

# Community Organizing Theory & Practice (COTAP)

ER&M 431

Tuesday: 1:30-3:20 pm via Zoom

Yale College, Fall 2020 Syllabus

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- HoSang office hours: Tuesday, 3:30-5:00, or by appt, <https://yale.zoom.us/j/8145317496>, sign up [here](#)
- Ortiz office hours: Wednesday, 12-2:00 or by appt, <https://yale.zoom.us/j/6307295154>

## A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses broadly on the history of social movements in general and direct action community organizing in particular, especially those organized around feminist, anti-racist, and internationalist visions of social equity. In our current moment, amidst a global pandemic that has highlighted longstanding group-based hierarchies and vulnerabilities, and the uprisings related to anti-Black violence and police brutality, community organizing strategies have taken on new significance and urgency.

We will explore community organizing history, theories and practice, as well as models of social change through a mix of skills-based workshops, guest speakers from social justice groups, theoretical readings, and practicum based work. Students will have an opportunity to work directly with several organizing projects, including the Anti-Racist Teaching & Learning Collective, the Public Goods Reconstruction Project, or another project of their own selection.

The texts for the course, written by both academic scholars, organizers and grassroots leaders, engage a series of questions: What is community organizing and how can we trace its origins and development in the US? What key assumptions lie at the center of this approach to social and political change, and what differences and divisions characterize the field? How does race, class, gender, sexuality, indigeneity, neighborhood and nation shape different organizing traditions? Finally, what role has research and knowledge production played in community organizing history and practice?

The course is designed for students with both research interests in community-based organizing, as well as those considering career opportunities in a variety of non-profit and social change fields. The course will also engage in an ongoing collaboration with Professor Leah Mirakhor's "Writer/Rioter: Public Writing in the 21st Century" sharing guest speakers, discussions, and public-facing assignments.

The readings draw from a variety of political commitments and perspectives and are designed to help us all reflect on our own ideas and worldviews within a shared and constructive framework. Many of the class sessions incorporate small group activities and other collaborative approaches.

The course is generally organized through units specific to different organizing genealogies related to race, class, gender, sexuality, indigeneity and other forms of difference shape privilege and power. These are not meant to be comprehensive, nor mutually exclusive. Throughout the course, students will be invited to contribute additional texts based on their interests and commitments.

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## B. REQUIRED TEXTS

Not available through Yale libraries; must purchase separately.

- **Barbara Ransby**, *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the Twenty-First Century* (UC Press, 2018).
- **Jonathan Matthew Smucker**, *Hegemony How-To: A Roadmap for Radicals* (AK Press, 2018).

These texts are available online through Yale Libraries or another source.

- **Ajamu Nangwaya, Kali Akuno, *Jackson Rising: The Struggle for Economic Democracy and Black Self-Determination in Jackson, Mississippi*** (Daraja Press, 2017).
  - **Grace Lee Boggs, *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century*** (University of California Press, 2012).
  - **Jane F. McAlevey, *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age*** (Oxford, 2018).
  - **Sillman, Fried, Ross and Gutierrez edited, *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice*** (South End Press, 2004).
  - **Charles Payne, *I've Got The Light Of Freedom The Organizing Tradition And The Mississippi Freedom Struggle*** (UC Press, 1996).
  - **Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*** (Haymarket, 2016).
  - **Nick Estes, *Our History is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*** (Verso, 2019).
  - **Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance***. (University of Minnesota Press, 2017.)
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### C. ASSIGNMENTS

1. **WEEKLY CONTRIBUTIONS TO COURSE WEBSITE AND WIKI.** Students will contribute to the course website and wiki (on Canvas) each week, engaging with a variety of options including book, podcast or website reviews, writing profiles of guest speakers, editing guest speaker videos, and other assignments. Details to be provided in class **(50% of final grade)**.
  2. **COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT.** Students will work in teams around a research project completed in collaboration with a community-based organizing project. Several group options are available, or students may propose a project of their own. Details to be provided in class. **(30% of final grade)**.
  3. **SEMINAR PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE.** Attendance is taken every class; advanced reading and participation are critical. You must notify the instructor in advance if you anticipate missing a class meeting and you must complete a make-up assignment. Regular participation in the course wiki is also required **(20% of final grade)**.
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### D. OTHER COURSE POLICIES

1. **CLASSROOM CONDUCT & CLIMATE.** We are all accountable to create a climate of mutual respect and engagement in the classroom. While differences of opinion, perspective and analysis are important and will be encouraged, common courtesy as well as University policy prohibit personal attacks and discriminatory conduct. Do not record/post/publish classroom discussions in any form without participants' consent.
2. **ATTENDANCE.** The seminar will be conducted via Zoom. Early in the term, we will establish a set of community guidelines and expectations in order to facilitate productive exchanges and work in the seminar.
3. **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY.** All work submitted in this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly acknowledged and documented. Penalties for plagiarism can include a failing grade for the course. Guidelines on proper citation practices and avoiding plagiarism can be found here: <http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/advice-students/usingsources/> and here: <http://ctl.yale.edu/writing/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism/what-plagiarism>.
4. **ACCOMMODATIONS.** If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability related barriers to your participation, please notify the instructor as soon as possible to discuss an accommodation. You may also wish to contact the Yale Resource Office on Disability <http://rod.yale.edu/course-accommodation>.
5. **SYLLABUS CHANGES:** Changes to the syllabus may be made during the term and will be announced in class and on Canvas.
6. **LATE SUBMISSION POLICY:** Generally, a letter grade will be deducted for any assignments submitted after the due date.
7. **DIGITAL RESOURCES:** Relevant class materials posted on Canvas are indicated. Students are expected to check the course site regularly.

