Deconstructing Systemic Oppression Through Teaching Community Organizing: A students-teaching-students course

Francesca A. Hall

University of Vermont

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/hcoltheses

Recommended Citation
Hall, Francesca A., "Deconstructing Systemic Oppression Through Teaching Community Organizing: A students-teaching-students course" (2015). UVM Honors College Senior Theses. 85.

https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/hcoltheses/85

This Honors College Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Theses at ScholarWorks @ UVM. It has been accepted for inclusion in UVM Honors College Senior Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UVM. For more information, please contact donna.omalley@uvm.edu.
Deconstructing Systemic Oppression Through Teaching Community Organizing
A students-teaching-students course

Francesca Hall
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Environmental Studies through the College of Arts and Sciences and the Honors College at the University of Vermont
April 30, 2015

Thesis Committee
Ingrid Nelson, Thesis Supervisor
Assistant Professor, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies Program, UVM
&
Stephanie Kaza, Advisor
Professor and Director, Environmental Studies Program, UVM
&
Robert Bartlett, Committee Chair
Professor and Chair, Department of Political Science, UVM
Abstract

Community organizing has been an essential component of every significant social movement in United State’s history. Often, community organizers receive no formal training and instead gain the skills and knowledge necessary to become effective organizers through experience and trial and error. Through the analysis of a 14-student students-teaching-students course developed and co-taught by myself and another UVM undergraduate in the fall of 2014, my research aims to discover if it is possible to teach, within a hierarchical university setting, how to community organize for the purpose of deconstructing systemic oppression. Using emergent pedagogy, such as non-hierarchical co-teaching through class discussions, service learning and hands-on trainings and activities, this course exposed students to the critical theories of community organizing and nonviolence for social change, and the history and practice of organizing in the U.S. I found that it is possible to teach students the rudimentary skills necessary for community organizing, however the theoretical and fundamental ideology required to deconstruct oppression cannot be taught when grades and in-class power dynamics are present. Specifically intra class dynamics, notably race, religion and gender, greatly influence the effectiveness of the pedagogy and the salience of the material. I call for the introduction of a pedagogy of the privileged to focus specifically on working with those who hold privileged identities to recognize and understand the systems that enable their power, and work to deconstruct them.

Keywords: community organizing; activism; environmental justice; social change; oppression pedagogy of the oppressed; pedagogy of the privileged;
Acknowledgments

They say it takes a village to raise a child, and this course and thesis are no exception.

The people who have inspired me and encouraged me the most during this process are my family: my mom, Jarek, and Alex, without whom I would not exist and would not have found my purpose.

Without my advisors, Dr. Ingrid Nelson and Dr. Stephanie Kaza, this class could not have come together, you have been sources of inspiration and optimism, as well as bearers of truth throughout. Thank you so much for all of your support and guidance.

Thank you to the entire Environmental Studies Program at UVM, for allowing me to develop and teach this course, and for the incredible journey I've had with this program over the last four years.

Many thanks also to the amazing students-teaching-students community, many of whom are still in Burlington, for encouraging me and offering timeless advice and sound wisdom.

My experience community organizing has been made possible by wonderful organizations that are working every day towards justice and sustainability, particularly the folks at Greenpeace, 350VT, Rising Tide, and especially everyone I work with at the Vermont Student Climate Coalition.

A lifetime of gratitude goes to Myriam Fallon, my mentor at Greenpeace, who helped change my perspective on the state of the world, and without whose support in developing this course I would never have been able to undergo this project.

Most significantly, an enormous thank you to my 14 incredible students and my co-instructor Tyler McFarland, for making this dream a reality and going on this ride with me.

This thesis is for everyone around the world organizing their communities in pursuit of justice. I am humbled to be a part of this movement, and am inspired every day by the tireless work of my peers, mentors, and community leaders.
Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. 2

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ............................................................................................. 3

TABLE OF APPENDICES .......................................................................................... 6

INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................... 7

LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................... 12
  INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................... 12
  COMMUNITY ORGANIZING ................................................................................... 13
  HISTORICAL MOVEMENTS ................................................................................... 16
    Civil Rights Movement ....................................................................................... 17
    Women’s Rights ................................................................................................... 20
    Environmental Movement .................................................................................. 23
  THEORY ................................................................................................................... 26
    Intersectionality and the Oppression Olympics ................................................... 27
    Nonviolence and Social Movements ................................................................. 28
    Pedagogy ............................................................................................................. 31

METHODS .................................................................................................................. 36
  INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................... 36
  OBJECTIVES AND METHODS ............................................................................. 37
  EVALUATIVE MEASURES ..................................................................................... 38
  TEACHING METHODS ......................................................................................... 39
  QUESTIONNAIRES/REFLECTIONS ..................................................................... 40
  ANALYSIS .............................................................................................................. 42
  EQUIPMENT NEEDS ............................................................................................. 43

RESULTS ................................................................................................................... 44
  INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................... 44
  CRAFTING COURSE CONTENT .......................................................................... 44
  CLASS LOGISTICS ................................................................................................ 45
  GRADING ............................................................................................................... 47
  COURSE CONTENT ............................................................................................... 49
  EMERGENT PEDAGOGY ....................................................................................... 52
    Lectures ............................................................................................................. 54
    Discussions ....................................................................................................... 55
    Activities ........................................................................................................... 56
  EVALUATIVE MEASURES .................................................................................... 58
    Reading Quizzes ............................................................................................... 58
    Assignments ...................................................................................................... 59
    Papers ................................................................................................................ 60
    Campaign Plan Midterm .................................................................................... 61
Final ................................................................................................................................. 62
Campaign, Movement, Organization Presentations ......................................................... 64
Readings ........................................................................................................................... 65
COLLABORATIVE TEACHING ...................................................................................... 66
INDIVIDUAL TEACHING CRITIQUE ............................................................................ 67
DISCUSSION ................................................................................................................. 69
INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................ 69
NON-HIERARCHICAL PEDAGOGY ............................................................................... 69
Grades ............................................................................................................................ 72
Pedagogy of the Privileged ......................................................................................... 75
ROLE OF IDENTITY ....................................................................................................... 77
Gender ............................................................................................................................. 78
Religion and Race ......................................................................................................... 82
ADVICE TO FUTURE STS INSTRUCTORS ................................................................. 87
LIMITATIONS .................................................................................................................. 89
CONCLUSION ................................................................................................................ 91
REFERENCES .................................................................................................................. 93
APPENDICES ................................................................................................................... 98
# Table of Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1:</td>
<td>COURSE SYLLABUS</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2:</td>
<td>PROMPTS FOR PAPERS 1-4</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3:</td>
<td>PROMPTS FOR ASSIGNMENTS 1-4</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4:</td>
<td>ASSIGNMENT 5 (FINAL COURSE EVALUATION)</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 5:</td>
<td>READING QUizzes 1-12</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 6:</td>
<td>PROMPT FOR CAMPAIGN PLAN MIDTERM</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 7:</td>
<td>PROMPT FOR FINAL “EXAM”</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 8:</td>
<td>FRANCESCA HALLSTS BIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 9:</td>
<td>CLASS BY CLASS REFLECTIONS</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

On the final class of ENVS 197: Community Organizing and Environmental Activism, after months of learning about the many systems of oppression that converge in our society to benefit those with dominant identities largely at the expense of marginalized groups, one straight, white, wealthy male student interrupted the beginning of a class discussion with the question “what is ‘the system’?”. Merely minutes before entering the classroom for our last class, the grand jury in New York City voted not to indict the white police officer responsible for killing Eric Garner via chokehold while several bystanders recorded the encounter on their phone. The decision coming minutes before class began already had tensions high, but this was amplified significantly with one student essentially making a mockery of the months of work that went into developing and teaching this course. In order to understand the significance of this interaction, how this final class session devolved into a vibrant and terrifying display of oppression within our classroom, it is important first to understand the many factors leading up to this class, and the sheer naivety and disrespect present in the utterance of those four words, on that specific day (See Appendix 10, date December 23, 2014 for the analysis of this class session).

This thesis and the methods, results, discussions and imbedded stories within, seek to determine what led to this outburst, this moment of oppression within a classroom designed to deconstruct systemic and internalized oppression. This is an exploration and conclusion of a multi-year journey in exploring the foundations of community organizing, the movement towards a more just society, and a desire to practice pedagogy of the oppressed.

The idea to teach a students-teaching-students (STS) class first came about in September 2013, when Tyler McFarland and I, then both juniors at UVM, were organizing UVM students to
attend Power Shift 2013 in Pittsburgh, PA. Tyler and I had both participated, two years apart, in an activist training program in Washington, D.C. called the Greenpeace Semester. While organizing on campus together, we began talking about developing and teaching an STS class together, building upon a similar class that had been taught in 2010 by Connor Gibson and Jessica Serrante. While at first a broad vision of a class far off, by October 2013 we began discussing this concept more seriously and evaluating the potential for its success. Originally this thesis began as a collaborative effort, and while the class remained a product of our mutual hard work and dedication, this thesis is a purely individual undertaking.

The STS program has existed at UVM for about 20 years, and was developed from a similar program at Williams College. The intention of the program is to create an environment in which students embark on the learning experience together, re-envisioning the traditional student/teacher educational structure. Usually a pair of students works with faculty advisers to develop the syllabus and course content and defend the syllabus to the full Environmental Studies Program faculty for approval. All STS classes are listed on the register as ENVS 197, and there averages about one class per semester. Tyler and I began the development of the syllabus while taking ENVS 201 together in the spring of 2013, and presented the draft syllabus to the faculty in March 2013. Pending minor revisions the class was approved, and we advertised the class predominately through email and word-of-mouth in April 2013. Throughout the semester Tyler and I met with our two course advisors, Stephanie Kaza and Ingrid Nelson, biweekly, and managed all aspects of the class including assignments, readings and grading internally between the two of us.

Tyler and I built this class off years of organizing on campus, in Vermont and nationally. I come from a mixed background of political campaigning and community organizing around
environmental justice. My perspective and research is informed by years of political work, and
environmental organizing, including founding and running a statewide organization, the Vermont
Student Climate Coalition (VSCC), which seeks to increase the capacity for intersectional
activism in the state among much else. In November 2012 I worked as the communications
coordinator on Vermont state senator Philip Baruth’s successful re-election campaign; in the
Spring of 2013 I lived in Washington, D.C. and participated in the Greenpeace Semester, which
gave me first hand experience on a variety of Greenpeace campaigns and helped me learn the
ropes of non-profits and organizing; in the summer of 2013 I interned for U.S. Senator Bernie
Sanders (I-VT) in his Burlington, VT office doing constituent outreach work; throughout the
2013-2014 school year I organized with Student Climate Culture at UVM on the fossil-fuel
divestment campaign; and founded the VSCC in that year as well while working as a Vermont
lead organizer for Power Shift 2013 through Energy Action Coalition. In addition to my work
off-campus I have also held several leadership positions on campus, including being a Resident
advisor and a senator on the Student Government Association. I have worked for non-profits, ad-
hoc organizations, and government all of which provided the foundation for my participation in
this project. For the full biography I submitted to the ENVS faculty in March 2013, see appendix
8.

