

San José State University, Spring 2018
Sociology 164: Social Action

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Class Schedule: Tu. & Th., 9-10:15 am
Clark Hall, 234
Office Hours: Tu. & Th., 10:30 am-12 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine the tactics and strategies of current and past efforts to bring about social change in the United States. In order to learn how to do social change well, we will examine and explore the basics of community organizing (e.g., issue development, campaign planning, creating a winning strategy, and building an organization). An exciting part of this course is that you will hear directly from former Soci. 164 students about their social action projects.

What is unique about this course is that it is designed to *do social action*. Instead of just reading about it in a book, you will learn about how to bring about social change by *doing* it. Of course, we will still use “book knowledge,” but my hope is that this knowledge will be challenged by what you’re learning in your social action projects, and that you will develop a more critical and deeper understanding of public issues and community change through action and reflection. Thus, this course is an action-oriented, solutions-based, course on community activism. As you will learn, students in Soci. 164 have created change, including:

- In 2017, *Students Against Sexual Harassment (SASH)* won their demand to force the resignation of a professor who had sexually harassed a student, but after a two-week suspension and diversity training, had been allowed to return to his faculty position.
- in 2016, *Students for a World-Class city* developed Measure G, the Modernization of the Business Tax, which won 65% to 35% in the 2016 election, and doubled the business tax by almost \$13 million (focusing on mid to large corporations).
- in 2015, *Students for DMH* won their demand for air conditioning in Dudley Moorehead Hall;
- in 2015, *College Action Network* won their demand for the institutionalization of a college tour program for third graders that they had developed;
- in 2015, *Every 15 Minutes a Students Wait* won their demand for more printers (two) in the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library;
- in 2014, *Students for Racial Equality* led a successful campaign to remove Tower Foundation board member Wanda Ginner after making a racist comment about Latinas;
- in 2010-2012, the *Campus Alliance for Economic Justice (CAFÉ J)* initiated and led the San Jose Measure D campaign, which won 60% to 40% in the 2012 election, which raised the minimum wage from \$8 to \$10 an hour;
- in 2011, *Students for Campus Safety* won two of their demands: (1) to have an opt out system rather than an opt-in system for SJSU Action Alerts, (2) to extend the SJSU shuttle service to six blocks off the campus;
- in 2010, provided critical leadership to *Collective Voices for Undocumented Students*, which won the campaign to allow AB 540 (undocumented) students to use computers from Clark Hall and to receive certain SJSU scholarships;
- in 2008, *Students for EOP* led the successful campaign, along with faculty (with Dr. Alaniz and others) to re-instate the SJSU Education Opportunity Program (EOP);
- in 2007, *Students Against Sweatshops* got the President to sign an executive order creating a sweatshop-free campus;
- in 2006-2009, the *Gulf Coast Civic Works Project* created two federal bills, had them introduced into Congress, and then lead a coalition of 200 organization to enact the bills;
- in 2006, *Student Homeless Alliance* created Poverty Under the Stars; now in its 11th year.

One last thing: this is a Sociology course, so you should know something about one of the most famous American sociologists, C. Wright Mills. Mills once said that, “personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues - and in terms of the problems of history making.” For example, if in a nation, there is just a small minority of the population in poverty, then it is the individual’s personal trouble, and for its relief we properly look to the character of the person and her or his skills. But if in that nation, there are 43 million people in poverty (like in the United States), then that is a social problem, and relief must come from a change in social structure (i.e., the arrangement of society). Mills called this approach to understanding reality the *sociological imagination*, which we will use throughout this course!ⁱ

SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS

All students will be involved in social action. This will require a minimum of 1½ to 2 hours per week of community work (25 hours minimum over 15 weeks). If you do not do more than 25 hours a week, you will not receive higher than a C on the overall portfolio grade, since it is difficult to do reflection if you are not doing social action. Of course, if you want to do more community work, that is great. In fact, I can arrange for you to get an extra one to three units of course credit (Soci. 181) if you do additional community work. Please come see me if you are interested in this additional course credit.

It will be possible to do your social action on campus, so all students should be able to work it into your schedule. In addition, class time will be dedicated to your community projects, so you will be able to do some of your organizing in class. During the second class, you will brainstorm various social action projects, and then select one to work on. The requirements for the project are: (i) that you have a minimum of 3 students on your team, (ii) you have passion for the issue, and (iii) your project tries to change some type of policy. We will discuss possible social action projects on the 2nd day of class.

READINGS

The readings for this course are *CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action* and *Ending Extreme Inequality*, both by Scott Myers-Lipton, and a reader. *CHANGE!* and the reader are available at SJ Copy (408-297-6698), located on 109 E. Santa Clara Street, two stores down from the Chevron gas station. *Ending Extreme Inequality* is available at Spartan Bookstore or on-line.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There are four course requirements. They include quizzes, a portfolio and log, participation, and a final presentation.

Five Very Short Quizzes (20% of total grade)

The purpose of these very short quizzes (i.e., less than 5 minutes) is to encourage reading. In order to encourage the reading of the course material, you will be given short quizzes throughout the semester. Actually, you will take six quizzes and the lowest one will be dropped. This comes in handy if you miss a quiz, as there are no re-takes for the quizzes. If you do the reading for each class, these short quizzes will be very easy to answer.