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## E. READINGS SCHEDULE (ALL ARTICLES/CHAPTERS ARE AVAILABLE ON THE CANVAS SITE)

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### UNIT A: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL CHANGE AND POWER

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#### WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW (9/1)

##### *Readings*

- **Steven Osuna** "Class Suicide: The Black Radical Tradition, Radical Scholarship, and the Neoliberal Turn" in Johnson and Lubin edited, *Futures of Black Radicalism* (Verso 2017)
  - **George Lipsitz**, "Accompaniment as a Way of Life," foreword to **Mary Watkins**, *Mutual Accompaniment and the Creation of the Commons* (Yale, 2019).
  - **Anne Spice**, "Heal The People, Heal The Land: An Interview With Freda Huson" in **Nick Estes and Jaskiran Dhillon** edited *Standing with Standing Rock: Voices from the #NoDAPL Movement*. (University of Minnesota Press, 2019).
  - **Spotlight organization:** Khmer Girls in Action, Long Beach, <http://kgalb.org/>
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## WEEK 2: BUILDING A VOCABULARY OF ORGANIZING (9/8)

### Readings

- **Jonathan Matthew Smucker**, "Political Orphan" in *Hegemony How-To: A Roadmap for Radicals* (AK Press, 2018).
  - **Jane F. McAlevey**, "Introduction" in *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age* (Oxford, 2018).
  - **Kim Bobo et al.** "The Fundamentals of Direct Action Organizing" in *Organizing for Social Change* (Forum Press, 2010).
  - **Cesar Chavez** , "The Organizer's Tale" Rampart's Magazine, 1966.
  - **Spotlight organization:** [Virginia Organizing](#)
  - **Guest organizer:** Libero Della Piana, Alliance for a Just Society, <https://allianceforajustsociety.org/>
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## WEEK 3: RECONSTRUCTING PUBLIC GOODS & THE COMMONS (9/15)

### Readings

- **K Sabeel Rahman**, *Losing and Gaining Public Goods*, *Boston Review* (2019), <http://bostonreview.net/forum/k-sabeel-rahman-losing-and-gaining-public-goods>
- **Lauren Jacobs**, "Response to Rahman" <http://bostonreview.net/forum/losing-and-gaining-public-goods/lauren-jacobs-naming-villain>
- **Mary Watkins**, "Introduction" in *Mutual Accompaniment and the Creation of the Commons* (Yale, 2019).
- **Amitava Kumar**, "I'm Writing a Novel, but There is the News, *Brick Magazine*, (103) <https://brickmag.com/im-writing-a-novel/>

- **Spotlight organization:** Idaho Community Action Network
  - **Guest organizer:** LeeAnn Hall, Alliance for a Just Society
  - **Guest speaker:** Amitava Kumar (joint with Public Writing class)
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#### WEEK 4: TEACHER ORGANIZING AND ANTI-RACIST CURRICULA AND PEDAGOGY (9/22)

##### Readings

- **Jane McAlevey**, *No Shortcuts*, Chapter 4, "Chicago Teachers: Building a Resilient Union."
  - Please watch the [webinar](#), "The Anti-Racist Education We Need" on the Anti-Racist Teaching & Learning Collective website and read the profiles on the website: Spotlight organization: [Anti-Racist Teaching & Learning Collective](#) and [Students for Educational Justice](#) (New Haven)
  - **Sarah Jaffe**, "[The Radical Organizing That Paved the Way for LA's Teachers' Strike](#)" *The Nation*, January 19, 2019.
  - **Guest Organizer:** Laura Burfoot, Hearing Youth Voices (New London)
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#### WEEK 5: ECONOMIC COOPERATIVES & ECONOMIC JUSTICE IN THE SOUTH (9/29)

##### Readings

- **Kali Akuno**, "Build and Fight: The Program and Strategy of Cooperation Jackson" and **Makani Themba-Nixon**, "The City as Liberated Zone: The Promise of Jackson's People's Assemblies" in **Ajamu Nangwaya and Kali Akuno edited**, *Jackson Rising: The Struggle for Economic Democracy and Black Self-Determination in Jackson, Mississippi* (Daraja Press, 2017)-
  - **Makani Themba**, "An Island Amid Mississippi's Covid Madness" *The Nation*, July 8, 2020. <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/coronavirus-racism-america/>
  - **Spotlight organization:** [Cooperation Jackson](https://cooperationjackson.org/) <https://cooperationjackson.org/> (please review website in advance)
  - **Guest organizer:** **Makani Themba**, Higher Ground Change Strategies
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#### WEEK 6: REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE & QUEER FUTURES (10/6)

##### Readings

- **Sillman, Fried, Ross and Gutierrez** edited *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice* (South End Press, 2004).