The project was actualized in fall 2014, as we co-taught this 14-student, 3-credit class,
under the impeccable advisement of Dr. Ingrid Nelson and Dr. Stephanie Kaza of the
Environmental Studies Program. The class time was Monday and Wednesday from 4:05-5:20pm,
and the course was divided into three main units: history of social movements, theories of
organizing, and skills trainings. The workload was divided into assignments, papers, quizzes a
midterm and a final, as will be discussed further in the methods and results chapters. My research
encompasses a combination of my reflections and analysis of class sessions, teaching methods, and class dynamics as well as in depth student evaluations provided after every class session and after the class as a whole. As the course was co-facilitated, there will be points at which I refer to a “we” referring to either Tyler and myself, or the class as a whole. There will also be sections in which I focus singularly on my contributions to the development and analysis of this course, I intentionally navigate this throughout, and give credit where credit is due to the work of my co-instructor, students, and advisors.

The original aim of this thesis was to determine “how to effectively educate an organizer,” and has transformed vastly through critical reflection of the course as it progressed, and the many events that have unfolded since this was proposed a year ago. Instead I have chosen to explore 1) if it’s possible to teach anti-oppressive community organizing in a hierarchical university setting and 2) if so, how best to facilitate that learning. The critical components of this project are the teaching methods used within the classroom (both in theory and practice), the content and structure used to teach the history, theory and skills of community organizing, and the implications of class dynamics on the outcome of the course.

In the literature review I will look at the strategies of different social movements, including civil rights, women’s rights and the environment. I will also explore the concept of intersectionality and the role of identities within organizing and movements. I also explore emergent pedagogy, and the foundation of the methods that guided the development of the course. In the methods section I explore the different evaluative measures of the course including papers, assignments, quizzes, etc. and discuss the various components of developing and teaching this course, including the reflections and evaluations that make up the result of my research. In the results section I walk through how the class unfolded by tying in student’s
reflections and evaluations to my own, in addition to a class-by-class analysis which can be found in Appendix 9. In the discussion section I dive into the major themes that arose, including the role of gender and race and religion on student dynamics and the effectiveness of the pedagogy. In the discussion as well I discuss the successes and failures of certain approaches, and provide advice for future STS instructors.

I find, as will unfold throughout, that non-hierarchical teaching cannot exist within a classroom where grades are assigned. However, I find that operating within a hierarchical classroom can still have its advantages, and produce results such as mine did, where students are engaging actively with the material and demonstrate willingness and desire to learn.
Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter is divided into three main sections: a brief history of the women’s rights, civil rights and environmental movements including the strategies employed by each to achieve their respective goals; an introduction to a few of the main theories and themes that are fundamental to this research and the results including intersectionality and the ‘Oppression Olympics’ that intimately relate to anti-oppression work; and an exploration of the pedagogy that guided the development and teaching of this course. The design of the class was intended to provide a history of some of the more prominent social movements, and due to a time constraint both during the semester teaching and here in the literature review, I will provide only a superficial overview of the three movements in the United States that have impacted the development of mainstream community organizing (through the development of non-profits and localized grassroots strategy). These are by no means representative of the full scale of organizing present today or historically, and the depth to each movement far exceeds the scale of this thesis. To accommodate this, I will briefly discuss the origins of each movement, the significant organizations and actors within, and the dominant strategies employed by these actors to achieve their stated goals. While each of these movements developed domestically as well as globally, the focus of this research is specifically domestic within the last hundred years.

While I do my best to provide the necessary context when describing social movements, it is important to note that the civil rights movement and the women’s rights movement are intimately connected. Similarly, the environmental movement is deeply tied to the communities impacted by environmental degradation and those at the helm of national organizing, and these two communities in certain cases inhabit different social standing. For every discussion of a
national organization or well-known organizer working within one of these movements, there are hundreds of local organizations and community leaders who continue to work day after day in the struggle for justice and may not be recognized in the history books.

The discussion chapter of this thesis connects the literature on emergent pedagogy, and intersectionality more intimately to the results and conclusions of this research. This literature review will provide the necessary context for the terms used and theories applied, while again recognizing the limitations of flushing each of these concepts out to their fullest within this work. The intention is to provide the necessary foundation to contextualize the content of the course, and in effect the results of my research, as well as to connect this to the broader themes present within community organizing domestically.

Community Organizing

Community organizing is a broad term that has blossomed in the past several decades to encompass a wide range of work. Broadly speaking, community organizing can be categorized into one of three main types: social work, political activist and neighborhood maintenance/development (Valocchi n.d.). The social work approach sees community organizing as a mechanism to meet the needs of a neighborhood in order for it to survive and thrive, the role of the organizer in this model is an ‘enabler’ or ‘advocate’ for the community to receive additional services. The political activist approach views the community as a political entity, a power base that can organize to gain, maintain and develop power. In this approach, unlike in the social work approach where organizers are members of the collective community in which they work, community organizers often come from outside of the community. These outside organizers seek out community leaders, and use the collective power of the community leaders to organize and gain power from those with outside power. The neighborhood maintenance
approach, on the other hand, is a way for members within the community (usually affiliated with civic organizations) to maintain standards and self-regulate the community. This includes property maintenance, or developments that view the community as having commercial value worth increasing and retaining (Ibid).

The majority of community organizing discussed throughout this thesis refers to the social work and political activist approaches, where community leaders are either stepping up and organizing for basic rights that are necessary for the survival of the community, or teaming up with professional organizers that come in to build collective power. In addition to the three reasons for community organizing mentioned above, there are several approaches to community organizing that are championed by different leaders and organizations. The four main approaches are: conflict organizing, women centered organizing, community building, and consensus organizing (Eichler 2006). Conflict organizing, which is most closely associated with Saul Alinsky, views the accumulation and transfer of power, through targeting of specific individuals and organizations with power, as the ultimate purpose of community organizing (Ibid; Stall and Stoecker 1997). This approach is highly dependent on outside organizers coming into a community, of which they are not a part and have no vested interest and ties, and organizing the people and community leaders as is necessary to achieve the stated goal. Alinsky divided humans into three categories: the Haves (people with power), the Have-Nots (people without power), and the Have-a-Little, Want-Mores (i.e. the middle class) (Alinsky 1971).

The women-centered model focuses on the concept of power sharing, far more than Alinsky did. This model believes that power can be created by the community, and is not solely something that must be retrieved from an ‘other’. This approach grew out of the increasing hierarchy present in Alinsky’s model of organizing, which created oppressive and discriminatory
power dynamics within communities organizing for liberation (Eichler 2006). These two approaches disagree not only on conceptions of power, but also on how communities should be enriched through the process of organizing. The women-centered model highly emphasizes personal development and growth, whereas Alinsky focuses significantly on the development on the group as a whole in order to gain power, while discounting the ability of personal development within a group to build collective power (Stall and Stoecker 1997).

The community-building model of organizing emphasizes expanding the capacity of the community to meet its own needs. Unlike conflict organizing and the women-centered model, organizers under this approach aim to educate and expand the skills of community members believing this is the most effective way to create the necessary change for the community (Eichler 2006). Many of the organizers in this model are staff, who are tasked with collaborating with already existent community leaders, building the capacity and skill set of community members and then creating collaborations among organizations and groups.

Consensus organizing operates in a manner somewhat similar to community building, in which parties with similar interests in a neighborhood are brought together to work towards a solution to whatever conflict may arise (Eichler 2006). This model is in vehement contrast to Alinsky’s conflict centered model, as Alinsky would believe that working with those who have power is equivalent to ‘sleeping with the enemy’. In consensus organizing, a community organizes itself and forms its articulate wants, needs and proposed solution, and then sits down with those who hold the political, economic and social power outside of the neighborhood. Community building is necessary to collectivize the message of the community, but through consensus building multiple parties with conflicting interests around a similar issue can come together and navigate the issues until an agreed upon solution is found (Ibid).
Community organizing has served as a mechanism for change locally, nationally and globally for the better part of human history, and has been studied and refined through specific approaches and theories more significantly in the last century. Community leaders working on specific campaigns have grown to local organizations, national non-profits, and global movements often seeking justice in some form. Examples of current movements include the environmental movement, LGBTQ Rights, Civil Rights, Labor/Worker’s Rights, and movements for broader economic and social justice in the United States. Examples of specific organizations within each movement, respectively include: Greenpeace, Human Rights Campaign, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Communication Workers of America, etc. Each of these organizations then work on specific campaigns to advance their overall mission. It is important to recognize the interconnectedness of each movement and organization, as a staple of community organizing is establishing community partners and collectively working towards a shared vision (Ganz 2008).

Historical Movements

There are countless social movements and organizations that have impacted society greatly and transformed the implementation of community organizing in the United States. To address each in any amount of detail to due the movement justice would take far more space than is provided here. In order to address anti-oppression organizing, it is important to first understand the systemic oppression that has created power structures that are at the foundation of any community organizing effort for justice and equity. The intent of the following subsections on the civil rights movement, women’s rights movement and environmental movement seek to introduce at a very basic level the reasons for the formation of such a movement (i.e. historical oppression), catalysts and main tipping points of the movement, the key people, organizations
and strategies employed, and the influence of that movement on others. The focus has been refined to specifically discuss organizing in the United States in the in the 20\textsuperscript{th}/early 21\textsuperscript{st} centuries.

**Civil Rights Movement**

The existence of the civil rights movement in the United States is rooted in this country’s long and troubling past of slavery. Between 1525 and 1866, over 10 million slaves were forcibly brought to the new world from Africa and enslaved (Gates 2011). The abolition of slavery with the passage of the 13\textsuperscript{th} Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1865 was by no means the end of the institutionalized oppression and murder of African Americans in the United States. Violence against African Americans persisted and continues to exist long after the 13\textsuperscript{th} Amendment was passed. Between 1882 and 1968 nearly 4,000 black men, women and children were lynched in the United States, a result of white hatred for the abolition of slavery and inclusion of blacks in mainstream ‘white’ society (Goodman and Gonzalez 2015). Systemic discrimination against blacks has continued to this day, with a 2003 Bureau of Justice statistic showing that the lifetime likelihood of imprisonment for white men born in 2001 is 1 in 17, while for black men there is a 1 in 3 likelihood of imprisonment at some point in their life (Bonczar 2003).

