

Topics in Political Science: Citizenship and Activism

(Political Science 250)
Rutgers University, Winter Session 2003

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This course focuses on how citizens mobilize and act for social change. Readings for the class will provide both the theoretical context to help students understand the evolution of the organizing tradition as well as practical skills to give students the ability to themselves be active citizens. We will read case studies that examine citizen campaigns, hear guest lectures from organizers about their own advocacy experiences, and have workshop sessions where students practice and develop skills necessary to organizing.

Required readings

A course pack will be available online through the library's reserve desk.

<http://www.iris.rutgers.edu/uhtbin/cgiirsi/bErvoYAOFz/31810171/36/7/X>

Grades

Students will be evaluated based on class participation, several short papers and presentations, and a group project that involves the planning of a hypothetical advocacy campaign.

This class is run as an intensive workshop experience. Attendance at **all** regularly scheduled class meetings is **required**. Any unexcused absence will result in 12.5 percent subtracted from your grade. To be excused, an absence must be documented to your college's dean of students.

Grades will be calculated based on the following formula:

30 %	Class participation
20	One-page papers and presentations
10	Final paper
40	Group final project
100 %	Total

Schedule

Reading assignment due on Day One:

Barry, Jan. 2000. "Citizens in Action," from *A Citizen's Guide to Grassroots Campaigns* (ch. 1).

Kahn, Si. 1991. "Organizing," from *Organizing* (ch. 1).

Day One. Monday, Jan. 6. Introductions and Identifying Issues.

Assignments for tomorrow:

- 2-minute presentation on why your issue is important
- read Jan Barry's "Rebuilding Urban Neighborhoods" (ch. 2)

Day Two. Tuesday, Jan. 7. Filtering and Focusing Your Issue. Resources and Research.

Two-minute presentations on why your issue is important.

Assignments for tomorrow:

- 2-minute presentation on your focused issue, using resource sources.
- read Jan Barry's "Saving a Swamp" (ch. 3)

Day Three. Wednesday, Jan. 8. Networking and Mobilizing. Who Are the Decisionmakers?

Two-minute presentations on researched issues.

Assignments for tomorrow:

- read Kim Bobo's "Developing a Strategy" (ch. 4 from *Organizing for Social Change*). Bring the work-sheet to class.

Day Four. Thursday, Jan. 9. Strategy and Tactics I. Short- and Long-term Goals.

Worksheet exercise.

Assignments for tomorrow:

- 2-minute presentation as a "call to action" on your issue.
- read "The Strategic Determinants of a Countermovement" by Victoria Johnson (ch. 12 of *Waves of Protest*, edited by Jo Freeman and Victoria Johnson.)

Day Five. Friday, Jan. 10. Strategy and Tactics II. Framing the Issue.

Two-minute calls to action.

Assignments for Monday:

- read Jan Barry's "Navigating the Media" (ch. 9)

Day Six. Monday, Jan. 13. Working with the Media.

Writing press releases and thinking about sound bites.

Assignments for tomorrow:

- revise your group press release into a polished version.
- practice your 30-second sound bites (what is your group; what is your issue)
- read "Sacrifice for a Cause" by Eric L. Hirsch (ch. 3 of *Waves of Protest*, edited by Jo Freeman and Victoria Johnson.)

Day Seven. Tuesday, Jan. 14. Budgets. Implementation and Evaluation.

Sound bites.

Assignments for tomorrow:

- Finish your group presentation

Day Eight. Wednesday, Jan. 15. Group presentations.

Ten-minute presentations in the form of a press conference, rally, or mobilizational meeting (as appropriate to your issue), followed by question-and-answer period.

Day Nine. Thursday, Jan. 16. No class.

Day Ten. Friday, Jan. 17. No class, but **papers are due.**

DUE: Three-page paper comparing the issue that you and your group worked on to one of the case studies we read. Compare and contrast the issues in terms of their mobilizing potentials, networking, framing of the issues, strategies and tactics, budgets, and relative success.