I. Course

A. Catalog Description
(Credit 3) Prerequisite: 34 hours in social work or consent of instructor. Methods and skills for building collaborative alliance with consumer/community systems to increase access to and control of needed resources. Emancipatory interventions and multicultural practice are emphasized.

B. Purpose
The intent of this course is to provide a foundation for students to develop self-reflective empowerment practice skills in working with others different from themselves.

The first foundation of the course lies in the ability to actively be aware of one’s own thoughts, emotions and actions to create a positive empowering environment. The course emphasizes facilitating one’s own and others’ empowerment through conscious use of self and modeling.

The second foundation lies in the ability to understand the nature and types of power and to analyze power relationships in specific situations. The course emphasizes facilitating one’s own and others’ ability to think and act politically for effect change in group situations.

The course is heavily grounded in theory and research on how people and political realities change.

II. Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate advanced knowledge of the history, theory, and politics of an empowerment approach to individual and social change;
2. Identify and implement emancipatory intervention skills that promote personal,
interpersonal, and collective power;
3. use a model of collaborative practice skills to further involve and give a more
equal share of power to clients and constituents of different gender, class,
race, and sexual orientation, especially minorities of color, women, gay and
lesbian persons, and those most economically disadvantaged;
3. demonstrate advanced skills in working effectively with diverse constituencies
and planning multicultural interventions;
4. Identify power and reconceptualize it in terms of oppressed groups, in order to
help people, organizations, and communities utilize it effectively;
5. Identify institutional and community practices that disempower, and develop
strategies to challenge them;
6. Demonstrate how to share empowerment theory and practice with
constituencies who are unfamiliar or inclined to oppose such; and
7. Demonstrate an ability to apply research methods for evaluating the
effectiveness of empowerment practice.

III. Course Content

The course will include the following topical (content) areas:

1. strategies for personal self-reflection, personal discernment, formation, and/or
mastery necessary to help individuals empower and lead others to effect
change;

2. strategies for understanding and assessing power and power relationships in
personal, group, and civic situations; and

3. studies and techniques on how to effectively think and act politically.

IV. Course Structure

Class sessions will include a combination of lecture, discussion, guest lecturers,
in-class exercises and group presentations. Five guest speakers will address the
class.

Guest lecturers will come from a list including:

Maria Xiquin – Service Employers International Union
Elizabeth Valdez – Lead organizer, The Metropolitan Organization (TMO)
Sister Mignonne Konechny – Senior organizer, Industrial Areas Foundation
Casey Fleming – Kinkaid School
Ginny Goldman – Lead organizer, Texas Organizing Project
James Gonzales – SEARCH
Mary Helen Merzbacher – Family Service Center
Theresa Strong – Bel Inizio
Michelle Paul – Capital IDEA
Laura Perez-Boston – Houston interfaith Workers Justice
Annica Gorham – Justice for Janitors Campaign
Jack Hendrie – Fun, Fair, & Positive Soccer

This material is intended to supplement, not review the course readings.

V. Textbooks and Readings

All readings for class will be provided by the instructor. Students will be given reading assignments from a number of different sources including but not limited to

Brueggermann, Walter. Hope Within History.

Brown, Brené. The Gifts of Imperfection: Let go of who you think you’re supposed to be and embrace who you are.

Chambers, Edward T. Roots for radicals: organizing for power, action, and justice.

Cromwell, Jason. Transmen and FTM’s: Identities, Bodies, Genders, and Sexualities

Erdrich, Louise. The Shawl.


McAdams, Dan P. The Stories We Live By: personal myths and the making of the self.

Miller, V., VeneKlasen, L., Reilly, M. and Clark, C. Making change happen: power, concepts for revisiting power for justice, equality, and peace. (Making Change Happen, No. 3).

Monoros, Jacqueline B. & Wilson, Scott M. Organizing for power and empowerment.

Sadan, Elesheva. Empowerment and Community Planning. Introduction

Additional readings will be taken from specific readings from the New York Times including

Teaching Psychiatric Patients Writing and Hope, Samuel Freedman,

An American Minority’s Road to Rights, Neil Genzlinger
Finding Purpose after Living with Delusion, Benedict Carey.

Learning to Live with a Mind’s Taunting Voices, Benedict Carey,

For mothers-to-be, finding health in a group, Tina Rosenberg.

A reading from the Houston Chronicle

New Plans to Improve performance at T.S.U.

A reading from the Toronto Globe and Mail

Undocumented immigrants are coming out of America’s closet

VI. Course Requirements

The final grade for this course will be based on the following assignments

a) Participation and Preparedness – 10 points. The success of this course is completely dependent on the interest, investment, and contribution of its members. Therefore attendance is mandatory. **Note: Students will be expected to share aspects of their personal story and to know all the names of their fellow students and significant aspects of their personal story as part of this class.**

b) Credo/Personal Statement – 35 points. Each student will be required to submit a written credo or personal narrative that summarizes their basic life experience, personal stories, and beliefs that allow them to act in the world. The paper will be personal, but not intimate or confessional.

c) Group Presentation – 20 points. Students will research and identify current and past organizations, movements, institutions, and agencies that consciously work to empower oppressed and marginalized groups of people. Small groups of two-three students will then make 30-45 minute class presentations on these efforts to their classmates. A list of such topics is given for groups to consider. Students may of course select other topics to present.

e) Final Paper – 35 points. Students will write a final paper that provides an in-depth summary of their understanding of the empowerment process as it relates to them personally and in general.