In response to this systemic oppression of black people in the United States, community organizations have sprouted locally and nationally addressing these issues from multiple approaches. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded by a collection of white and black Americans in Illinois in 1909 as a response to a high number of lynchings in the area, and the 1908 race riot response to these acts (NAACP n.d.). The NAACP’s original mission was to “secure for all people the rights guaranteed in the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the United States Constitution, which promised an end to slavery, the
equal protection of the law, and universal adult male suffrage, respectively” (Ibid). Their mission has since expanded to “ensure the political, educational, social and economic equality of minority group citizens of United States and eliminate race prejudice” (Ibid). With this expansion of the group’s mission has come a variety of tactics employed by the organization to achieve its goals. Through the establishment of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, the organization has secured immense victories through intensive litigation and use of the policy process including: Brown v. Board of Education (1954) which desegregated the public school system; the integration of the armed forces in 1948; and the passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1964, and 1968 in addition to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Ibid). While the NAACP was originally founded under a community-building model of organizing, other organizations that sprouted in the 1950s and 60s, during the height of the civil rights movement were much more power oriented and modeled after conflict organizing.

In what is now a famed and historic moment in U.S. history, and was at the time a very strategic employment of resources, on December 1, 1955 Rosa Parks (a NAACP member) refused to give up her seat to a white passenger on a Montgomery county bus. This moment served as a significant catalyst for the civil rights movement, and in the Montgomery bus boycott that followed, and lasted for more than a year and resulted the desegregation of the bus system, several prominent leaders and organizations arose (Gates 2011). Unlike the NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Council (established in 1957 with Martin Luther King, Jr. at the helm) served as a national umbrella organization for several local grassroots organizations that were working on the bus boycott, and other desegregation efforts in the south (MLK Research and Education Institute n.d.). The SCLC worked with dozens of local groups working all over the south, and aided in the rise of small grassroots campaigns that worked simultaneously with
the larger national movement that was spreading all over the country. The focus on the local and the national simultaneously allowed for the desegregation of local bus systems and restaurants, while also providing the movement to have prominent leaders who negotiated and worked with policymakers to enact more sweeping and permanent legislative reform (Ibid).

As the civil rights movement progressed, younger generations began to feel more urgency in establishing swift change and eliminating discrimination in the public sphere. Following the Rosa Parks model, students famously sat-in in the whites only sections of Woolworth lunch counters throughout the south, which began to catalyze the student movement and young people engagement with this movement (Gates 2011). Not long after the rise of lunch counter sit-ins, a gathering of 150 students on April 16, 1960 in Raleigh, North Carolina created the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) (Ibid). These students felt the older generation of civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and organizations such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) were too conservative and timid, and sought more radical demonstrations (Ibid).

In addition to the rise of non-violent demonstrations by organizations seeking the elimination of racial discrimination in the U.S., the Black Panther Party for Self Defense formed in October 1966. The Black Panthers had more of a social work perspective and cared for the African American community by organizing free breakfast for school-children, calling for equal housing and education, and protecting black citizens from white police violence by carrying cameras, law books, and guns (Williams 1987). They utilized a variety of methods to achieve their stated goals, including often-militant protection of communities and advocating for more violent tactics than were used by the many other organizations operating at the height of the civil
rights movement (Ibid).

Through the wide variety of community organizing strategies employed by the various leaders and organizations that arose during the height of the civil rights movement, many victories were achieved. Those advocating in local neighborhoods for desegregation were successful, and this was further aided by U.S. Supreme Court decisions mandating the desegregation of public spaces. Through lobbying and effective policymaking several key pieces of legislation were passed including the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, and in a much less quantifiable way, public opinion has shifted drastically over time to be much more inclusive. While many more organizations have sprouted in the last few decades, and the NAACP continues to advocate for the rights of people of color in the United States, this work is far from completed. In response to the continued killing of unarmed black men in the United States, the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement has sprouted and ignited demonstrations across the country and serious conversations with the media, government and in schools regarding the state of race relations today (Blow 2015).

Women’s Rights

The movement for women’s rights in the United States is as old as the country itself. Beginning with the ‘founding fathers,’ no mention of women’s rights were made at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, in fact with the founding of this country women were barred from voting, property rights, guardianship of their children, and even testifying in court (Simon and Danziger 1991). With a “Declaration of Sentiments” in 1830, the women’s rights movement began to gain some steam in the U.S., but often took the backseat to efforts to end slavery in the U.S. In fact, for much of the 1800s, before and after the Civil War, women were among the most active organizers and lobbyists of the end of slavery, and nearly abandoned the women’s rights
movement in order to advocate for the abolition of slavery (Ibid). With the passage of the 13th Amendment (1865), 14th Amendment (1865), and 15th Amendment (1870) which abolished slavery, granted ‘freedmen’ the rights of citizenship, and suffrage respectively, women began to reenter the political sphere demanding suffrage (Ibid). There is no denying the interconnectedness of the civil rights and women’s rights movement, as the two struggles for justice and recognition under the law mirror the gross inequities on which this country was founded.

After the Civil War, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other women’s rights activists allied with the predominately white men who continued to hold political power in the hope they would support women’s suffrage (MacLean 2009). Despite the significant effort that women played in supporting the abolition of slavery and the civil rights movement, women were essentially abandoned by the civil rights organizations they had once championed (including SNCC) when the time came to advocate for women’s suffrage (Simon and Danzinger 1991). It was not until 1920, 72 years after the first Women’s Rights Conference in Seneca Falls in 1848, and 55 years after the end of the Civil War that the 19th Amendment was passed granting women the vote (Ibid). The significant rifts among activists with different identities and working towards different aspects of a collective liberation have long plagued the women’s rights and ‘feminism’ movements.

The passage of the 19th Amendment constituted a feat for suffrage activists, but was only the beginning of the continuing struggle for equal treatment of women in the U.S. The second wave of feminism, as it is sometimes referred, began to tackle women’s roles in family life, reproduction, and the workplace (Ibid). This second wave still largely consisted of white wealthy women championing for middle class values and equal inclusion in family decision-making and
the workplace, and is an ongoing struggle the height of which occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. The second wave was partially catalyzed by the rise in public awareness of women’s issues, including through the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*. In 1966, the National Organization of Women (NOW; considered the women’s version of the NAACP) was founded, and began to advocate for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, and for increased access to contraception and abortion (Burkett n.d.).

In November of 1977 thousands of American women attended the first National Women’s Conference in Houston, Texas (Acker 1983). Due to skillful organizing in the early 1970’s the women’s movement created public concern for women’s issues, which resulted in Republican and Democratic politicians alike feeling obliged to support the movement. The Conference received federal funding and at the end delegates from all fifty states passed a series of resolutions recommending action on nearly every feminist issue of the preceding ten years (Ibid). The movement had successfully passed a bill giving the National Commission on the Observance of International Women’s Year the responsibility to organize the conference and to be legally obligated to provide recommendations to the President and Congress.

Among the most significant critiques of second wave feminism, is that it largely left out poor women, queer women and women of color. The recognition of this has led to the rise of the ‘third wave of feminism’ born out of a 1992 essay by Rebecca Walker (Head 2007). This third wave seeks to incorporate marginalized women (and gender non-conforming and transgendered people) into the dialogue around gender equality in the U.S. The waves of feminism are immensely intergenerational, with each wave building on the triumphs and tribulations of those that came before, however this ‘feminist’ movement, identified by bell hooks as the movement to
end sexist oppression, is still underway and is slowly becoming more inclusive and representative of the struggles that women face today (hooks 1984).

Environmental Movement

The rise of the environmental movement began largely as a global response to the impacts of the industrial revolution felt in the wake of the Second World War (Shabecoff 1993). The environmental movement in its current form should not to be confused with the rise of environmentalism in the early 1900s, which saw naturalists such as John Muir and Aldo Leopold write eloquently about their natural landscapes, while calling for conservation and preservation of land and resources. The environmental movement discussed here instead refers to the response of communities and organizations to the unfettered greed and inherent environmental degradation that is intimately linked to the strengthening of capitalism in the U.S. and globally (Ibid). As corporations began to dominate resource extraction globally (i.e. coal mining, oil extraction, gold mining, etc.) and use of chemicals in agriculture and production, the impacts of these actions began to be studied and acknowledged by mainstream society. The early history of the environmental movement can be traced to water quality and human health, particularly in areas near sites of extreme contamination, such as in Donora, PA when over 600 people were hospitalized as a result of sulfur dioxide emissions from a nearby steel plant descending into the valley of Donor as smog (PBS n.d.). Through water and air quality testing, scientists began to discover causal links between industry and environmental/human health. Following several other instances of asthma or air contamination impacting communities, President Eisenhower signed the Air Pollution Control act, which vaguely made individual states responsible for air pollution regulation, without providing enforcement mechanisms (Ibid).

Despite minor legislative actions regarding air and water pollution, and the development
of more research drawing connections between corporate actions and pollution, it wasn’t until Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* in 1962 that the environmental movement really began (Shabecoff 1993). Carson’s landmark book detailed the impacts of DDT, a commonly used pesticide, on the environment and human health, noting that between 1950 and 1963 the amount of DDT found in human tissues had tripled (PBS n.d.). Carson’s book received widespread attention and by 1972 DDT was banned in the U.S. Organizations and communities around the country began to demand action to reduce air and water pollution in the U.S., while individual consumption continued to grow (by 1963 83 million Americans owned a personal vehicle, etc.) (Ibid). While the environmental movement got its bearings in the late 1960s/early 1970s, more information began to be discovered about the extent of biodiversity loss, human health impacts, and implications of fossil fuel extraction and pervasive chemical use on the environment.

A huge catalyst for the mainstream environmental movement occurred on April 22, 1970 with the advent of the first Earth Day (Rome 2013). Earth Day was first planned in 1969 by United States Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin and a team of organizers, this event inspired 12,000 to 13,000 other Earth Day celebrations across the country around the same time (Ibid). Many leading environmentalists, who went out to found or organize with local and national environmental non-profits were introduced to the movement through organizing for the first Earth Day (Ibid). While pollution and pesticide use were central issues to the beginning of the modern environmental movement (post-1950s), nuclear testing, overfishing, whaling, and deforestation were among the other issues of central importance to the rise of the movement.

In 1971, Greenpeace was founded by a group of Canadian anti-nuclear activists protesting atomic testing in the off the west coast of Alaska (Shabecoff 1993). What began as a small group of individuals has since grown into the largest independent environmental non-profit
in the world, with a membership of over 2.8 million people, chapters all over the world, and active campaigns on issues including deforestation, toxics, arctic drilling, overfishing and more (Greenpeace n.d.). While Greenpeace utilizes non-violent direct action strategies in their campaigning, some of the environmental movement’s largest successes were won through policymaking. The Sierra Club, which was founded by John Muir in 1892 with the intention of conserving wilderness, has grown to become one of the largest grassroots environmental organizations, with active campaigns continuing to protect wilderness, transition away from dependence on fossil fuels, and increase environmental legislation (Sierra Club n.d.). Through the work of the Sierra Club and pressure from legislators and the public, the 1970s were an immensely successful period for the environmental movement. Among the significant pieces of legislation passed during this time are: the National Environmental Policy Act (1970); the establishment of Environmental Protection Agency and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration in 1970; the Clean Water Act (1972); Endangered Species Act (1973); and many more. With the establishment of this new order of environmental regulation, new organizations such as the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) emerged to empower citizens with the ability to draft environmental laws, and use the law to hold companies responsible for following regulations (PBS n.d.).

