

Teaching Social Action

by Dr. Scott Myers-Lipton
San José State University

OVERVIEW OF SOCIOLOGY 164: SOCIAL ACTION

- In class, the key points of the chapter are discussed in the first 45 minutes, and then 20-30 minutes are spent in the group, where I go around and answer questions, and nudge them toward action
 - At end of each chapter, I have them respond to the questions in each chapter. In class, students talk about these questions, but I have them write their responses up individually. (posters, sign up sheet, and campaign notebooks are the exception).
 - If you are teaching Social Action for the first time, there will be 3-5 new campaigns, so the students might get to recruitment and may do a kick off event. FYI: In the fall semester, I use a student-created event, "Poverty Under the Stars" as a kickoff event for many of the groups. However, after the students turn it over to a new group the following semester, and the students begin the class with the previous semester's campaign notebook, students are more likely to begin engaging in a series of actions.

MESSAGE TO TEACHERS

1. Start Campaigns Quickly

- Term doesn't provide much time (i.e., 2-4 months), so it's key that students start social action projects ASAP
 - Students present own ideas to one another. As time went on, other student groups, faculty, and community orgs have asked to come in and talk to students...
 - Generally, 3-5 projects going on; however, a few times, whole class has worked on 1 campaign.

2. Action is offset with reflection, research, critical thinking

- Don't overwhelm students.
- Perform action, and then reflect. Thus, "action" (e.g., campaign kickoff) is followed by "reflection" (e.g., group dynamics)
- Note: chapters alternate between action and reflection/critical thinking; explain why first action is Issue Development, then there are two reflective chapters (Setting the tone and Change Theory), and the second action is recruitment.

3. Use Pedagogies In Addition to "Teacher Talk"

- Must actively engage students
 - do give lectures, but do small group work on campaigns
 - when texted discussed, often have students facilitate to encourage an active role
 - also, have former students come talk
- All de-center from traditional role of teacher, and asks students to take center stage.

4. One Caution: Expect a Bit of Chaos as students come to terms with their power

- Be clear as possible about your role (i.e., guide on side") and be transparent and honest about your expectations.
 - tell students while they are much more in control of the class than in other college courses, but remind them power is shared (e.g., I still set curriculum, give short lectures, provide guidance for groups, and evaluate their work.
 - FYI: don't give students a higher grade if they win campaign; rather, evaluate work on written and oral assignments.

5. May Have to Talk with Administrators and Larger Community.

- When concerns raised, I explain to administration and to the press that I am teaching about DEMOCRACY and POWER.
 - Assure them that students choose projects to work on is based on their interests.
 - not coercing them into particular project; have choice
- Projects students select may have a liberal or conservative bent, or no bent at all (e.g. more printers for the library or air conditioning for an old building).

- Provide examples of students working in public realm:
 - Business classes having students help solve problems for local companies,
 - Engineering courses that design power grids or create software protection programs for real customers.
- Tell administrators that students trained in social action makes campus better, more productive space to be.

TEACHING THE CLASS USING CHANGE! A STUDENT GUIDE TO SOCIAL ACTION

PROLOGUE

Key Points: Explanation of the book: “action-oriented, solutions based experience of change

Explanation of the “my journey” to Change!

CHAPTER 1: ISSUE DEVELOPMENT

Chapter 1 Issue Development

Personal and Social Problems 1

Issue 2

Issue Identification 4

Case Studies 6

Key Points: Individual Problem vs. Social Problem vs. Issue

- **An Issue:**
 - Has a solution
 - Has a specific demand (i.e., a concrete, measurable request) that requires a yes or no
 - Has a target (i.e., the lowest ranking person who can meet your demand),
 - People feel strongly about and willing to do something about it
 - Is winnable
- **Issue Identification (Issue ID):** Normally takes 4-10 weeks.

Key Action for Students: Choose Issue: SASH, SPOT, SJGD, SHA, USAS (discuss process)

CHAPTER 2: SETTING THE TONE

Chapter 2 Setting the Tone

Redefining Leadership: Seeing Yourself as a Leader 22

Plato's Cave 27

Key Points:

- **Students views on social change, and if it is possible**
- **Old vs. New Definition of Leadership**
- **Leadership skills** (e.g., listening, becoming aware of how group is feeling, having integrity, understanding privilege, being persistent, learning to say now with a smile, speaking to small group)
- **Plato's Cave**

Key Reflections for Students: social change, leadership, and where are we

CHAPTER 3: CHANGE THEORY

Chapter 3 Change Theory

Macro Change 31

Community Change 34

Critical Education Theory and Service-Learning 44

Key Points:

- **Large-scale, macro change:** materialist and ideationalist perspectives
- **Community organizing:** Women-centered model and Alinsky model
- **Functionalist & Conflict Theory of education** critical theory & service-learning

Key Reflections for Students: Begin to connect various theories to their campaign

CHAPTER 4: BUILDING POWER

Chapter 4 Building Power

What Is Power 52

How to Get Power 54

Recruitment: Base-Building for Power 56

People Came, Now What? 61

Case Studies 62

Privilege and Power: A Word of Caution 66

Key Points:

- **Define power:** how do they feel about power?
- **3 types of power:** power over, power with, power for
- **How power manifests itself:** organized people, org money, & org violence
- **How to get power:** Become organized
- **Recruitment:** builds your base; recruit continuously!

