1. TITLE OF COURSE AND COURSE NUMBER:

Activism and Social Change. WGS 3330. 3 credits

2. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course critically examines the notion and practices of “activism” that are framed around contemporary issues that call for “social change” such as inequality, violence, loss of livelihoods, educational access, forced migration, lack of health and healthcare, environmental justice, discrimination and law, and globalization. Using a social justice framework to explore dynamics of race, gender and class, the course will examine case studies of community activism and advocacy to understand the interconnected systems of inequality and ways to challenge them. Key questions that inform this course are: What are the social, political, economic, ecological and cultural conditions that give rise to social activism and movements? How have marginalized groups historically organized for political and social justice? How do these movements affect political processes and institutions? The course will explore possibilities to engage with local community-based work and advocacy.

3. COURSE PREREQUISITES: UCC areas 1, 2, 3 and Area 4

4. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

   To deepen an understanding of civic engagement and effective citizenship

   To identify, examine, and analyze social conditions and community problems as arising from systems of inequality and discrimination

   To critically appreciate the need for activism and social justice

   To evaluate the notion of activism and activist practices and strategies

   To explore possibilities to engage with community-based work and advocacy

   To examine connections and distinctions between community service and social activism

   To enhance critical thinking and communication
5. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

a. Demonstrate the knowledge and skills to engage in community problem solving

As part of WGS 3330, students, working with the instructor, select a project they will work on for the course—either an analysis of community-based case studies and/or a service-learning component that creates opportunities for students to engage with local communities. Students will be required to: write and present their analysis of the problems/key issues facing the community; recognize the meanings and importance of activism for social change.

b. Identify key arenas (local, national and/or global) of engagement and decision-making

Throughout the semester, students will have written assignments and readings that will identify particular communities and issues or problems to investigate. The writing assignments and project reports will focus on particular kinds of community-based work and advocacy in order to: demonstrate the interconnectedness of social problems (local, national, regional, global), their contexts, and possibilities for change; identify and analyze the conditions under which different forms of activism emerge and their strengths and limits.

c. Identify the relationship between the course discipline and civic engagement

The discipline of WGS is inherently defined through an integration of intellectual (theoretical) and civic engagement (activist) work (such as interventions in public discourses, practices and policies). This course will enable students—through written assignments, research and presentations—to effectively use social justice frameworks and intersectional approaches to civic engagement (around issues such as gender, race, class, sexuality, environment, identities, immigration, health).

d. Demonstrate the skills to effectively participate in community and civic life

As part of this course, students will work on a class project of their choice which will include collaborations with civil society organizations (communities and advocacy organizations such as those working on rights, domestic violence, homelessness, immigration, poverty, healthcare, etc.) and demonstrate that they can successfully apply their skills and knowledge of civic engagement within this context.

6. TOPICAL OUTLINE FOR COURSE CONTENT:

What is activism? Its forms, historical emergence, relation between forms and contexts, strategies and ideologies; activist imaginations; examples include historical cases such as civil rights movement, anti-war movements, and local cases of issue-based community actions.
What is community? Kinds of community, problems and challenges, membership and leadership, engagement with larger society and state, solidarity and community activism; examples include communities based on commonality of experience of oppression (ethnic, race, gender, sexuality, class), local communities (residential), communities of interests (elderly)

Community-based organizations - NGOs, INGOs, non-profit organizations, campus services, issue-based activisms, outreach

What are social movements? How do social movements link to community activism? Advocacy? definitions, functions, models, communication, agendas; examples could include women’s movement, civil rights and anti-discrimination, labor and class, LGBTQI rights, “occupy” movements, issue-based such as welfare, environmental, cultural rights, displacement

Methods of inquiry into community engagement - identification and construction of problem, collection of data within the community, analytical tools for problem-solving, communication methods.

Human rights as a transnational framework: history, policies, institutional changes, debates, case studies

Activism and the State - engaging the state versus community-based solutions, law and communities, government and representation of community interests, public policy, institutions of state - justice system, military, welfare, housing, healthcare

Activism and globalization – forms of solidarity, global activisms, global justice movements, transnational institutions for activism and advocacy, online communities and activism, anti-globalization struggles and forums

Activism and change: promise of feminist education, movements for social change, modes of engagement and resistance

7. Writing Intensive: No
8. Technology Intensive: No
9. SUGGESTED TEACHING METHODS AND STUDENT LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

Writing portfolios, structured reflections, group discussions, individual and course service learning projects, films, guest speakers, site visits, and, etc.

10. GUIDELINES/SUGGESTIONS FOR METHODS OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT:
Journals, informal and formal writing assignments to analyze the historical and contemporary contexts of people and the world that students encounter during experiential learning within communities

Group projects (paper and presentations) where students present their analysis of the work of organizations and develop social policy initiatives for the organizations

11. Suggested readings, suggested or required texts, objects of study

Suggested Required Texts:


12. Bibliography of supportive texts and other materials:


Dartnell, Michael Y. 2006. *Insurgency Online: Web Activism and Global Conflict (Digital Futures)*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press


Hephaestus Books. 2011. *Activism By Method, including: Civil Disobedience, Direct Action, Human Shield, Culture Jamming, Hacktivism, Satyagraha, Advocacy, Open Campaign, ... Pamphleteer, Judicial Activism, Soapbox*


McCaughey, Martha and Mike Ayers. Eds. Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice. NY: Routledge


Silvers, Anita. 1995 “Reconciling Equality to Difference: Caring For People With Disabilities.” *Hypatia*. 10:1


14. ORIGINAL DEPARTMENTAL APPROVAL DATE: August 26th, 2012