While many environmental organizations practice non-violence and utilize lobbying, grassroots pressure against corporations, and the media to achieve their goals, almost simultaneously with the rise of these mainstream organizations came the rise of more militant organizations. Earth First!, while not militant, was founded in 1980 by a group of individuals who were inspired by the work of Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold, Edward Abbey and others (Shabecoff 1993). Many of the founders believed that the environmental movement was
becoming too mainstream and was less effective than more direct approach to limiting the expansion of industry. Earth First! has been known to sabotage industrial machinery that contributes to the destruction of the environment, with the aim of conserving vast landscapes for their inherent worth. The Earth Liberation Front, recognized as an eco-terrorist organization by most countries around the world, was founded in the United Kingdom in 1992, and has since grown throughout Europe and the United States (Rosebraugh 2004). ELF’s approach involves attacks against facilitates and corporations which they deem destructive to the environment, including companies involved with logging, car sales, energy production, genetically modified crops and more; since becoming active in the U.S. in 1997, ELF has caused over $45 million in property damage against these corporations (Ibid).

As climate change science continues become common knowledge globally, and clearer links are drawn between human actions and environmental degradation, more organizations and campaigns intending to reduce human impact on the environment sprout. Through inherently local grassroots efforts for clean air and water, as well as national collective efforts to ban toxic chemicals and institute regulations surrounding pollution, the environmental movement has seen several small and large-scale successes. As this movement continues to grow and take on new issues and campaigns, the more than 100,000 non-governmental environmental organizations that have sprouted across the country and world will likely continue seeing more systemic and significant successes (Wapner 1996).

Theory

Discussed below is a brief introduction to three of the theories/approaches vital to the teaching of this STS course and the research and results outlined within this thesis. Intersectionality is mentioned in the context of the historical movements outlined above, and will
be further flushed out in the discussion chapter of this thesis. Nonviolence and civil disobedience, which served as a foundation of the organizing and skills taught in the semester, is summarized below, again given the time and space constraints of this thesis this serves only as a superficial overview. Finally there is a review of emergent pedagogy and the work to reform classroom dynamics and hierarchical practices in order to effectively and thoughtfully educate.

**Intersectionality and the Oppression Olympics**

Intersectionality, simply put, is the study of intersections of oppression (racism, classism, sexism, etc.). As discussed the section on the women’s rights movement above, social movements have historically been internally oppressive to those for whom the movement is vital (i.e. the civil rights movement silencing women’s voices, and the women’s rights movement silencing people of color’s voice). The concept of ‘intersectionality’ signifies “the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts” (Brah and Phoenix 2004, p. 76). Intersectionality is immensely important in organizing, because it recognizes the nuance of identities and societal power systems. Intersectionality grew out of the 1960s and 70s, as a form of ‘revisionist feminist theory,’ which the notion that gender was the only, and most significant, factor impacting women’s lives (Bhattacharya 2012). Intersectionality is not limited to understanding race, class and gender, but is rather a format through which interconnections in society and individuals can be understood and utilized to approach social issues as inclusively and accurately as possible.

When organizing under an intersectional framework of incorporating difference and diversity into every campaign, organization and movement, the path is paved for the rise of the ‘Oppression Olympics’. This term, predominately used in intersectional feminist theory,
describes when “groups compete for the mantle of the most oppressed without dismantling dominant structures and discourses that generate the dominant standards of a competition” which leads to groups aligning “themselves with singular identities when articulating claims” (Hankivsky and Dhamoon 2013). While not present in all movements, a form of oppression Olympics arose following the end of the civil war, as black male leaders silenced the voices and contributions of black and white women who had contributed to the abolition of slavery in the U.S. Shortly thereafter, white women began gaining political steam in the fight for suffrage and silenced the voices of poor, queer and women of color from that movement in order to achieve their goals (Simon and Danziger 1991). Recognizing that there is no ultimate title of oppressed and oppressor is fundamental to intersectional theory, and allows movements to exist with the necessary nuance and consideration to be effective.

Nonviolence and Social Movements

Nonviolence, and the theory behind peaceful civil disobedience, has been the staple of many of the most influential and effective social movements in United States history. Nonviolence “played a significant role in the Abolitionist movement, the struggle for women’s rights, the debates about imperialism and about entering the two world wars, the rise of unions and the struggles for worker’s rights, the civil rights movements of African Americans and other minority groups, the antiwar movement of the Vietnam era, the anti-nuclear movement, [and] the environmental movement,” each of which has altered the course of history dramatically (Chernus 2004, p. x). The theory and implementation of nonviolence dates back to the origins of Christianity and has continued to shape culture and governments globally as recently as ‘Occupy Wall Street’ and the ‘Arab Spring,’ (Chernus 2004; Atack 2012).
Contemporary civil disobedience in the U.S., as a form of resisting societal and governmental injustices, dates back to a speech entitled “On the Relation of the Individual to the State” by Henry David Thoreau in January 1848. This speech, colloquially known as “Civil Disobedience,” outlined Thoreau’s refusal to pay taxes due to discontent over the Mexican War, the existence of slavery in the South, and the unjust treatment of ‘Indians’; ultimately leading to his arrest (Thoreau 1969). Thoreau’s speech is largely anarchistic, opening with a statement affirming, “Government is best which governs not at all,” and supporting this with evidence of the many injustices levied against the people by their government. Historian Howard Zinn, although less anarchistic than Thoreau, claimed “We have been naïve in America about the efficacy of the ballot box and representative government to rectify injustice… Historically, we have found it necessary to go outside ‘the proper channels’ at certain pivotal times in our history” (Zinn 1968, pp. 65-66). Not all practitioners of civil disobedience aim to abolish law and government, but rather recognize that inherent in affecting change is working from within and outside the system simultaneously. Martin Luther King, Jr., famed civil rights activist and supporter of nonviolence, claimed that nonviolent political actions are a medium between submission to an unjust state and violent resistance of it (Atack 2012). Civil rights attorney and former Pennsylvania Senator Harris Wofford Jr., in an article from 1957, points to the necessary interconnection between law and disobedience, and the significance, as highlighted by President Lincoln, for public sentiment in support of an issue. Wofford argues, “compliance with the Constitution is still the best instruction in our constitutional duties. Negroes voting will do more to change the habits and opinions of those who oppose such voting than any amount of talk” (Wofford 1969 p. 61). Thoreau and Wofford come to similar conclusions about the relation between law and disobedience, Thoreau proclaimed “The law will never make men free, it is
men who have to make the law free,” and Wofford proclaimed “through nonviolent action men, by becoming free themselves, in turn help our law at last to be free” (Thoreau 1969; Wofford 1969).

A debate has long waged about the effectiveness and morality of violence and nonviolence, as well as the uses of nonviolence. Theorists tend to place practitioners of nonviolence into two categories: principled and pragmatic (Atack 2012; Bedau 1969). The “principled” practitioners of nonviolence are those who practice it for deeply held ethical or religious reasons, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Quakers; Gandhi called this the nonviolence of the strong (Chernus 2004). Those who approach nonviolence as a principle have many reasons for disdain and refusal to partake in violence, whether these reasons be ethical, inspiration from others, emotion, natural tendency, or logic and reason. Gandhi once referred to the practice of nonviolence for pragmatic reasons as the nonviolence of the weak. This nonviolence is undergone when people believe that in a particular situation violence will not be effective, when they do not have the resources to undergo violence, are afraid of retribution, cannot convince others to partake or do not have the energy for it. “All these people would do violence, if circumstances were different,” hence they practice pragmatic, or convenient, nonviolence (Chernus 2004, p. ix). The nonviolence that has systematically changed the course of history in the United States is that of principled nonviolence, the practice of which has seen millions stand steadfastly by their values in the face of violence and personal injury at the hands of the government to further their cause and combat injustice (Alinsky 1971).

The steps to pursuing principled nonviolence were outlined in Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham City Jail” published in 1963, as a defense to his nonviolent protest and subsequent arrest in Birmingham, Alabama. King’s four basic steps are “1) collection of the facts
to determine whether injustices are alive. 2) negotiation. 3) self-purification and 4) direct action” (King 1969).

There is a fine line to walk between violence and nonviolence, as Saul Alinsky notes, “when passive resistance becomes massive and threatening it gives birth to violence” (Alinsky 1971). Also inherent in nonviolence, is the potential for violence enacted upon the peaceful practitioner. Many nonviolent activists end up in jail, and modern social, economic and environmental movements have found pride in the numbers arrested at nonviolent protests as a means of highlighting the injustice of the government (Chernus 2004). Gandhi warned his followers “nonviolence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering,” and that “suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears, which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reason” (Wofford 1969, p. 67).

Pedagogy

Peer-to-peer educational styles challenge many conventional norms about student-teacher relationships and the hierarchical, results driven, educational system predominant in the U.S. This educational style, part of the “authoritarian educational system,” is popularized through large lecture classes in higher education where there is a clear power dynamic between student and teacher (Heron 1999). While lectures are the norm in many educational settings, including at the University of Vermont, “research has shown that after 10 to 20 minutes of continuous lecture, assimilation falls off rapidly” (Drummond 1995). Instead of aiming to simply insert knowledge into the minds of the class, it is imperative that students are given the opportunity to form their own opinions based on the presentation of materials. The most thought-provoking teaching allows “students to develop the capacity to name the world for themselves, to identify the obstacles to their full humanity, and the courage to act upon whatever the known demands”
(Ayers 2011, p. 11). In order to combat the “oppressive forms of teacher authority” that John Heron lays out in *The Complete Facilitator’s Handbook*, other styles of teaching such as peer-to-peer instruction and group discussions can be utilized. There are three modes of facilitation: the hierarchical, the co-operative, and the autonomous (Heron 1999). For teaching beginners, a course is most effective when designed from a three-stage perspective, beginning by establishing facilitator-student dynamics and sharing information vertically, then transitioning to a method where facilitators and students develop the course together and make decisions cooperatively, culminating with students given the freedom to self-direct their learning.

Among the ways to address hierarchy in the classroom, particularly with a male and female co-teaching, is to address the socially constructed power-dynamics of gender, race, religion, etc. (Arnold 1991). With every new educational setting and learning opportunity, it is important to address the social identities in the room, and how they interact with the ability of the learning community to thrive and expand their comfort zone. In a world of systemic injustice at every level of the social system, down to the classroom, education is needed for people to emerge from oppression into autonomy and responsibility, “the oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their freedom” (Friere 1989). In order for those experiencing oppression to emerge and remove the oppressor, they must develop the pedagogy themselves. The oppressed must liberate one another from a state of systemic injustice. Friere refers to the current, predominant, educational system as the “banking system,” one in which teachers deposit information into the minds of students with no context for the real-life implications and application of this knowledge. In order to combat the inherently oppressive banking system, in which students are only being educated for further classroom settings, the teacher-student hierarchical dynamic must cease to exist, and in its place a setting where “both are
simultaneously students and teachers” (59).