- **Chapter 1**, "Women of Color & the Struggle for Reproductive Justice"
- **Chapter 2**, "The Political Context for Women of Color Organizing" (available through Yale Libraries).
- **Forward Together**, "The Road to Reproductive Justice: Native Americans in New Mexico" (Canvas)
- **Ricke Mananzala, Dean Spade** "The Nonprofit Industrial Complex and Trans Resistance," *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* (2008). (Canvas)
- **Spotlight organization:** Forward Together (please spend a few minutes reviewing their website and their blog for Black women and non-binary writers, Echoing Ida).
- **Guest organizer:** *Eveline Shen*, Executive Director, Forward Together

## WEEK 7: INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATION AND SOVEREIGNTY (10/13)

### Readings

- **Nick Estes**, *Our History is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (Verso, 2019).
- **Leanne Betasamosake Simpson**. *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*. (University of Minnesota Press, 2017.) Selections
- **Spotlight organization:** Native Organizers Alliance
- **Guest organizer:** Judith LeBlanc (Caddo), Native Organizers Alliance

## WEEK 8: MIGRATION, LABOR AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS (10/20)

### Readings

- **Glen Omatsu**, "Immigrant Workers Take the Lead: A Militant Humility Transforms LS Koreatown" in in Rachael Buff edited, *Immigrant Rights in the Shadows of Citizenship*. (Canvas)
- **Tiffany Willoughby-Herard** (2019) "The Whatever that Survived: Thinking Racialized Immigration through Blackness and the Afterlife of Slavery." In Molina, HoSang, and Gutierrez co-edited, *Relational Formations of Race: Theory, Method and Practice* (UC Press, 2019) (Canvas)
- **Rinku Sen**, [Are Immigrants and Refugees People of Color](#), *ColorLines*, July 10, 2007.
- **Rinku Sen**, [As People of Color, We're Not All in the Same Boat](#), *Nation*, August 27, 2014
- **Rinku Sen**, [Community organizations are returning to their 19th century roots](#), (*Press-Telegram*, July 10, 2020)

- Guest organizer: Rinku Sen
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## WEEK 9: MIGRATION, LABOR, & SOCIAL MOVEMENTS (10/27)

### *Readings*

- Jane McAlevey, Chapter 6, "Make the Road New York" in *No Shortcuts* (Canvas)
  - Jane McAlevey, Organizing to Win a Green New Deal. Jacobin, March 26, 2019.
  - Jane McAlevey, Three Lessons for Winning in November and Beyond, *NY Times*, Oct 10, 2018.
  - Jane McAlevey, Getting Out of Tight Corners, *New York Review of Books*, October 20, 2020.
  
  - Guest organizer: Jane McAlevey
  - Spotlight organization: Make the Road NY
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## WEEK 10: THE LABOR MOVEMENT AND WORKER POWER (11/3)

### *Readings*

- Jane McAlevey, *No Shortcuts*, Chapter 3 (Canvas)
  - Smucker, Chapters 3 and 4 in *Hegemony How-To*
  
  - Puya Gerami, "Nursing Home Patients and Workers Are at Ground Zero for Coronavirus." *Jacobin*, May 21, 2020
  
  - Spotlight organization: SEIU 1199NE (CT Healthcare workers union)
  - Guest organizer: Puya Gerami, SEIU 1199NE
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## WEEK 11: ORGANIZER TRAINING AND MOVEMENT BUILDING (11/10)

### *Readings*

- Libero Della Piana, "The Case for An Organizing School"
  - Grassroots Policy Project, "Training for Transformation: A Report on the First Strategy College"
  - Smucker, Chapters 6 and 7 in *Hegemony How-To*
  
  - Spotlight organization: Grassroots Policy Project, [www.grassrootspolicy.org](http://www.grassrootspolicy.org)
  - Guest organizer: Francis Calpotura, in-a(d)vance/TIGRA
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## WEEK 12: BLACK FREEDOM MOVEMENTS (11/17)



Readings

- **Barbara Ransby**, *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the Twenty-First Century* (UC Press, 2018).
- **School Colors podcast**, [Episode 4, "Agitate, Educate, Organize!"](#)
- **Spotlight organization**: Brooklyn Movement Center

Guest organizer: Mark Griffith, [Brooklyn Movement Center](#), [http](#)

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WEEK 13: TOWARDS A NEW HUMANITY (12/1)

Readings

- **Grace Lee Boggs**, *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century* (University of California Press, 2012).
- **Smucker**, Chapter 8 and Conclusion in *Hegemony How-To*
- **Spotlight organization**: Class selection

Guest organizer, Lian Cheun, Khmer Girls in Action