

Teaching Social Action

How to Start a Course or Workshop Series

This session will cover the nuts and bolts for launching a Social Action class on your campus using the model developed at San José State by Dr. Scott Myers-Lipton using his book: *CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action*. Our goal is that every campus find a way to teach interested students the skills to bring about change through community organizing approach.

Workshop Agenda

Initial Questions:

- What most excites you about having a social action experience/class on your campus?
- Do you have personal experience doing or teaching social action?

Overview: Teaching Social Action using *CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action*

Who would teach it?

- Who are the likely faculty or staff on your campus to teach social action experience/class?
- What department would teach it, or would it be a co-curricular Bonner project?

What would a social action course look like at your campus?

- a 3 unit class in curriculum
- a 1 unit pass/fail curriculum
- co-curricular: a Bonner “capstone” experience in the 3rd and/or 4th year (part of training and hours normally completed)
- If class, what do you need to do to obtain course approval?

Other Questions

- What will be your biggest challenges to get started?
- If the administration has concerns, how will you deal with them?
- What’s your role when students are protesting a campus policy or incident?
- ...?

Support

- Bonner Resource Wiki – Social Action section
- Bonner Learning Community – Social Action Group
- Bonner Social Action Discussion List – socialaction@bonner.org
- Dr. Scott Myers-Lipton – smlipton@gmail.com

TEACHING SOCIAL ACTION START-UP CHECK LIST

The following list represents the key steps in your start-up process of a Social Action class/experience.

Framework

- Decide if Social Action will be a credit-bearing class, a Bonner non-credit workshop experience, or will it take some other form.
- Design the curriculum. It should include such things as: issue development, change theory, power and recruitment, target analysis and power mapping, strategy and tactics, group dynamics (i.e., facilitation, decision making, conflict resolution), campaign planning (i.e., event planning, media outreach, fundraising), negotiation, and evaluation. Dr. Myers-Lipton is available for consultations, smlipton@gmail.com.
- Choose the books (e.g., *Change! A Student Guide to Social Action*, *Stir it Up*, *Tools for Radical Democracy*, etc.)

Staffing

- Decide who will teach the Social Action class/experience (e.g., Bonner staff, faculty, local community organizer, etc.).
- If you decide that Social Action is a credit-bearing class, you will need to work with the department to find the appropriate course number.

Recruiting Students

- Develop marketing material (e.g., poster, letter to professors, staff, and students).
- If credit-bearing class, develop plan to attract students

Contact Community Organizations

- Meet with community partners individually to explain Social Action model and to see if the organization would like to come and pitch a campaign that they are working on to the students.

Key Lessons for Teaching Social Action

- Select the campaign issue(s) in the first or second week of the class/experience
- Community action is offset with reflection, research, critical thinking.
- Expect a bit of chaos as students come to terms with their power.
- Use active, engaged pedagogy, in addition to “teacher talk”.
- Be prepared to explain to administrators and the larger community about how Social Action is appropriate for higher education since students choose their own campaigns, it teaches students about how power operates, and it engages students in democracy.