There are many methods available to address hierarchy and oppression in the classroom in order to create a more inclusive and productive learning environment. Incorporating systems thinking, and the appropriate systems thinking exercises, can expose group’s unconscious interactions, create a shared experience, and engage participants who have a wide range of learning styles (Sweeny 2010). Along with incorporating systems thinking exercises into the classroom, it is important to work towards conditions that foster emergence and creativity in the classroom. There are seven (not nearly all-encompassing) conditions for facilitating this emergence: connectivity, diversity, rate of information flow, lack of inhibitors, good constraints to action, positive intention, and watchful anticipation (Tosey 2006). Tosey acknowledges that one of the most significant ways to increase connectivity in a higher education setting is to replace the constrained ‘vertical’ (hierarchical) connections between students and staff with a much richer lateral, peer to peer connection. Through this methodology, developed by Richard Seel, the differences between the command and control paradigm, and the emergent paradigm are quite distinct and can create a wholly different learning outcome.
Table 1 - Command and control versus emergent organizations (Seel 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command and Control Paradigm</th>
<th>Emergent Paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep people in ‘silos’</td>
<td>Build connectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure everyone ‘salutes the flag’</td>
<td>Encourage diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage communication initiatives</td>
<td>Have conversations in corridors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blame people for failures</td>
<td>Learn from events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make it clear who’s in charge</td>
<td>Give everyone leadership opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell people what to do</td>
<td>Tell people what not to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set objectives</td>
<td>Agree clear goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep Busy</td>
<td>Wait expectantly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no one, all-inclusive, teaching method that can adequately achieve classroom goals. Instead, it is important to synthesize methods and theories from all realms of education and experience into one’s facilitation method. The key, however, is to ensure that students are not being taught what to think, but instead are encouraged how to think (Jackson 2006). In order to instill creativity in a higher education setting,

[A teacher’s] role is to help students gain the confidence and skills to be creative by: equipping them with appropriate thinking and process-creation skills; building their confidence to take risks and designing assessments that do not penalize them if they are not successful; developing their self-confidence to work in unpredictable situations; and promoting the development of self-awareness and reflective learning (Jackson 2006, p. 210).

In order to actualize the vital role of a teacher in the classroom, while transcending oppressive teacher-student dynamics, identifying oneself as an instructor, or facilitator, as opposed to
teacher or professor, is key and can revolutionize the relationships and interconnection of the classroom environment to promote creative and radical learning (Friere 1989; Sweeny 2010; Heron 1999).
Methods

Introduction

Originally the intention of my research was to determine what teaching methods are the most effective in educating college students in community organizing to combat systemic oppression in the U.S. Over time, however, the aim of my research has evolved, as I realized that asking what teaching methods are most effective, implies that within a hierarchical classroom setting it is, in fact, possible to educate students in community organizing aimed at deconstructing systems of oppression. Similarly, my initial question was too broad; I am incapable of drawing conclusions on education to combat oppression across the U.S. through a limited case study in one classroom in Vermont. Instead, the research and appropriate methods that follow, seek to determine if 1) it is possible to practice a pedagogy of the oppressed within the confines of a hierarchical university setting and 2) if it is possible, how can one best facilitate that learning through teaching community organizing. I have developed two research objectives in order to explore this question, and have outlined the corresponding method to reach each objective below. My methods are divided into two main sections: facilitating the course and analyzing the results of the course.

This is all in the context of a students-teaching-students course I co-designed and facilitated during the fall 2014 semester at the University of Vermont. This course was very much collaborative, as I worked with my teaching partner Tyler McFarland daily for over a year on the development and facilitation. The research, however, all that follows in this work as well as the conclusions I draw are uniquely my own, and merely build on the collaborative research process.
For the entirety of the course, I was engaged in the classroom community, and aimed to utilize alternative, non-hierarchical teaching methods in order to engage in discussions with students and advance their learning. A key aspect of the course was encouraging action by students, requiring that students engage with and participate in environmental/social justice campaigns using the skills and theory from the course. A large part of my development of this course is the research into theories of activism and the historical context of organizing for social change in the U.S. A key phrase that I used to define the role of the instructors in the STS course is that “we’re the search engine not the fact book”. I, by no means, had all the answers during the semester, but the hope was that Tyler and I could act as the means through which students could find the answers they searched for.

**Objectives and Methods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1) To educate students on the history and fundamentals of successful and unsuccessful social movements, primarily in the U.S., and empower students to draw their own conclusions about what methods of organizing are the most effective to bring about necessary change. | - Course readings  
- Class lectures and discussions  
- Reflections, papers and assignments |
| 2) To explore which means of facilitating the education of an organizer are most effective. | - Analysis of student reflections and evaluations  
- Questionnaires throughout the semester  
- Facilitator observations |

The content of the course was divided into three main sections: history, theory and skills. Throughout each section a combination of discussions, lectures and activities were used to convey the information and create a diverse way for students to retain information and think critically about the course content.
**Evaluative Measures**

In addition to careful monitoring of classroom participation, Tyler and I utilized eight unique evaluative measures to assess student engagement with and comprehension of the material throughout the semester. These evaluative measures are outlined below, and a copy of each assignment and paper prompt can be found in the appendices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluative Mechanism</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 Papers</td>
<td>To have students apply theories discussed in class to specific case studies described in readings presented throughout the course. Focus on history and theory components of course. Encouraged development of research and writing skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- P1: Intersectionality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- P2: Nonviolent Direct Action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- P3: Organizing Models</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- P4: Specific Skill Case Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Assignments</td>
<td>To have students practice skills taught in class by applying them to their semester long campaign project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A1: Finding a Campaign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A2: Recruitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A3: Power Map/Targeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A4: Letter to the Editor/Op-Ed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A5: Reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Reading Pop Quizzes</td>
<td>To motivate students to complete all class readings in time for class sessions and make sure they were able to identify the key takeaways of the readings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign Plan Midterm</td>
<td>To have students condense the several key skills in developing a campaign and create a semester long campaign plan. Focused on application of theories and skills to the real campaign they were each working on. Encouraged development of public speaking in the presentation, and writing skills in the plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Campaign Simulation</td>
<td>To have students practice working in coalitions, and under a severe time pressure to utilize all skills taught throughout the semester in a short presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minute Campaign/Movement/Organization</td>
<td>To allow students the opportunity to learn and teach the class about a real campaign,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Presentation

movement or organization that we did not have time to cover throughout the semester.

Extra Credit

To encourage students to attend lectures, workshops or watch relevant documentaries in order to supplement their learning throughout the semester and replace low reading quiz grades.

Reflections

At the end of every class session we had students fill out a reflection to determine which teaching methods from that day were the most effective to their immediate learning and to see what content they were interested in or struggled with.

*Teaching Methods*

In order to utilize a non-hierarchical teaching strategy I drew on from a plethora of information regarding in-class facilitation styles and teaching methods. The intention behind the facilitation strategies Tyler and I utilized was for students to feel as though they had an active hand in their education and determining how they would be evaluated. Since I am by no means an expert in this field, I wanted to insure that students who knew more about a certain topic had the space to step up, and that the learning in this classroom was collaborative. For every class until November 3, Tyler and I developed each lesson plan together and divided the various aspects of the lesson plan between the two of us. We planned to utilize rotational co-teaching and tag team (traditional team) teaching. The former is when each teacher is responsible for a certain aspect of the lesson and they rotate as the discussion evolves into other subject areas. The latter is when both instructors facilitate simultaneously sharing knowledge and input either as planned or in the moment as the course progresses. The first few weeks were difficult to navigate co-teaching, as we would interrupt one another and stray from our lesson plan significantly; as the
course progressed we got better at sharing the teaching, and decided that rotational teaching was the best method for us.

Following November 3, each class was individually taught entirely, with only one instructor present and that facilitator responsible for developing the lesson plan, reading and reading quiz for that session. This was a great way to determine which kind of teaching was the most effective, traditional team teaching or traditional solo teaching. This also allowed us to explore the gender implications of the classroom, and for us to individually connect with students and the material in a way that we found limiting through co-teaching endeavors.

We aimed to avoid lecturing as our predominate teaching method, and hoped to have students facilitate conversations, use activities at least once a week to increase student engagement, and facilitate discussions with little facilitator input. As the course progressed, however, we ended up utilizing a lecture format far more often than we had anticipated, to mixed results. This was largely a result of our own conditioning as students in predominately hierarchical settings. It was very difficult to truly practice a non-hierarchical approach when we were responsible for assigning grades, determining course content, and also had spent several months preparing the material which gave us more content knowledge that our students. This will be discussed further in the results chapter.

**Questionnaires/Reflections:**

In order to gauge student receptiveness to the course material including readings, assignments and in-class discussions, I created a reflection template that was given out in the last five minutes of nearly every class. For the first few weeks we asked students to put their names on the reflections, so Tyler or I could respond to individual questions and concerns that students had. What I found though was that most students were hesitant to be critical on a reflection that
had their name attached, so after week four, all reflections were anonymous. The goal of the reflections were twofold, I hoped to adapt the syllabus and materials as the course developed in order to respond to what aids the advancement of the student’s education and understanding of content, and I also hoped to gather data on how the teaching methods helped to accomplish the stated objectives. A very important factor in analyzing the data from these reflections is that most students may not recognize just how much they learned or retained immediately after a lesson. Therefore all data analyzed is done so with this concern in mind. At the end of the semester a much more in depth reflection was assigned, anonymously but for credit and was completed by all but one student in the course. This allowed us to see how students responded to the material and teaching methods overall, and what they thought could have been done differently.

This was the format used for the daily reflections:

Date:

How would you rate the effectiveness of the activity, lesson, or discussion?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

What method helped you learn best?

What would you have changed about the activity?

Additional comments
The other evaluative measures, described briefly in the table above, were designed to provide a better way of determining how students were thinking about the content of the course. Papers were designed to promote critical thinking and have students apply critical theories to practical skills and historical case studies. The assignments, on the other hand, were related specifically to a specific campaign that students were required to associate with from the beginning of the semester. Students worked on several campaigns, some in groups with students from the course and some unaffiliated to the course. Assignments required the application of skills such as petitioning, fundraising, power mapping, etc. to that campaign and a reflection on said work. The campaign plan and final project simulation were also designed to see how students could take course concepts and apply them to real situations. The reading quizzes, unlike these other assignments, served mostly to motivate students to complete the readings, and for me to determine how well they identified the key concepts from readings.

