

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

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Fall 2021

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

T 2:30-5:20 pm

Bradley Hall 313

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 their New Jersey communities. 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 New Jersey 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 Canvas.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS/REQUIREMENTS:

General:

I am very glad that we will be back to face-to-face instruction this fall. Yet there are more uncertainties than we might have hoped for earlier in the summer. I recognize that there may be disruptions to our planned schedule this fall, and I have tried to build a syllabus and a pedagogy that is flexible enough to accommodate some of the ways that you and I as individuals, or we as a university community, may need to adapt to changing circumstances regarding the ongoing pandemic.

Students are expected to attend scheduled class sessions as you are able and to complete all assignments. Because of the “hands-on” nature of this class, during some weeks we will do action projects. Before the pandemic, this was a community engaged course where we actually went into the community; given the current situation, most of our engagement will take place virtually. Sometimes these action projects will take place virtually from the classroom, 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. 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. 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 New Jersey 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.

PLEASE NOTE and please follow the university policy regarding masks:

In order to protect the health and wellbeing of all members of the Rutgers-Newark community, masks must be worn by all persons inside campus buildings when in the presence of others, and in buildings in non-private enclosed settings (e.g., common workspaces, workstations, meeting rooms, classrooms, etc.). Masks should securely cover the nose and mouth. Masks must be worn during class meetings. Each day before you arrive on campus or leave your residence hall, you must complete the brief survey on the My Campus Pass symptom checker self-screening app found at: [myRutgers Portal](#).

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. The entire Academic Integrity Policy can be found here:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

Your health and well-being matter, and Rutgers has put in place a number of resources that are intended to help students through the challenges that might emerge during these times. Information on many of these resources appears below. Please let me know immediately if you are experiencing circumstances that are negatively impacting your academic performance. I also strongly encourage you to contact your academic advisor.

Accommodation and Support Statement:

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

- **Absences:** All students are responsible for timely notification of their instructor regarding any expected absences. The Division of Student Affairs can provide assistance for absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (illness, personal or family emergency, etc.) Students should refer to the University's Course Attendance policy (10.2.7), for complete expectations and responsibilities. The office can be contacted at: (973) 353-5063 or deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu.
- **Disabilities:** The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter barriers due to disability. Once a student has completed the ODS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and reasonable

accommodations are determined to be necessary and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be provided. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and follow up with a discussion. This should be completed as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at ods.rutgers.edu. Contact ODS: (973) 353-5375 or ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

- **Temporary Conditions/Injuries:** The Division of Student Affairs can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition of injury (broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request for assistance at: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.
- **Pregnancy:** The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist students with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the office at (973) 353-1906 or TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.
- **Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment:** The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the office at: (973) 353-1906 or TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?RutgersUniv&layout_id=7. For more information, students should refer to the University's Student Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Related Misconduct located at: <http://compliance.rutgers.edu/title-ix/about-title-ix/title-ix-policies/>.
- **Interpersonal Violence:** The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance can provide any student with confidential support. The office is a **confidential resource** and does **not** have a reporting obligation to report information to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Students can contact the office at: (973) 353-1918 or run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential, text-based line students can text for support: (973) 339-0734.
- **Crisis and Concerns:** The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a support plan to address personal situations that might impact academic performance. Students may contact the CARE Team at: https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?RutgersUniv&layout_id=11 or careteam@rutgers.edu.
- **Stress, Worry, or Concerns about Well-Being:** The Counseling Center has confidential therapists available to support students. To schedule an appointment:

counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or (973) 353-5805. If a student is not quite ready to make an appointment with a therapist but is interested in self-help, check out *TAO at Rutgers-Newark* for an easy, web-based approach to self-care and support: <https://thepath.taoconnect.org/local/login/home.php>.

- **Emergencies:** Call 911 or contact Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) at (973) 353-5111.

☐ Learning Resources:

- Rutgers Learning Center (tutoring services)
(973) 353-5608
<https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/learning-center>
- Writing Center (tutoring and writing workshops)
(973) 353-5847
nwc@rutgers.edu
<https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/writing-center>

☐ Technology LaunchPad:

<https://runit.rutgers.edu/technology-launch-pad/>

Description of Writing Assignments:

General instructions: The specific instructions for all papers will be posted in the Assignment section of Canvas. I will drop the lowest grade should you choose to write more than three reaction papers. Papers should be submitted via the Canvas 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 Canvas. I have tried to build flexibility into the required assignments; please let me know if you have questions or concerns.

Public Autobiography: This is due Sunday, September 19, and instructions are in Canvas.

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 October 2**. 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.

Questions on course readings: Students will be required to write three to five questions based on the course readings for the week; over the course of the semester, you must submit these questions for at least five class sessions. This assignment will be available on Canvas; I will use the questions to help guide class conversation. Students should post these questions prior to the beginning of class to receive credit. This will be graded as credit/no credit and is mainly intended to foster better class discussion.