ⁱ C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 226.

Portfolio and log (40%)

At the university, you generally demonstrate that you understand the ideas from the course in an exam. This class is different; in this class, portfolios take the place of exams. Importantly, the portfolio is where you demonstrate your knowledge of the text in light of your social action experiences. Therefore, you must integrate the text with your community work throughout each portfolio. With no integration of text, you cannot receive above a C on your portfolio.

In addition, you can not get higher than a C on your overall portfolio grade if you do not complete at least 25 hours of social action work (1.5 to 2 hours a week). I will email you a log to keep track of your community work, and it will be turned in with each portfolio. Please buy a very thin folder for your portfolio and log. Your portfolio and log will be collected every three to four weeks. Late portfolios will be accepted, but 1/3 grade will be deducted for each school date it is late.

Participation (20%)

The purpose of evaluating your participation is to encourage and reward students who prepare for, and engage in, the habits of the mind. Thus, you will be evaluated on the extent and quality of your participation in the class. Your classroom participation grade will be based on the following criteria:

Excellence (A) requires that you play a leadership role in the large class discussion and your team, apply the text, discuss points articulately and respond intelligently to other's views; ask insightful questions, and take responsibility for the direction of the class discussion and your team.

Above average (B) requires that you participate regularly in the large class discussion and your team, demonstrate good knowledge of the text, discuss points articulately and respond intelligently to other's views; ask insightful questions, but you do not take a strong leadership role in the overall class discussion and the direction of your team.

Average (C) requires that you follow the discussion in the large class and your team, make occasional comments, have a basic knowledge of the text, and sometimes ask questions in the large group and your team.

Below average (D) requires that you occupy a seat and occasionally show signs of life.

Failure (F) requires that you occupy a seat but show no signs of life.

At the end of the course, you will be asked to evaluate your level of participation, as well as your teammates. This evaluation will be taken seriously when participation grades are determined.

Final Presentation (20%)

For the final exam, students give a group presentation that evaluates your social action project.

GRADING SCALE

Since the various parts of the course add up to 100%, each percent equals a point. For example, your participation is 20% of your grade; thus, this assignment is worth 20 points. The scale that I use to measure your work is the following:

98-100=A+	88-89=B+	78-79=C+	68-69=D+	59 & below =F
93-97=A	83-87=B	73-77=C	63-67=D	
90-92=A-	80-82=B-	70-72=C-	60-62=D-	

EXTRA CREDIT

There will also be extra credit opportunities throughout the semester. To receive the extra credit, you need to attend the campus event that I have assigned, and then write a 3-4 paragraph reflection paper on how the event is connected to the course readings and ideas from the course. Depending on the quality of the extra credit paper, one to two points will be added to your participation grade. You can do a total of 5 extra credit papers/events.

SJSU WRITING CENTER

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall in Room 126. Please take advance of this resource. The Writing Center website is: <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>.

FACULTY WEB PAGE

My faculty web page is www.sjsu.edu/people/scott.myers-lipton. You can also get to my web page at the SJSU home page and go to More Quick Links>Faculty Pages link.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

According to the University's Academic Integrity Policy, "cheating is the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work through the use of any dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means (see Section 1.1.1 through 1.1.7), while plagiarism is "the act of representing the work of another as one's own without giving appropriate credit, regardless of how that work was obtained, and/or submitting it to fulfill academic requirements (see Section 1.2.1 and 1.2.2). The university's Academic Integrity Policy is available at:

http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf.

If I determine there has been a violation of this policy, students will receive an automatic zero for the paper. In addition, I will file a report with the Academic Affairs Judicial Officer regarding the violation of the academic integrity policy. (Please note: I often checks papers on the web!)

To learn more about student conduct and ethical development, go to

http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html.

CAMPUS POLICY IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE AMERICAN DISABILITIES ACT

Sociology 164 complies with campus policy regarding the American Disabilities Act. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability (e.g., if you need a note taker, you need to view the course readings on a screen, or you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated), please contact me as soon as possible. In addition, if your disability Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that a student with a disability register at SJSU's Disability Resource Center (DRC, Admin 110, 924-6000) to establish a record of that disability.

OTHER INFORMATION

1. Cell Phones and Computers: Cell phones and texting are not allowed when we are in the large group. If you have your phone out, I will ask you to put it on my desk. Also, do not use your computer for social networking or searching during the large group discussions. If you do, I will ask to close your computer. However, you will be able to use your phone and social media when you are in your teams/small groups.
2. Office Hours: My office hours are on Tuesday and Thursday. Office hours are generally used to help clarify information from lectures, discussions, group activities, readings, or social action projects. However, at least once this semester, please come by my office hours.
3. Late Papers: The late policy for any work is a 1/3 drop in grade for each school day that it is late. Thus, if the paper is due on Tuesday, and you turn it in on Thursday, your grade will be dropped by 2/3s (i.e., a grade of B would be a C+).
4. Strongly Recommended for Students in Community Change Concentration: This class is strongly recommended for students in the Sociology Department's Community Change Concentration (CCC), and is recommended for anyone interested in being an engaged, democratic citizen. The prerequisite is Soc. 1 or equivalent; however, the professor has discretion to let students into the class.