Analysis

The analysis of this data, collected through course assignments and reflections, was a process that I underwent while the semester was underway, and in the months following. When certain classes received overwhelmingly negative reviews, I would adapt following lesson plans in order not to repeat ineffective teaching methods. As a result, the course changed immensely throughout the fall semester, often for the better. In addition to collecting student feedback throughout the semester, my co-facilitator and I kept a journal throughout the semester with our own insights and reflections on what worked and what did not. We also conducted semi-structured interviews with certain students throughout the semester to check in and see how students were handling this emotionally sensitive and challenging material. The results of this analysis will be discussed in my results chapter.


*Equipment Needs*

This course required little resources beyond the classroom space, equipped with a computer, chalkboard, projector, and desks and chairs. We made extensive use of Blackboard to post class readings and updates, and heavily relied on the Environmental Program’s printer in order to print the daily reflections and reading quizzes as well as the hard copy of the lesson plans for facilitators. I utilized my relationships with community organizers in Vermont and around the country for advice and the few guest lectures we had, and met biweekly with the course advisors. The only required reading we asked students to purchase was Saul Alinsky’s *Rules for Radicals*, although we made a digital copy available. All other course readings were available online, and Tyler and I operated heavily through the use of Google Drive. We kept copies of all lesson plans, assignments, papers, etc. in a Google Drive folder, and used spreadsheets to keep track of when assignments and readings would be due. We kept track of all grades through a very well organized spreadsheet. For the final project we needed paint and poster paper, but were able to retrieve all supplies for free on campus.
Results

Introduction

The purpose of my research is seeking to determine if it’s possible to teach anti-oppressive community organizing in a hierarchical university setting and if so, how best to facilitate that learning. In order to understand the conclusions I draw, it is first important to understand what occurred in the classroom including the approaches I took, content taught, and how it was actualized in the classroom twice a week for thirteen weeks. As such, what follows is first a synthesis of the overall significant results from my research, followed by a class-by-class analysis of what occurred and the reflections from students and myself.

Crafting Course Content

Together Tyler and I developed the course syllabus in the late fall 2013/early spring semester 2014, and determined what percentage of the grade would go towards which assignments. The syllabus was largely developed through consultation with faculty, organizers, and previous STS classes (and the Greenpeace Semester). While the intention of the course was for Tyler and I to equally share the preparative responsibilities, it became quite clear early on where our strengths and weaknesses lay. I wrote the prompt for every assignment and paper, while he and I shared the responsibility of writing the prompts for the midterm and final assignment, and Tyler wrote the majority of the weekly reading quizzes. We chose course readings together, and as we each have our respective realms of expertise within organizing, we often took point on readings for the subjects which we had the most experience in. For example, I was responsible for all of the theoretical readings, most of the history, and only a few of the skills such as fundraising and messaging. All course content was managed via a very well
organized Google Drive folder, where we could both edit content for particular classes and see which assignments, readings, etc. were to occur that day.

Until the point at which we began solo teaching, Tyler and I would meet weekly to craft the upcoming week’s lesson plans. We would often spend the several hours before each individual class in the Bittersweet preparing materials and going through our plan for that day. The activities on the lesson plans clearly identified which sections I would facilitate and which he would. I facilitated the majority of course discussions, and developed activities through pedagogical texts I was familiarizing myself with, and Tyler would often navigate lectures and presentations.

Overall Tyler and I both develop the course content and steered the direction of the course, while I crafted the majority of evaluative measures (papers, assignments, etc.), and researched readings to assign.

*Class Logistics*

The course reached capacity relatively quickly; we recruited through the Environmental Program listserv, and through our networks in organizations on campus. While 15 students were originally registered, one never showed up leaving us with 14 students for first half of the semester. The first week of school, one of our students sustained a serious head injury, which left her status in the class unclear for several weeks. After consultation with Tyler and myself, as well as her advisors and Dean, she took a medical withdraw from the class. One other student withdrew from the course the last possible day to do so, without notifying either Tyler or myself. That left us with 12 students for the remainder of the semester, consisting of 10 students who identify as female, and two who identify as male; the racial makeup of the class was 13 white (including both instructors) and one person of color.
The course met Mondays and Wednesdays from 4:05-5:20. Only one class session was canceled, on October 27, 2014 as there were three separate events happening on campus and in Vermont that we felt students would benefit from attending. Originally the classroom we were assigned was a small discussion room in Lafayette that had the capacity for 15 students. However, on the first day it became apparent that this space was limiting and did not have sufficient seating for our class size. Following the first week of classes we were reassigned a classroom and carried out the remainder of the semester in Votey 223, a room with the capacity for 30 students. This allowed us to circle the seats every class, have ample use of the projector and chalkboard, and facilitate activities that required getting out of one’s chair. The final exam was located in L/L 216 and guests were invited to observe. The second week of the semester we held a class potluck at my house in which Tyler and I cooked, and we had the class go around and share their “story of self,” an activity used to help your peers understand what led you to where you are today. This was mandatory, all students attended, and it was very well received.

We had two guest lectures throughout the semester, the first of which was on October 1, 2014 where we invited Connor Gibson, UVM alum (and former STS instructor) and current researcher for Greenpeace USA to speak to our class about the field of opposition research. He assigned the class several readings and videos to watch, and had an engaging lecture where students learned more about researching for nonprofits. Several students who were not in our class attended this lecture to hear Connor speak. The second guest speakers facilitated a non-violent direct action training on October 13, 2014. This training lasted for three hours and was mandatory; all students were told to put this on their calendar the first week of the semester and all attended. The two trainers, Will Bennington (UVM alum) and Anna Shireman-Grabowski, who both organize with Rising Tide Vermont, gave an introduction to nonviolence as a social
change tactic, facilitated multiple activities in which students were given a specific situation and had to determine whether it constituted a strategic use of nonviolence, and practiced hands on soft-blockades. We reserved a much larger room for this training in order to allow us to simulate NVDA tactics. On Wednesday October 15, 2014 we held the NVDA debrief on the CBW lawn outside of Votey as it was a beautiful day and none of us wanted to be inside. The only other classes not held in our classroom were November 17, 2014 the fundraising training, as I had sustained a severe back injury and could not leave my house. As a result, I held class in my living room.

**Grading**

Tyler and I group graded the first few papers and assignments to establish a uniform grading style, and for the remainder of the semester split papers, quizzes and assignments evenly. If the averages for one of our set of grades appeared starkly higher or lower than the others, we would go through them together to establish a grade together. One month in, we began noticing our biases towards certain students and their way of writing, so we began having all students submit assignments with their 95 numbers only, so that we wouldn’t know whose papers we were grading. For the campaign project (the midterm), a portion of the grade consisted of a 5-minute presentation to the class. Every student was given a sheet with a grading rubric on it, and after each presentation graded their peers based on the criteria for the presentation we had developed as a class. The grade for this presentation portion was the average score from each students peer evaluation. The grade for the final was determined in consultation with the three outside judges who came in to participate. At the end of the final, each student filled out an evaluation form grading his or her group mates out of 10. As the final project required the class to split into two groups, every one received the same grade within the group, as every student
reported that their group mates all contributed equally, which Tyler and I deemed accurate from our observations of their group work. While four papers were assigned, we dropped the lowest grade, having only three count towards the final grade. Similarly, 12 pop quizzes were given out, with the two lowest grades being dropped. We also provided the opportunity for students to receive extra credit for attending a maximum of five outside events that were pre-approved by us and completing a two page write up of how that event related to course content. Six students completed extra credit, no one completed the full five possible.

Rubrics for all assignments and papers were included on the prompt sheet and were followed very closely. For reading quizzes, they were graded on a scale of -1 to 5, the -1 was reserved for those who clearly did not do the reading but tried to convince us otherwise. This created an honor system in which we asked students to simply write “did not complete the readings” or leave it blank instead of making us have to determine whether they’re lying or simply did not understand the material. Only once throughout the semester did we actually have to give someone a -1, and that student agreed it was deserved. For every quiz that we assigned, at least one student admitted they did not complete it.

The grading in the class was divided as such:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papers</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign Plan/Presentation</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-Credit</td>
<td>Up to 25 points</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>500 points</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The overall class averages for each section were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Class Average</th>
<th>Total Possible Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>21.83</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>44.83</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>40.76</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papers</td>
<td>106.92</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>112.54</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>45.29</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>66.91</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>443.17</strong></td>
<td><strong>500</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final letter grades consisted of: one A+, three A’s, four A-’s, one B+, one B, one B- and one C-. These final grades were determined in consultation with Stephanie Kaza after all course assignments were completed.

**Course Content**

As mentioned previously, the course was broadly divided into three units: history, theory and skills. No particular section contained solely one of these aspects, as theory is needed to contextualize history, and vice versa, and history largely informs the application of skills. The way in which we planned the order of classes was based of what Tyler and I, in consultation with professors and organizers, deemed the most logical escalation of a campaign. As such, we planned to start with the history of oppression in the land that is now the U.S., continue to a background of social movements in the U.S., and then move to the theories that inform modern community organizing followed by trainings for specific organizing skills. Throughout the semester, however, much of our plan was changed and we would rearrange the class schedule regularly to meet the needs of our students and their experience level. The class diverged to focusing predominately on different forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, classism,
heterosexism, etc. and the capacity of community organizing to combat these forms of systemic oppression.

The two main readings for the course were *Rules for Radicals* by Saul Alinsky (1971), and *People, Power and Change* by Marshall Ganz (2008); although the Midwest Academy’s *Organizing for Social Change* (2010) was also used during the skills trainings. Throughout the semester students read all but one chapter of Alinsky’s book, and about ¾ of Ganz’s. The average class reading consisted of one chapter of either Ganz or Alinsky and an accompanying chapter or article from another author. Most classes had supplemental readings available for students who early on expressed an interest in having access to relevant readings beyond those assigned. I was very intentional about incorporating readings from a diverse array of authors, and was hesitant at first to incorporate the Alinsky book into the course at all, although his text provided a great forum for critique of modern organizing methods during class discussions. Authors of readings include: bell hooks, Cesar Chavez, Dennis Banks, Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Donella Meadows and more.