Action for Students: create Recruitment Team, develop recruitment plan and tools: 1-2 minute organizational rap, signup sheet, flier, social media (facebook twitter accounts)

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH

Chapter 5 Research

Historical and Target Analyses, and Power Mapping 71

Case Study: Historical Analysis 74

Case Study: Target Analysis 78

Case Study: Power Mapping 80

Key Points: 3 groups

- **Historical Analysis:** history of social problem, solutions tried, what has worked/not worked, major players
- **Target Analysis:** target's position, his/her political lens, who does s/he listen to
- **Power Mapping:** how much power does group have? Allies/opponents have? Need?

Action for Students: Each campaign breaks into 3 sub-groups & does analysis and poster board

CHAPTER 6: STRATEGY and TACTICS

Chapter 6 Strategy and Tactics

Tools of the Craft 87

Strategy 87

Tactics 89

Actions Connected to a Media and Public Education Strategy 90

Actions Connected to a Disruption Strategy 96

Actions Connected to Target Meetings 100

Key Points:

- **Strategies:**
 1. Legislation: enact a new law

2. Policy Change: Improve administration system or create new public program
3. Alliance building: work directly with other orgs, can't do it alone
4. Media and Public Education: engage the media; get message out
5. Disruption: non-violent public action that disrupts day-to day schedule or interferes with normal operations of agency or business
6. Direct Negotiation with Target:

• **Tactics:** actions that publicly show your org power (numbers & quality of orgs leaders)

- rally, march, and picket
- street theater
- public hearings
- Disruption: non-violent public action that disrupts day-to day schedule
- Occupying spaces (buildings, offices, walkways)
- Walkouts
- *Direct Negotiation with the Target*
- *Accountability Sessions:*
- *Lobby Day*
- *Day in the Life*
- *Public Hearing*

Key Action for Students: Choose several strategies and tactics; plan 1 action

- Creates tension
- Driven by group members—develop skills, leadership
- Creative, energetic, fun
- Educational: both for public and participant (how power works)
- Planned well
- Within group capacity
- Series of collective, public actions—essential to win, shifts power
- Challenge the *target* in creative and bold ways

CHAPTER 7: CAMPAIGN KICKOFF

Chapter 7 Campaign Kickoff

Going Public With the Media 111

Campaign Message 111

Planning the Kickoff Event 114

Media Relations Plan 117

Day of the Event 118

Case Studies 120

Key Points: discuss components of kickoff event (?)

Action for Students:

- **Plan Kick off event,**
- **develop commitment cards,**
- **create Media Relations Team** (develops media contacts, call assignment desks, get to know reporters' names, create press release),
- **and for day of event:** create agenda for event, assign greeters, get rostrum/music stand, get 10 people to stand behind speaker with signs, plan well and evaluate it

CHAPTER 8: GROUP DYNAMICS

Chapter 8 Group Dynamics

Ensuring the Group Doesn't Implode 129

Roles of the Facilitator 131

Culture of Accountability 138

Key Points: Ensuring the group doesn't implode (study how the group meets)

Roles of Facilitator (creates agenda, keeps meeting moving, go around, dealing with harmful words/actions, vibes watcher, encourage active listening, and making group decisions)

Action for Students: Students continue to plan kickoff event

CHAPTER 9: CAMPAIGN PLAN

Chapter 9 Campaign Plan

Keeping It on Track 143

Previous Work 144

Timeline 144

Implementation 146

Fundraising 147

Concluding the Campaign 148

Key Points: Campaign notebook has sections, which includes the group's issue development an organizational rap, recruitment plan, media relations plan, research (historical analysis, target analysis, and power map), and strategies and actions (series)

Action for Students: Buy and create a campaign notebook

CHAPTER 10: EVALUATION

Chapter 10 Evaluation

Passing It On

Key Points: Evaluate campaigns: issue identification, recruitment, research, media outreach, group dynamics, strategy & tactics, campaign implementation, and lessons learned

Action for Students: do a 20-30 minute creative presentation on final's day

CHAPTER 11: SHEROES AND HEROS JOURNEY

Chapter 11 The Hero's and Shero's Journey

You Are the Chosen One 162

Reflections for Students: "We are the ones we have been waiting"