VII. Grading

_Criteria for Letter Grade_

95-100=A 77-79=C+
Policy on grades of I (incomplete). The grade of I (incomplete) is a conditional and temporary grade given when students are passing a course, but, for reasons beyond their control, have not completed a relatively small part of all requirements. Incompletes will be given only under exceptional situations after consultation with the instructors.

VII. Consultation

Contact instructor by phone or e-mail for appointment.

IX. Addenda

Disabilities. Whenever possible, and in accordance with 504/ADA guidelines, the University of Houston will attempt to provide reasonable academic accommodation to students who request and require them. Please call 713 743-5400 for more assistance.

Plagiarism and academic honesty. All written assignments must be original student work. Ideas, concept, and words of others cannot be used without attribution of the source. References and citations are required. Plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for that assignment and in additional disciplinary procedures in accordance with the academic honesty policy.

X. Bibliography


Brown, Brene. (2010). *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let go of who you think you’re supposed to be and embrace who you are*. Center City, Minnesota: Hazelden.


Empowerment
Proposed Calendar

January 13
Syllabus
Introductions
The Story of the Exodus

No Class
Martin Luther King Day

January 27
A Theory of Empowerment
Reading: Walter Brueggemann: Hope Within History. Chapter 1
Group Topics Chosen

February 3
The Relational Meeting
Group Exercises
Reading: Ed Chambers. Roots for Radicals. Chapter 2

February 10
The Importance of Story
Guest Speaker: Casey Fleming- The Kinkaid School
Reading: Louise Erdrich: The Shawl (in class)
Reading: Samuel G. Freedman: Teaching Psychiatric Patient Writing and Hope

February 17
The Importance of Mastery
Guest Speaker: Theresa Strong- Bel Annizio
Reading: George Leonard: Mastery

The Personal Narrative
Handout: Components of a Life Story Interview taken from The Stories

We Live By: Dan P McAdams
Group Exercises

February 24
Guest Speaker: Mary Helen Merzbacher – Family Service Center

Reading: Oxford Group: Fourth Step Inventory Questions
Reading: At a big church, a small group health solution
Group Exercises

March 3
Guest Speaker: James Gonzalez - SEARCH
Reading: Transmen and FTM’s
Group Exercises
March 10          Guest Speaker: Jack Hendrie - Fun, Fair, and Positive Soccer  
**Reading:** *Every Kid Can Win*  
Group Exercises

March 17          Lecture: Theories of Oppression and Domination  
**Reading:** *Making Change Happen: Concepts for Revisioning Power*  
for Justice, Equality, and Peace  
First Assignment Credo Due

March 24          Guest Speakers: Michelle Paul, Capital IDEA  
Sister Mignonne Konechny, Industrial Areas Foundation  
**Reading:** *New Plans to Improve Performance at T.S.U.*  
*Reading:* Low success rates an annual disaster: community college drop-outs cost taxpayers $74 million

March 31          Guest Speaker: Ginny Goldman Texas Organizing Project (TOP)  
**Reading:**  
Group Presentations

April 7           Guest Speaker: Laura Perez-Boston – Houston Interfaith Workers  
Justice  
**Reading:**  
Group Presentations

April 14          Guest Speaker: Maria Xiquin - Service Employees International Union  
**Reading:** *Life on $7.25 hr.*  
Group Presentations

April 21          Guest Speaker: Cesar Espinosa – Immigrant Families and Students in the Struggle  
**Reading:** *Undocumented Immigrants are Coming out of America’s Closet*  
Group Presentations

April 28          Last Class  
Group Presentations  
Final paper Due
Empowerment Strategies

Self-Help Groups
- Alcoholics Anonymous, Oxford Group, Oxford House
- Moderation Management
- Hearing Voices Movement
- Bel Inizio

Identity Groups
- SHAPE – Self-Help for African People (Houston), Back to Africa Movement
- Nation of Islam
- Transgender Center – Houston
- Men’s Movement (Robert Bly)
- Act Up
- ADAPT
- United We Dream (Dream Act) “Dreamers”

Affinity Groups
- Unemployment Councils (Depression)
- Weight Watchers, Dress for Success, The Daniel Plan
- PFLAG – Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

Economic Groups
- SEIU – Service Employees International Union
- Houston Interfaith Workers Justice
- Fast Food Forward
- Local Food Movement
- National domestic Workers Union
- Coalition of Immokalee Workers
- United Farm Workers/Cesar Chavez
- Mondragon Movement (Spain)

Education
- Miles Horton and The Highlander School
- Capital IDEA - Austin

Grass Roots Organizations
- The Metropolitan Organization (TMO)
- Texas Organizing Project (TOP)
- Houston Area Women’s Center
Intentional Communities and Religious Orders

- Base Communities (Liberation Theology)
- Kibbutz Movement (Israel)
- Catholic Worker Movement
- Benedictines, Franciscans,
- Oneida Community, Shakers

Mass Movements

- Civil Rights Movement (Southern Christian Leadership Conference; NAACP; Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee)
- Women’s Movement (Phases 1, 2, and 3)

International Movements

- Swadhyaya Movement (India)
- Green Belt Movement (Kenya)
- Landless Movement (Brasil)
- Gulen Movement (Turkey)
- Amcha (Holocaust Survivors) – (Israel)

Protest Movements and Mobilizations

- ANSWER – Act Now to Stop War and End Racism
- Stonewall/Gay Rights Parades
- Women’s Christian Temperance Union
- The Riott Girl Movement

Youth Empowerment

- Boy Scouts
- Girl Scouts
- SEARCH Institute
- Girls Rock Camp Houston