

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

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Fall 2018

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

M 2:30-3:50 pm, W 1:00-2:20 Smith 234

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 at least one Jersey City Together meeting or training session.
 - NOTE: There is a folder in Blackboard that contains details of upcoming Jersey City Together events; announcements of upcoming meetings will be posted on an ongoing basis.
- 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 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, and through writing blog journal entries about class activities, 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, generally speaking we will always meet as a class on Mondays; during some weeks your hands on assignments will be substituted for the Wednesday class meeting time. 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. Students will also be expected to contribute to class sessions through informed and relevant participation in class discussions, class exercises, and group action projects. 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, the instructor and for other students. 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.

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 grades should you choose to write more than three reaction papers. Papers should be submitted via the Blackboard assignment function. I cannot accept emailed papers. **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 16, 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, and besides the negotiation paper, you may choose which weeks to write your other two reaction papers. Papers are due at midnight on Sunday night on the dates indicated.

Group Blog: Students will be required to write **five** total blog/journal entries over the course of the semester. These blog entries are intended to provide the class with a place to reflect on our hands on experiences, and to help you know about events that you may not have been able to attend, but a classmate was able to attend. The journal entry should be 100-200 words in length and should summarize the action or event and the student’s response to and reflections on the action. The journal entry should be completed no more than one week after the event. For example, if a project was completed on September 18, the assignment is due September 25. We will use the class blog area of Blackboard for these assignments, so your journal entries can also be read by your classmates.

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.***

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 should write a blog entry about each of these projects.**

Jersey City Together Meetings: Jersey City Together will hold its fall city-wide action team meeting on the evening of October 1. This would be a great opportunity to see how grassroots organizations such as JCT operate. Some of you may have conflicts, but please make every effort to attend this meeting if you can. We will discuss transportation to the meeting in class—if there is interest and need I will help arrange for group transportation. In addition to this meeting, the action teams will hold a variety of meetings throughout the semester. I will announce the meetings that you may attend throughout the semester in class and/or via the Jersey City Together Events folder in Blackboard. **You are required to attend at least one (1) Jersey City Together meeting and to enter at least on (1) blog entry about that meeting.**

Guest Speakers: As noted in the syllabus, we will have guest speakers from Jersey City Together in class. **You are required to enter at least one (1) blog entry about a class guest speaker.**

Class Exercises: We will conduct several class exercises, on relational meetings and small group meetings. **You are required to enter at least one (1) blog entry 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 (three): 30%

Group Action Projects (participate in at least two): 20%

Class Blog Entries/Journals (at least five entries; see instructions) 20%

Final Paper: 20%

Readings:

Required Readings:

All required course readings, with the exception of the Mary Beth Rogers book, 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*

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

Course Outline:

Week 1: Negotiation

September 5: Introduction to class: Democracy and democratic participation

Week 2: Broad based organizing: power; building relationships

September 10:

Read: Mary Beth Rogers, *Cold Anger*, Prologue and Chapters one and two; Michael Gecan, *Going Public* Preface, Introduction, and Ch. 1 “All Real Living is Meeting” and ch. 2, “The World As It Is”

September 12:

Read: Michael Gecan, *Going Public*, Chapter 10; Mary Beth Rogers, *Cold Anger*, chapter 7: “The First Revolution is Internal”; Read: How to on relational meetings (Blackboard)

Assignment Due Sunday September 16: Public Autobiography

Week 3: Jersey City Together Issue Campaign: Affordable Housing

September 17: **Negotiation, power**

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

September 19: **Discussion of negotiation**

Read: Rogers, Chapters 3 through 6

Week 4: Power; background research

September 24: Read: Danielle Farrie, Education Law Center, “Understanding Adjustment Aid in New Jersey School Funding: A Case Study of Jersey City”; Press coverage of Jersey City Together advocacy on education funding

September 26: GROUP ACTION PROJECT: Instructions will be posted on Blackboard

September 29: GROUP ACTION PROJECT (Saturday opportunity for those not able to make it on Wednesday)

Assignment Due Sunday September 30: Reaction Paper #1: Negotiation

Week 5: Leadership: Qualities, Actions, and Relationships of Leaders

Oct 1: Read: Romand Coles, *Visionary Pragmatism*, pp. 30-34; President Barack Obama and Marilynne Robinson conversation from September 2015, parts 1 and 2 (on Blackboard)

Oct 1: 7-9:15 pm: JERSEY CITY TOGETHER MEETING: Attend Jersey City Together city-wide action team meeting, location TBA.

Oct 3: ***Class exercise: relational meetings***

Week 6: Mobilizing, Organizing, the role of reflection

October 8: ***Developing Leaders***

Read: Hahrie Han, ch. 4

October 10: ***Power Organizations and Movement Organizations***

Read: Mary Beth Rogers, chapters 8 through 10

Week 7: Issue Campaigns: Structure, Purpose, Process

October 15: ***GUEST SPEAKERS: Jersey City Together leader(s), housing team***

October 17: GROUP ACTION PROJECT

Week 8: Campaigns: Structure of a successful campaign

October 22: Read: Amy Dean, “How Domestic Workers Won Their Rights: Five Big Lessons” (Blackboard); Press coverage of the Jersey City Together advocacy on affordable housing

October 24: GROUP ACTION PROJECT

October 27: GROUP ACTION PROJECT (Saturday opportunity for those not able to make it on Wednesday)

Week 9: Leadership

October 29: ***Developing leaders***

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

Nov. 1: ***Guest Speakers: Jersey City Together Leaders, education team***

Week 10: Developing Issue based strategies: Education

November 6: **IAF organizations and community schools**
Read: Dennis Shirley, *Valley Interfaith and School Reform*, ch. 5 (on Blackboard)

November 8: **GUEST SPEAKERS: Jersey City Together leaders, public safety team**

Week 11: Community Organizing and Grassroots Democracy

November 13: 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

November 15: GROUP ACTION PROJECT

November 18: GROUP ACTION PROJECT (Saturday opportunity for those not able to make it on Wednesday)

Week 12:

November 20: **Class Exercise: relational meetings revisited**

November 22: NO CLASS, Thanksgiving, FOLLOW FRIDAY CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 13: Group Action Projects at Rutgers

November 27: Read: Chancellor Nancy Cantor, "Anchor Institutions and Urban Inequality" RU-N Global Urban Futures conference April 29, 2016

November 29: **CLASS EXERCISE: Issue meeting at Rutgers**

December 2: DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER DUE

Week 14: Evaluation and Reflection

December 3: Read: Mary Beth Rogers, *Cold Anger*, Epilogue

December 5: Work Session: Planning the final presentation

Week 15: Circling back: Broad based organizing and next steps

December 10: Read: Read again the conversation between President Obama and Marilynne Robinson (Blackboard)

December 12: LAST DAY OF CLASS: Final presentation and celebration with Jersey City Together leaders

December 16: Final Paper Due