Final Paper: You will write a final paper of about eight 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 Canvas. 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, New Jersey 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 at least one action projects with your classmates along with leaders of New Jersey Together. These action projects will be related to the current campaigns on affordable housing and tenants’ rights, on education, on policing and public safety, or on other new issue campaigns of the organization. **You are required to attend and participate in at least one Group Action Project. You may write one reaction paper about this project.**

Virtual meeting: Throughout the semester, you will have opportunities to attend virtual meetings of various action teams from New Jersey Together. **You are required to attend at least one virtual meeting of New Jersey Together. You may write one reaction paper about the meeting you attend.**

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

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

Graded Assignments, Requirements, and Weights:

Public Autobiography: 10%
Reaction papers (four opportunities; three required): 35%
Group Action Projects (participate in at least one): 15%
Class Reading Questions 10%
Final Paper: 25%

Readings:

Required Readings:

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

Required reading:

Gregory F. Augustine Pierce, ed. *Reveille for a new generation: Organizers and Leaders Reflect on Power*

Supplemental materials: For many of the topics that we will cover I have added a list of supplemental materials, many of which will be available in the course folder in Canvas.

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 7:

Introduction to the course and organizing

Week 2: Power (power over vs power to) and power organizations: a brief history

September 14:

Read: *Reveille for a New Generation*, chapters by Ella Baker, John R Lewis, Saul Alinsky, Cesar Chavez, Jeffrey Krehbiel, and Matthew Marienthal
Eric Fretz, “Core Concept: Power”

Supplemental Materials:

Luke Bretherton *Resurrecting Democracy* ch. 1’

“Listen, Organize, Act” podcast, Episode 1: What is Community Organizing? & Episode 4: Power Over and Power With

Michael Gecan, *Going Public* Preface & Introduction

“Power is Not a Dirty Word” (Valley Interfaith)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnB7QAoOJIQ>

Assignment Due Sunday September 19: Public Autobiography

Week 3: Basic tools of organizing: Relationships and the relational meeting

September 21:

Read: *Reveille for a New Generation*, chapters by Ernesto Cortes, Jr. “The Power of Public Conversation”, Kristen King, Abdul Malik Mujahid, Josephine Lopez Paul

Read: How to on relational meetings

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

Supplemental Materials: “Listen, Organize, Act” podcast, Episode 2: The Basic Tool of Organizing: The Relational Meeting

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

Class exercise: Relational meetings

Week 4: Basic tools of organizing: house (or issue) meetings

September 28:

Read: *Reveille for a New Generation*, essays by Arnie Graf, Alisa Glassman

JCT How to on House Meetings fall 2018

Supplemental materials:

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

Supplemental Materials: “Listen, Organize, Act” podcast, Episode 3: The Other Basic Tool of Organizing: House Meetings

Class exercise: house or issue meetings

Assignment Due Sunday October 2: Reaction Paper #1: Negotiation

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

October 5: *Developing Leaders*

Reveille for a New Generation, essays by Alisa Glassman, Ronnie Crudup, Keisha Krumm, Ernesto Cortes Jr. “Collaboration in Organizing”, Kathleen O’Toole

Supplemental Materials:

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

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

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

Week 6: October 12: GROUP ACTION PROJECT ONE: Instructions will be posted

Week 7: Issue Campaigns: Structure, Purpose, Process; Problems vs. Issues; Creating Tension; Polarizing and Depolarizing

October 19: **GUEST SPEAKERS**

Read: *Reveille for a New Generation*, chapters by Martin Trimble, Cheri Andes, Chevon Chatman, Robert Connolly, Burns Stanfield and Larry Gordon, Tom Mosgaller
Press coverage of the Jersey City Together advocacy on education funding

Supplemental Materials:

Read: Amy Dean, “How Domestic Workers Won Their Rights: Five Big Lessons” (Blackboard); Michael Gecan, *Going Public*, chapter 8, “The hard edges of effective organization”
Mary Beth Rogers, *Cold Anger*, chapters 11, 12, and 13
Luke Bretherton, *Resurrecting Democracy*, ch. 4 “An Anatomy of Organizing I”; “Listen, Organize, Act” Podcast, Episode 11: Campaigns as Public Action

Assignment Due Sunday October 24: Reaction Paper #2

Week 8: Imagination, two worlds, the role of emotions

October 26: ***Guest Speakers***

Read: *Reveille for a New Generation* chapters by Stephen Applegate, Richard Townsell, Anna Eng

Supplemental Materials:

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 9:

November 2: GROUP ACTION PROJECT TWO: Instructions will be posted

Week 10: Developing Issue based strategies

November 9: ***Guest Speakers***

Read: *Reveille for a New Generation*, chapters by Robert Connolly, Burns Stanfield and Larry Gordon, Tom Mosgaller

Supplemental Materials:

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

Assignment Due Sunday November 14: Reaction Paper #3

Week 11: Community Organizing and Grassroots Democracy

November 16:

Read: Nick Bowlin, “Rereading Alinsky in Baltimore,” *The Nation* November 2018
Readings on New Jersey Together issue campaigns education; affordable housing; on chromium contamination and cleanup in Jersey City, on Bayfront, on property revaluation, on school funding, on COVID-19 policies at the state and local level.

November 16: 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

Class Exercise: relational meetings revisited

November 23: NO CLASS, Thanksgiving, FOLLOW THURSDAY CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 12:

Group Action Projects at Rutgers

November 30: *Class exercise: Rutgers Issue meeting*

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

Assignment Due Sunday November 28: Reaction Paper #4

December 5: DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER DUE

Week 13:

December 7: **Evaluation and Reflection: Broad based organizing and fragile democracy**

Reveille for a new generation, chapters by Paul Turner, Amy Totsch

Supplemental Materials

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

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

Read: Luke Bretherton, *Resurrecting Democracy*, Conclusion

December 17: Final Paper Due