

GRASSROOTS POLITICS IN PHILADELPHIA

Spring 2009

Political Science 325
Haverford College

Steve McGovern
Phone: 896-1058 (w)
smcgover@haverford.edu

Office: Hall 105
Office Hours: W 1-3
(and by appointment)

Course Description

This course examines community organizing and grassroots advocacy to empower ordinary people. We will consider how individuals who have all too often been marginalized in urban society come together to identify common problems, set an agenda, and then pursue change through collective action. How do such individuals mobilize resources, establish organizations, and seize opportunities to enhance their power and revitalize their communities?

The spatial context for our analysis of grassroots politics will be the city of Philadelphia. Like so many other American cities, Philadelphia suffered from the ravages of mass suburbanization, deindustrialization, deepening poverty and inequality, and mounting racial and ethnic tensions during the latter half of the twentieth century. We will begin the semester by reviewing the societal forces that contributed to urban decline, as well as the major political decisions at the local, state, and national levels that tended to exacerbate the impact of those forces. We will then take stock of current conditions in Philadelphia, which in some respects have improved in recent years, while highlighting the many social, economic, and political constraints that continue to limit the options of urban policy makers.

Next, we will move into the heart of the course by evaluating various models of community organizing and community development. From there, we will broaden our inquiry beyond community-based organizing to consider the potential of alliances between neighborhood groups and other entities advocating for change, including labor unions and faith-based organizations. Finally, we will study coalition-building strategies that encompass city-wide, regional, and national campaigns for popular empowerment.

A crucial component of this seminar is its blend of classroom-based learning with an experiential component featuring internships and participatory research. Along with weekly class meetings to discuss and analyze assigned readings on the theory and practice of community organizing, each student will be placed in an internship in Philadelphia with a community-based organization, public interest group, or city government entity concerned with popular mobilization around issues related to housing and community development, homelessness, economic development, education, and poverty. An underlying assumption of the seminar is that what students learn in the classroom will take on a deeper meaning if they are given the opportunity to confront directly serious problems affecting city residents and contribute to ongoing efforts to resolve those problems. The internship experiences will thus inform class discussions throughout the semester, as well as provide the foundation for a research project based on the organizing initiatives of city residents to address a major issue affecting one or more urban neighborhoods. We will conclude by reassessing the condition of Philadelphia and other American cities and the prospects for their revitalization through grassroots activism.

Requirements

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| Class participation | 20% |
| Short paper (5 pages) | 20% |
| Presentation of research | 10% |
| Research paper (10-15 pages) | 50% |

Texts

- Carolyn Adams, et al., *Restructuring the Philadelphia Region: Metropolitan Divisions and Inequality* (Temple University Press, 2008).
Marion Orr, ed., *Transforming the City: Community Organizing and the Challenge of Political Change* (University Press of Kansas, 2007)
Lee Staples, *Roots to Power: A Manual for Grassroots Organizing*, 2nd ed (Praeger 2004)

All other assigned readings will be available through Blackboard.

Topics and Readings

Week 1

- I. Introduction to Course
 - A. Course overview
 - B. Starting Your Internships

Week 2

- II. American Cities in the Twentieth Century
 - Robert O. Self and Thomas J. Sugrue, “The Power of Place: Race, Political Economy, and Identity in the Postwar Metropolis” in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, eds. Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig
 - Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf, and Todd Swanstrom, “The Roads Not Taken: How Federal Policy Promoted Economic Segregation and Suburban Sprawl” in *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the Twenty-First Century*
 - Saskia Sassen, “Place and Production in the Global Economy” in *Cities in a World Economy*
 - Roger Waldinger, “The New Urban Reality” in *Cities and Society*, ed. Nancy Kleniewski
 - Robert Zecker, “Introduction” in *Metropolis: The American City in Popular Culture*
 - Alan Greenblatt, “Downtown Renaissance: Are Center Cities Finally Returning to Health?” *CQ Researcher*, June 23, 2006

Week 3

III. Philadelphia

A. Historical Overview

Carolyn Adams, et al., "The Legacy of the Industrial City" in *Philadelphia: Neighborhoods, Division, and Conflict in a Postindustrial City*

James Wolfinger, "Moving Out" in *Philadelphia Divided: Race and Politics in the City of Brotherly Love*

Matthew J. Countryman, "'From Protest to Politics': Community Control and Black Independent Politics in Philadelphia, 1965-1984" in *Journal of Urban History* (September 2006)

Buzz Bissinger, "The Racial Trifecta" in *A Prayer for the City*.