In the beginning of the semester, each student was responsible for joining an active campaign on campus or in the greater Burlington community that related to social/environmental justice or advanced environmental causes. This served as a semester long service learning component, in which students gained real life experience while learning the skills necessary to become effective organizers. Campaigns that students worked on were: UVM Student Climate Culture’s fossil fuel divestment campaign, Rising Tide’s campaign against the Vermont fracked gas pipeline, VSTEP’s eco-ware campaign, Vermont Students for Animal Protection, and the organization of Black Lives Matter march through ALANA leaders coalition.
Below is a schedule of all classes and the corresponding topic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M Aug. 25</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story of Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Aug. 27</td>
<td>What is Organizing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Sept. 3</td>
<td>Campaign Project Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Sept. 8</td>
<td>History of Social Activism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Sept. 10</td>
<td>History of Environmental Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Sept. 15</td>
<td>Environmental Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Sept. 17</td>
<td>Anti-Oppression Training/Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Sept. 22</td>
<td>Strategic Campaign Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Sept. 24</td>
<td>Vision, Goals, Strategy, Tactics (SMART)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Sept. 29</td>
<td>Recruitment: Petitioning, Tabling, Class Raps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Sept. 10</td>
<td>Recruitment Part 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Oct. 1</td>
<td>Targeting &amp; Power Mapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Oct. 6</td>
<td>Messaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Oct. 8</td>
<td>Tea Party Vs. Occupy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Oct. 13</td>
<td>NVDA Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Oct. 15</td>
<td>NVDA discussion/Debrief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Oct. 20</td>
<td>Writing a Campaign Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Oct. 22</td>
<td>Media Training Part 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Oct. 27</td>
<td>Cancelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Oct. 29</td>
<td>Campaign Plan Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Nov. 3</td>
<td>Check-in/Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Nov. 5</td>
<td>TYLER: Media Training Pt. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Nov. 10</td>
<td>TYLER: Decision Making/Facilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Nov. 12</td>
<td>FRANCESCA: Methods of Organizing Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Nov. 17</td>
<td>FRANCESCA: Fundraising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Nov. 19</td>
<td>TYLER: Systems thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Dec. 1</td>
<td>FRANCESCA: Avoiding Burnout/effectiveness of activism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emergent Pedagogy

My expectation upon embarking on this class was to deconstruct the hierarchical classroom setting, in which the professor maintains complete control over content, evaluation and the learning experience and students are merely subjected. My research and the literature has suggested that there are alternative approaches in which teachers and students embark on a learning experience together and are collectively responsible for crafting the content and evaluating the material in a productive and effective manner. Often this means deviating from lecture format teaching, and allowing students to engage in hands on and intellectual activities which require them to learn from their processes and draw their own conclusions about material rather than being told what to think. The way I hoped to accomplish this in the classroom was by limiting lectures to only when necessary, and having a classroom dependent upon student input and engagement through discussions and activities.

Unfortunately, only a week into the semester it became clear that the assumptions Tyler and I had made about the status of our student’s background knowledge was not accurate. We ended up incorporating about four class sessions to reviewing the history of oppression and the relationship between capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, etc. to marginalization of people of color, the poor, women, etc. from decision-making. As Tyler and I had to change the content on the fly to meet the needs of our students, we found ourselves pressed for time in developing creative, alternative pedagogical activities that could facilitate the learning of our students. As I’ve been inculcated in my education to follow the traditional lecture format of relaying information, that is what I found myself resorting to when presented with new subject areas to
present to class. As can be seen in the class-by-class analysis, more than half of our class sessions involved some form of lecturing by either myself or Tyler. This lecturing reinforced traditional perceptions of teacher/student hierarchical dynamics.

The best way in which I could maintain some form of emergent pedagogy in the classroom was through discussions, which were easy to develop with limited time and allowed the students to challenge their preconceived notions about the material. Nearly every reflection following every class in which we facilitated a thoughtful discussion based around readings, students asked that more time had been allotted to discussions. This became problematic, however, because we could not facilitate a discussion on material that the majority of the students did not comprehend. This led to a trend of the first 30 minutes of class revolving around a variation of lecturing, and the last 30 minutes being dedicated to a thoughtful discussion on the material.

Among the pedagogical practices that worked best when incorporated, which did not happen as often as I would have liked, is making students responsible for crafting the discussion questions and facilitating the conversation. Originally Tyler and I had planned to make one of the assignments to be having students each facilitate one discussion over the course of the semester in order to practice facilitation skills, but also to remove that onus from myself and Tyler. This never happened, however we did incorporate an assignment in which students were responsible for presenting one five-minute introduction to a campaign, movement, or organization that we did not cover in class but which they felt was interesting or important to know. This allowed students to present some content to the class so that Tyler and I were not the only source of information. Another component to our approach was ensuring accessibility to students outside of the classroom, our students had our phone numbers and were able to contact us with
questions, concerns and thoughts throughout. During the writing of paper 3, one student called me and we talked for an hour about our thoughts on different approaches to organizing. In preparation for the midterm, Tyler and I set up office hours in L/L for anyone who wanted to talk through their projects, and four students came and processed with us. We also had one-on-ones with three students in response to events that happened in the classroom, and one who was struggling with the content and nearly failing the course. See appendix 10 for a full analysis of each class session and the teaching approaches used.

**Lectures**

For a variety of course content, particularly relaying the history of oppression (colonialism, slavery, imperialism, capitalism, etc.) and kinds (sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, etc.) as well as the history of social movements (abolition of slavery, women’s suffrage, civil rights, native rights, LGBTQ rights, environmental justice, etc.), Tyler and I deemed a lecture format was the most effective way to relay information. In compliment to readings, we would develop Power Points in some cases, and in others simply talk, about all of this information. Our success in this format was creating an open and collaborative classroom environment in which students would always step up and contribute information where our prepared materials were lacking, or provide evidence and stories to contribute.

Students often reflected that Power Point’s were immensely boring and should be avoided, and we responded accordingly and limited the use. The praises relating to lectures revolved around our use of visual media, videos and photos, to compliment our stories and lectures, and the incorporation of student’s experiences into our lectures. Certain students expressed to us early on that they are visual learners, and required note taking and information
on the board to facilitate their learning, and over time Tyler and I found ways to incorporate this without deviating to a purely lecture class.

Discussions

Nearly every class incorporated a discussion into the lesson plan, and I predominately developed and facilitated them. Particularly with a small class, and the requirement of the material to reflect on your own identity, facilitating this class without discussions would have been impossible and entirely unproductive. The main formats of discussion that I utilized were:

- pair/share: break up into pairs and discuss a given topic, and then come back together as a group and share what you discussed
- group breakout: divide the class into groups of 3 or 4, each with a specific question or task (each group usually given a unique question) and discuss for 10-15 minutes, and have one person report back to the larger group what you discussed
- group craft/class discuss: groups of 3 or 4 are given 10-15 minutes to craft two pertinent questions related to a specific reading for that week, and the class as a whole chooses the top questions to engage with for the remainder of class as a whole
- full class: a question is posed to the entire group, and everyone engages together either popcorn style or through being called on.

These four methods had mixed results, the two favorites of students as gleaned from their reflections, were group breakout and group craft/class discuss. The later was a favorite of mine, and provided the best results in the discussion because students were able to craft specific questions and chose which to engage with. This often meant that students were genuinely interested in this topic and we would see more engagement. The former was the best for facilitating the learning of students, particularly in a class with many self-described introverts.
who often remarked feeling uncomfortable speaking up in full class discussions. Breakout groups of any kind allow every voice to be heard and for those thoughts to be brought back to the larger group. This method worked particularly well when discussing intersectionality, a concept that many students struggled to understand and whose concerns were not voiced during initial full class discussions.

At first facilitating discussions was difficult, as Tyler and I would not prepare enough discussion questions for the class and conversations could easily deviate from the prescribed path. With time, however, I became very comfortable and confident facilitating discussions, and worked to navigate the amount of space that I took up when facilitating. I tried to reserve my judgment and opinion and allow students to form their own based on readings and lectures, so as not to discourage students from expressing dissenting views. Tyler struggled slightly more with facilitating discussions, as he tended not to step up when necessary. The two of us struck a balance eventually regarding when to step up/step back and allow students to navigate discussions.

Activities

Throughout the semester activities were designed to fit into the class sessions as well as outside for homework and service learning. As noted previously, due to a need to restructure the course content within weeks of beginning the semester, Tyler and I found ourselves crunched for time and did not have the capacity to develop and plan as many activities as we had hoped. The story of self activity, which took place the second week of classes at the class potluck at my house, was one of the best ways to start the semester and aided greatly in the development of the class community. Similarly other activities that had a lasting impact on the content and class dynamics were the non-violent direct action training, which required role-play and many other
consensus based activities. The final exam similarly required role-play and was rated very highly by students. Most of the assignments were designed to require students to practice active engagement with course content outside of the classroom, which was useful. The left handed/right handed activity that I facilitated in preparation for our anti-oppression training also had a lasting impact on students and allowed them to view the content in a new manner.

Role-plays, pair practices and reflective writing were the three most common forms of activity used in the class. Particularly during skills trainings, these activities were necessary to get students to practice the skills we were teaching. For example, during the messaging training we had students write a sample pitch for their campaign, and break up into pairs and give the pitch as if they were talking to a reporter. Reflective writings were used heavily around the time that the Mike Brown and Eric Garner grand jury decisions came out, and the rise of national protests around police brutality. These were issues that directly related to course content, but were too nuanced and triggering for certain students that only engaging with this material through discussions were not providing for the needs of our students. Reflections allowed Tyler and myself to check in with students outside of the group context, but also connect the class to current events.

Well-developed activities could have been utilized more effectively to navigate many of the gender, race and religion dynamics that interfered with class dynamics weekly. Could things have been navigated differently, and if Tyler and I had more time to develop course content on top of our other responsibilities, I would have hoped to incorporate more learning exercises and activities into the classroom.
Among the different pedagogical strategies employed in the classroom, the best results were when lectures, discussions and activities were incorporated into one class session and topic. Across the board the highest reviewed class sessions were, and highest praise of any class related to the effective combination of various strategies to relay one particular topic. While discussions were a student favorite, even classes that consisted only of variations of discussions lacked the depth provided by varying strategies within one lesson.

Evaluative Measures

Reading Quizzes

Reading quizzes were added the syllabus a mere two hours before the start of the first class session, as it became apparent that Tyler and I had not included a way to hold students accountable to completing the assigned readings. These readings were short, usually 1-3 questions consisting of either fill in the blank or short response, and were worth 5 points. They served their purpose of encouraging students to complete readings and come prepared to class, however they overall did more harm than good. Students consistently remarked that these quizzes did not adequately measure their comprehension of the material, and that they felt punitive. In many cases, I felt horrible as I distributed a quiz because it reinforced the hierarchy and as we began class with the quiz, it set a tone for the remainder of the class.

Tyler and I were very responsive to student feedback, and changed the format of the quizzes after an in-depth conversation with students in which we gathered their feedback and suggestions. In the end, we still did pop quizzes in class, but we allowed them to be open note so students could focus on comprehending the concepts of readings instead of vigorously memorizing facts (not that our quizzes focused on minute facts). In the final class reflections, one student remarked that “even when I did all the readings, I always felt nervous handing in the
quizzes” while another noted that once we changed our quiz policy they “felt more encouraged to spend time doing the readings and less time trying to figure out what was likely going to be asked”. As the first student’s reflection notes, these quizzes reinforced the hierarchy and created almost a sense of fear in the beginning few minutes of every class. As the second student’s reflection notes these quizzes in essence distracted from actual learning and reading comprehension because students read to pass the quizzes instead of reading for comprehension of material and critical thought. See appendix 5 for a copy of each reading quiz.

