, including an expectation of civility and respect for presenters, community leaders, other students, and the instructor and teaching assistant. We will be talking a good deal in this class about the nature of public relationships and our interactions should reflect the respect and integrity and accountability that organizations such as Jersey City Together require. All of our work will take place in the context of public relationships and we can hold each other accountable, and extend a spirit of generosity, as we learn together.

Academic Integrity: As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic

integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University's educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community. Academic Integrity Policy:
<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academicintegrity-policy/>

Disability Services: Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must complete and submit the Registration Form, schedule and complete an intake meeting, and submit appropriate documentation. If your request for reasonable accommodations is approved, you will receive a Letter of Accommodations (LOA), which you should present privately to the instructor as early in the semester as possible. Accommodations are not retroactive and are effective only upon submission of the LOA to the instructor. Please begin the process by completing and submitting the Registration Form, Applying for Services, available at the website below. • Applying for Services: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services> • Documentation Guidelines: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentationguidelines> • Letter of Accommodations (LOA): <https://ods.rutgers.edu/myaccommodations/letter-of-accommodations> • Office of Disability Services (ODS) Suite 219, Paul Robeson Campus Center (973) 353-5315 odsnewark@rutgers.edu

Religious Holiday Policy: Students are advised to provide timely notification to instructors about necessary absences for religious observances and are responsible for making up the work or exams according to an agreed-upon schedule.

Learning Resources:

• Rutgers Learning Center (tutoring services) Room 140, Bradley Hall (973) 353-5608
<http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/rlc>

• Writing Center (tutoring and writing workshops) Room 126, Conklin Hall (973) 353-5847 nwc@rutgers.edu

Description of Writing Assignments:

General instructions: The specific instructions for all papers will be posted in the Assignment section of Blackboard. I will drop the lowest grade should you choose to write more than three reaction papers. Papers should be submitted via the Blackboard assignment function. I cannot accept emailed papers (the reason is mainly logistical). HOWEVER, if you are interested in getting my feedback on your paper before you submit it, you may email it to me at least three days before the final due date and I will do my best to provide you with feedback by end of the next day.

All assignments are due on the date stated and should be submitted via the "assignment" section of Blackboard. I cannot accept any late assignments.

Public Autobiography: This is due Sunday, September 15, and instructions are in Blackboard.

Short Reaction Papers: Students will be required to write a total of **three** reaction papers, each approximately three standard essay pages in length, about our hands on class experiences. A reaction paper, regardless of its specific subject, should accomplish three things: It should describe the experience (briefly), it should assess the experience, and it should provide context for the experience by relating it to class materials including readings and/or lectures/class discussion. You are required to write three papers. One paper **must** be about the negotiation exercise; this paper is due **on September 29**. For your other two reaction papers, you may choose among the following subjects: a class exercise, a group action project, a guest speaker (See “Hands on assignments” below). Papers are due at midnight on Sunday night on the dates indicated. You will have **four** opportunities to submit the required **three** papers. I will drop the lowest grade if you submit four papers. The due dates are: September 29, October 20, November 10, November 24.

Reading Presentation Summary: Students will be required to write **one** total reading summary over the course of the semester and will post their reading summary on the class discussion board in Blackboard. You will choose one of the readings, for which you will provide a brief summary and help lead class discussion of the reading. Students may post these summaries in Blackboard no later than the beginning of class on the day that the reading is assigned. Your summary should include the main point and key subpoints of the reading, a discussion of how this reading relates to the key themes of the class and should conclude with two to three questions that will help to foster class discussion.

Final Paper: You will write a final paper of about ten pages in length that summarizes and brings together the course readings, your experiences through the group action projects and class exercises, and what you have learned about community organizing and about yourself as a leader during the course. More specific instructions will be distributed later in the semester. ***You will write a draft of this paper and receive feedback from the instructor, which will count for 15% of the total grade on the paper, and then write a final version. This draft is due December 1. The final paper is due December 17.***

Plagiarism: This course follows the Rutgers University plagiarism policy. For reference, you can find more information in the “Academic Integrity” folder in Blackboard. One puzzle that you may face in this class is how to cite presentations in and outside of class—generally speaking, if you can cite the speaker’s name, the title and location of the event, and the date of the presentation, that should sufficiently identify your source. Feel free to ask if you are not sure of how to cite such material.

Hands On Assignments:

Group Action Projects: The community organization that we will be working with during this class, Jersey City Together, has chosen to focus its work on three general issue areas: education, public safety, and housing and homelessness. Over the course of the semester you will engage in action projects with your classmates along with leaders of Jersey City Together. These action projects will be related to the current campaigns on affordable housing and tenants’ rights, education, and policing and public safety. **You**

are required to attend and participate in at least two (2) Group Action Projects. You may write one reaction paper about one of these projects.

Guest Speakers: As noted in the syllabus, we will have guest speakers from Jersey City Together in class. **You may write one (1) reaction paper about a class guest speaker.**

Class Exercises: We will conduct several class exercises, on relational meetings and small group meetings. **You may write one (1) reaction paper about a class exercise.**

Use of Electronic Devices:

Please don't use electronic devices in the classroom in a way that distracts from participation in class by you or by your fellow students. You may use a laptop to take notes, but please don't use your laptop for other purposes during class. Please try to avoid mechanical interruptions of class (cell phones, pagers, electronic toys, music players, text messaging, etc.) by turning off your devices.