Carolyn Adams, et al., *Restructuring the Philadelphia Region*, Ch. 1

Film in class: "Rizzo"

Week 4

B. Current Conditions in Philadelphia

Carolyn Adams, et al., *Restructuring the Philadelphia Region*, Chs. 2-4, 6

Week 5

IV. Urban Politics and Policy Making

Paul E. Peterson, "The Interests of the Limited City," excerpt from *City Limits*, reprinted in *American Urban Politics: The Reader*, eds. Dennis R. Judd and Paul Kantor

Clarence N. Stone, "Urban Regimes: A Research Perspective," excerpt from *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988*, reprinted in *American Urban Politics: The Reader*, eds. Dennis R. Judd and Paul Kantor

John H. Mollenkopf, "How to Study Urban Political Power," excerpt from *A Phoenix in the Ashes*, reprinted in *The Urban Politics Reader*, eds. Elizabeth A. Strom and John H. Mollenkopf

Adolph Reed, Jr., "Demobilization in the New Black Political Regime: Ideological Capitulation and Radical Failure in the Post-Segregation Era," excerpt from *The Bubbling Cauldron: Race, Ethnicity, and the Urban Crisis*, eds. Michael P. Smith and Joe R. Feagin, reprinted in *The Urban Politics Reader*, eds. Elizabeth A. Strom and John H. Mollenkopf

Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf, and Todd Swanstrom, "Urban Politics and City Limits: What Cities Can and Cannot Do to Address Poverty" in *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the Twenty-First Century*, 2nd ed

Short paper due

Week 6

V. Community Organizing

A. Models of Community Organizing

Saul Alinsky, "Tactics," in *Rules for Radicals*

Sidney Plotkin, "Community and Alienation: Enclave Consciousness and Urban Movements" in *Breaking Chains: Social Movements and Collective Action*, ed. Michael P. Smith

Mark Warren, "A Theology of Organizing: From Alinsky to the Modern IAF" in *The Community Development Reader*, eds. James DeFillippis and Susan Saegert

Mark Santow, "Running in Place: Saul Alinsky, Race, and Community Organizing" in *Transforming the City*

Michael Eichler, "Consensus Organizing: Sharing Power to Gain Power," *National Civic Review* (Summer/Fall 1995)

Michael Reisch, "Radical Community Organizing" in *The Handbook of Community Practice*, ed. Marie Weil

Week 7

B. Community Development

James DeFilippis, "Community Control and Development: The Long View" in *The Community Development Reader*, eds. James DeFillippis and Susan Saegert

Neal Peirce and Carol F. Steinbach, *Corrective Capitalism: The Rise of America's Community Development Corporations*, pp. 10-69

Randy Stoecker, "The CDC Model of Urban Development: A Critique and an Alternative" in *The Community Development Reader*, eds. James DeFillippis and Susan Saegert

Robert Fisher and Eric Shragge, "Contextualizing Community Organizing: Lessons from the Past, Tensions in the Present, Opportunities for the Future" in *Transforming the City*

Film in class: "Northeast Passage: The Inner City and the American Dream"

Week 8

SPRING BREAK

Week 9

C. Partnerships and Coalition Building

John DiIulio, Jr., "The Urban Church: Faith, Outreach, and the Inner-City Poor" in *The Essential Civil Society Reader: The Classic Essays*, ed. Don E. Eberly

Judith Goode, "Faith-Based Organizations in Philadelphia: Neoliberal Ideology and the Decline of Political Activism" in *Urban Anthropology* (Spring 2006)