Graded Assignments, Requirements, and Weights:

- Public Autobiography: 10%
- Reaction papers (four opportunities; three required): 35%
- Group Action Projects (participate in at least two): 20%
- Class Reading Presentation/Summary 10%
- Final Paper: 25%

Readings:

Required Readings:

All required course readings will be available on Blackboard, as assigned (see schedule below). I have also set up a folder in Blackboard to post news stories about Jersey City Together as covered in the local press.

Required reading:

Mary Beth Rogers, *Cold Anger*

Recommended reading:

Hahrie Han, *How Organizations Develop Activists*

Michael Gecan, *Going Public*

Luke Bretherton, *Resurrecting Democracy*

There will be no final exam in the course. As noted above, you will write a final paper.

Course Outline:

Week 1: Introduction: Negotiation, power

September 3: Frank McMillan, Lead Organizer of Jersey City Together, will be our guest

Week 2: Power organizations: a brief history

September 10:

Read: Luke Bretherton ch. 1

Read: Mary Beth Rogers, *Cold Anger*, Introduction and Prologue & chapters one and two, and chapter 9 “Tactics is the art of taking”
Michael Gecan, *Going Public* Preface & Introduction

Assignment Due Sunday September 15: Public Autobiography

Week 3: Broad based organizing: power; building relationships

September 17:

Read: Mary Beth Rogers, *Cold Anger*, chapter 7: “The First Revolution is Internal”;

Read: How to on relational meetings (Blackboard)

Read: Jeffrey Stout, *Blessed are the Organized*, Ch. 12 “Face-to-Face Meetings”

Michael Gecan, *Going Public* chapter 1 “All Real Living is Meeting”

Read: Eric Fretz, “Core Concept: Power”

Class exercise: Relational meetings

Week 4: Methods of organizing: house meetings, iron rule, listening campaigns, public actions

September 24

Read: Romand Coles, *Visionary Pragmatism*, pp. 30-34;

Michael Gecan, *Going Public* ch. 2, “The World As It Is” Read: Michael Gecan, *Going Public*, chapter 5, “Merit means (almost) nothing”

JCT How to on House Meetings fall 2018

Class exercise: house or issue meetings

Assignment Due Sunday September 29: Reaction Paper #1: Negotiation

Week 5: October 1: GROUP ACTION PROJECT: Instructions will be posted on Blackboard

Week 6: Leadership: Qualities, Actions, and Relationships of Leaders

October 8: ***Developing Leaders***

Read: Hahrie Han, *How Organizations Develop Activists*, ch. 4

President Barack Obama and Marilyne Robinson conversation from September 2015, parts 1 and 2

Read: Rogers, ch. 8, ch. 10, and chapter 16, “There is no substitute for the fire”

Michael Gecan, *Going Public* chapter 4, “Introducing your larger self”

Week 7: Issue Campaigns: Structure, Purpose, Process; Problems vs. Issues

October 15: ***GUEST SPEAKERS***

Read: Amy Dean, “How Domestic Workers Won Their Rights: Five Big Lessons” (Blackboard);

Read Luke Bretherton, *Resurrecting Democracy*, ch. 4 “An Anatomy of Organizing I”

Michael Gecan, *Going Public*, chapter 8, “The hard edges of effective organization”
Mary Beth Rogers, *Cold Anger*, chapters 11, 12, and 13
Press coverage of the Jersey City Together advocacy on affordable housing

Assignment Due Sunday October 20: Reaction Paper #2

Week 8: October 22: GROUP ACTION PROJECT

Week 9: Imagination, two worlds, the role of emotions

October 29:

Jeffrey Stout, *Blessed are the Organized*, ch. 11, “The Compelling Force of the Ideal”
Michael Gecan, *Going Public* chapter 9, “Disorganizing and Reorganizing,” chapter 10:
“Three Public Cultures”

Read: Rogers, *Cold Anger*, Chapters 3 through 6

Read: Marilynne Robinson, “The Human Spirit and the Good Society” from *When I Was A Child I Read Books*

Week 10: Developing Issue based strategies: Affordable housing

November 5: *Guest Speakers*

Read: Readings on affordable housing; on chromium contamination and cleanup in Jersey City, on Bayfront, on the property revaluation, on school funding.

Read: Jeffrey Stout chapter 13, “The Passion of St. Rose”

Assignment Due Sunday November 10: Reaction Paper #3

Week 11: Community Organizing and Grassroots Democracy

November 12: Harry Boyte, “Seeds of a Different Politics,” *The Good Society* 2003;

Romand Coles, “Of Tensions and Tricksters: Grassroots Democracy Between Theory and Practice,” *Perspectives on Politics* 2006

Nick Bowlin, “Rereading Alinsky in Baltimore,” *The Nation* November 2018

Class Exercise: relational meetings revisited

Week 12:

November 19: GROUP ACTION PROJECT

Assignment Due Sunday November 24: Reaction Paper #4

November 26: NO CLASS, Thanksgiving, FOLLOW THURSDAY CLASS SCHEDULE

December 1: DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER DUE

Week 13: Group Action Projects at Rutgers

December 3: ***Class exercise: Rutgers Issue meeting***

Read: Chancellor Nancy Cantor, “Anchor Institutions and Urban Inequality” RU-N
Global Urban Futures conference April 29, 2016

Week 14: Evaluation and Reflection

Circling back: Broad based organizing and democracy

December 10:

Read: Mary Beth Rogers, *Cold Anger*, Epilogue

Read: Luke Bretherton, *Resurrecting Democracy*, Conclusion

December 17: Final Paper Due