- Richard L. Wood, "Faith-Based Organizing in Action: The Local Organizing Committee at Saint Elizabeth's Church" in *Faith in Action: Religion, Race, and Democratic Organizing in America*
- Nari Rhee and Julie Anna Sadler, "Building an Inclusive City: Labor-Community Coalitions and the Struggle for Urban Power in San Jose" in *Labor in the New Urban Battlegrounds: Local Solidarity in a Global Economy*, eds. Lowell Turner and Daniel B. Cornfield
- Ian Greer, Barbara Byrd, and Lou Jean Fleron, "Two Paths to Power: The Dynamics of Coalition Building in Seattle and Buffalo" in *Labor in the New Urban Battlegrounds: Local Solidarity in a Global Economy*, eds. Lowell Turner and Daniel B. Cornfield
- Guest speaker, Thursday, March 19, 7:30-9:00: W. Wilson Goode, Director, Amachi, a national, faith-based organization working with children of incarcerated parents; Mayor of Philadelphia, 1984-1992

Week 10

D. Community Organizing and Public Policy

- Rob Rosenthal and Maria Foscarinis, "Responses to Homelessness: Past Policies, Future Directions, and a Right to Housing" in *A Right to Housing: Foundation for a New Social Agenda*, eds. Rachel G. Bratt, Michael E. Stone, and Chester Hartman
- Dennis Shirley and Michael Evans, "Community Organizing and No Child Left Behind" in *Transforming the City*
- Stephen J. McGovern, "Mobilization on the Waterfront: The Ideological/Cultural Roots of Possible Regime Change in Philadelphia," *Urban Affairs Review* (forthcoming in 2009)

Panel Discussion on Homelessness, Sponsored by Center for Peace and Global Citizenship, March 25 (Details forthcoming)

Week 11

E. Coalition Building beyond the City

- Kathleen Staudt and Clarence N. Stone, "Division and Fragmentation: The El Paso Experience in Global-Local Perspective" in *Transforming the City*
- Heidi Swarts, "Political Opportunity, Venue Shopping, and Strategic Innovation: ACORN's National Organizing" in *Transforming the City*
- Richard L. Wood, "Higher Power: Strategic Capacity for State and National Organizing" in *Transforming the City*

VI. Presentation of Research

Week 12

Presentation of Research
Lee Staples, *Roots to Power*, Chs. 1-2

Week 13

Presentation of Research
Lee Staples, *Roots to Power*, Chs. 3-4

Week 14

Presentation of Research
Lee Staples, *Roots to Power*, Chs. 5-6

Week 15

VII. Conclusion: The Future of Grassroots Politics

Peter Dreier, "Community Organizing for What? Progressive Politics and Movement Building in America"

Research paper due at end of semester

Internship in Philadelphia

1. ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now)
846 N. Broad Street, 2nd Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19130
www.acorn.org
2. Asian Americans United
1023 Callowhill St.
Philadelphia, PA 19123
www.aaunited.org
3. Asociacion de Puertorriquenos en la Marcha (APM)
600 W. Diamond Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
www.apmphila.org

4. Councilmember Maria D. Quinones-Sanchez
Philadelphia City Council, 7th District
City Hall, Room 592
Philadelphia, PA 19107
www.phila.gov/CityCouncil/sanchez
5. Education Law Center
1315 Walnut Street, Suite 400
Philadelphia, PA 19107
www.elc-pa.org
6. Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger
1725 Fairmount Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19130
www.hungercoalition.org
7. Penn Praxis
409 Duhring Wing
School of Design
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA 19104
www.design.upenn.edu/pennpraxis
www.planphilly.com
8. Philadelphia Public School Notebook
3721 Midvale Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19129
www.thenotebook.org
9. Philadelphia Student Union
5011 Baltimore Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19143
www.phillystudentunion.org
10. Philadelphia Unemployment Project
112 N. Broad Street, 11th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102
www.philaup.org
11. Project H.O.M.E.
1515 Fairmount Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19130
www.projecthome.org

12. SEIU (Service Employees International Union)
Local 32BJ
42 S. 15th Street, Suite 200
Philadelphia, PA 19102
www.phillyunions.com/seiu32bj

13. Women's Community Revitalization Project
407 Fairmount Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19123
www.wcrphila.com