Assignments

There were five assignments over the course of the semester, and overall these assignments were well received by the class. Each assignment required students to take skills learned in class, apply it to the campaign they worked on throughout the semester, and complete a reflection and analysis of the application of that skill. According to the end of semester evaluation, students spent an average of 2 ½ working on each assignment, and felt that these were relevant to the course content, aided in their comprehension of the material and were fairly graded. Every student responded that working on a specific campaign made the course content feel more relevant, with one student remaking that assignments applying to their campaigns “made for a beautiful intersection between schoolwork and things I care about in real life”. Each of the assignments built upon one another in preparation for the campaign plan midterm for which many of the assignments just had to be edited and updated to be included. Some students definitely struggled with the content of the assignments, particularly the power mapping assignment, but we dedicated ample class time to each assignment so that students were equipped to complete the material. See appendix 4 for a copy of each assignment prompt.
Papers

The papers were by far the most challenging component of this class, and required that students think critically about the course content and connect material from across the themes and subjects of the course and apply them to real world examples. The papers were my favorite thing to write and grade, and provided the best insight into student comprehension of the material. Students reported spending an average of six hours per paper, and the end of course feedback was overwhelmingly positive, although throughout the semester many students registered complaints. The papers focused heavily on critical theories of nonviolence and oppression, requiring that students analyzed texts and case studies to draw specific conclusions. They were graded with the understanding that these students were predominately second years, but also that this is a 100-level class and there is an expectation of writing and research ability.

In-class discussions helped students to process the content of the papers before writing them, and after receiving feedback that students need in class time to process readings before writing about them we restructured to allow that. Following the reordering of discussions and due dates, students began doing much better on papers and having a more thorough understanding of the readings. The aim in assigning papers was not punitive, and in order to pad the impact on student’s grades we dropped the lowest score, which helped many students who struggled on the first paper and received poor grades.

The first paper on intersectionality yielded some interesting results. Student’s writing at first was very casual, with few to no citations used, paragraph structure that reflected journal writing rather than an academic paper, and an overall casual approach to the work. This was likely a result of expecting two students (Tyler and me) to be grading them, however we still had high expectations. In the first paper, one student even quoted Albus Dumbledore from the *Harry
Potter series as a credible source. After handing back the first papers, I led a citation workshop for the class to understand our expectations around credible citing, and we had a discussion around the expectation of formality. Students improved dramatically by the second paper.

As far as a means of evaluating reading and course comprehension, no other evaluative measure compares to the values of the papers. In the paper of intersectionality one student wrote an entire paper claiming “intersectionality is bad and confuses organizations and movements,” which fundamentally misunderstands the significance of intersectionality in community organizing. Another student wrote that a father strictly disciplining his son is an example of oppression, also completely misunderstanding the concept. This allowed me to reassess concepts in class and have space to flush out concepts more thoroughly to ensure that students understood the material. See appendix 2 for a copy of each paper prompt.

**Campaign Plan Midterm**

The midterm for the class required that students develop a full campaign plan for the semester-long campaign that they worked on, and then prepare a 5-minute presentation for the class on the key points of their campaign plan. Writing a thorough campaign plan is an essential part of any campaign, whether for non-profit organizing or political campaigning, so this is a very important skill for students to have. Most of the aspects of the assignment simply required updating previous assignments (such as the power map) and including it, so there was not too much additional work. Tyler and I dedicated an entire class session to working through the requirements of the campaign plan and responding to any questions students had in order to make sure this was fully flushed out and not unduly overwhelming.

The class crafted the evaluation for the presentation, and on the day of the presentation, Tyler and I handed out a workbook with 12 evaluation forms for students to fill out with specific
criteria for how many points to assign. Tyler and I also filled out a form for each student, and our scores were weighted equally with the other students to calculate the average grade. The presentations were kept strictly to the 5-minute limit with no time for questions, as we had to fit them all into one class session. Overall most students evaluated the midterm highly, and many claimed that it taught them the complexity of planning a campaign. Until this point every skills lesson had been taught almost disconnected from the other skills, and this required students to blend everything together and create a fluid and logical plan for the upcoming spring semester. See appendix 6 for a copy of the midterm prompt.

**Final**

The final was developed from a very common evaluative measure used in organizing circles, a campaign/event simulation. Tyler and I co-wrote the final, and built upon a similar (but more involved) simulation used by the Greenpeace Semester coordinators. We created a scenario in which a coal plant was being planned for UVM’s campus, and one group was fighting the placement of this coal plant, while the other was advocating on behalf of the coal plant. Students were divided randomly, with each student being given a specific role (i.e. mother with two kids who attend 4th grade across from proposed coal plant). The groups were tasked with creating campaign messaging, and selecting one person to testify in front of the city council in favor/against the coal plant. They also had to submit a press release and prepare to conduct an interview with media at the event. Guests were brought in, with Caroline DeCunzo as a journalist, and Dr. Nelson, Jaclyn Devino, Tyler and myself as the city council. Students were given two hours to prepare their messaging, etc. before the presentations. Students were evaluated as a group, and everyone filled out a group evaluation determining how much each group mate contributed. In the end, every student in each group got the same grade. One group
excelled far more noticeably than the other and received an A, while the other group got a B. The points were distributed among the feedback from the guest evaluators, but were ultimately compiled by Tyler and me taking into consideration the quality of their press release, messaging and testimony, as well as the effective use of time and resources and application of skills in the scenario.

Most students appreciated this sort of final, as it required no preparation going into it, and was a fun and lighthearted way to end a challenging semester in this class. As an evaluative measure it actually proved more useful than I had anticipated, because it was clear which students had really paid attention to some of the more trivial and nuanced skills lessons as opposed to those who did not fully engage because they viewed the lessons as common knowledge. For example, one group entirely ignored the lessons on effective interactions with the media, and allowed anyone to speak with the journalist even when they were not on message. The other group, however, had everyone steer the journalist towards the designated point person, and even took the time to call Caroline during prep (we’d put her number on the press information card) and given her the necessary information leading up to a rally they had planned. Ironically the students in the group that excelled were the students who, for the most part, had not experienced organizing prior to the start of the course.

There was conflict in the planning stages as far as the ethics of bringing in outside individuals to grade students they had not engaged with. Tyler and I felt it was appropriate since in actual organizing, those who witness the final product of your campaign have often not been involved in the planning process, so fresh eyes are representative of that. Along that line, in many European universities the standard is to bring in outside evaluators to determine the final grade for students in a class, as this reduces instructor bias. However, in the end our outside
guests served only an evaluative role, and did not provide scores on final grades. Tyler and I condensed their feedback and converted it into a grade for students. See appendix 7 for a copy of the prompt for the final.

Class photo directly following the conclusion of the final, holding posters they made for the final

Campaign, Movement, Organization Presentations

I developed this assignment after the first week of classes and presented it to the class for their approval (since it was not written into the syllabus). I realized that there are so many significant current events surrounding organizing, ad even many historical campaigns, movements and organizations that we did not have time to cover in the course of the semester, so I wanted a way for students to bring this to the classroom. The result was a very loosely structured assignment, in which every one signed up for a presentation day, in which they would
bring an article relating to a specific campaign, movement, or organization and spend 5 minutes talking about it and engaging in discussion with the class about their topic. This was not for a grade, however the one student who never did the presentation lost 5 points on participation for it. Many interesting topics were introduced, such as ecofeminism, male circumcision, re-wilding corridors, etc. from a very wide range of issues that all led to great conversation in the class. The dates of presentations are not included in the class-by-class analysis, but about 7 of the classes had presentations for the first 10 or so minutes.

Readings

The readings were a fundamental part of this course. As Tyler and I are not academics/professors, readings were a way to incorporate critical theory into the course. Many of the readings were relatively easy and straightforward, such as Rules for Radicals and Organizing: People, Power and Change. However, there were many texts that students struggled with, although in reflection most students admitted that after class discussions unpacking the text, these readings proved to have the most lasting impact on them. Tyler and I aimed to never assign a text just for the sake of having an assigned reading, although there were certainly some classes where readings were assigned that we never had time to debrief and discuss in class.

In the final reflections half of students reported completing 70-90% of readings, while the other half reported completing 90-100% of readings; on average students spent 1.5 hours working on each reading. For many students, the readings in this course were the first time they had been exposed to many authors who are people of color, women, queer, and native. In a conversation two months after the completion of the course one student enthusiastically declared “the readings in your class have shed a light on every other class I’m taking at UVM and has exposed me to a world of critical thinking that I would not have known exists”. Many students
consistently asked for supplemental reading on subjects they were particularly interested in, and Tyler and I began a system of posting supplemental readings for students to utilize. Every student also reported in the class evaluation that readings aided in their comprehension and completion of class discussion, trainings, assignments and papers.

**Collaborative Teaching**

The co-teaching experience played a very significant role in the development and application of the course. Tyler and I designed classes so that we would trade off lessons, and insert our specific strengths into the lesson. At first, we did not adequately divide up tasks on the lesson plan, so we would trip over each other metaphorically in class. By the third week, however, we got in the habit of clearly identifying on the lesson plan who would be responsible for facilitating what, and we became to acquire a rhythm to teaching. There were certainly immensely stressful moments of planning and grading, particularly with our vastly different working styles, but our different personalities often served to balance each other out. By the end of the semester, when we began solo-teaching, I certainly found relief in being individually responsible for developing the lesson plan and facilitating class, so that I could craft a class exactly how I envisioned it. In all, though I believe that Tyler and I both provided a much needed energy and perspective to this class and could not have carried out this vast of a project individually.

In the course evaluation, students were asked to describe how co-teaching and solo-teaching worked for them, and which they preferred. Among the praises of co-teaching was our balancing, as one student put it, “the dynamic of introvert and extrovert together worked well for this class”. However, as Tyler and I began to part in our vision for the class and ability to effectively work together, that became clear to students. Student’s reflections on this are more or
less in line: “there was tension between them and it was stressful”; “the solo teaching helped more, because there was less tension”; “It was VERY obvious when one of you were having a bad day”. Despite our best efforts, it was not easy to mask internal strife from our students, particularly due to personal friendships with students, so this began to impact the class dynamics. The students had several critiques of solo teaching efforts, including that Tyler’s lessons were not well structured, and mine were very intellectually challenging. When asked to rate us each on a scale of 1(worst)-10(best), Tyler averaged a score of 8.7, while I averaged a 9.0. Overall, most students believed they learned best from co-teaching, because Tyler and I brought different styles and methods to teaching that created a fuller understanding of content.

Individual Teaching Critique

An analysis of the results of this course would be incomplete without a reflection on my role as an instructor, and the strengths and weaknesses I embody in that role. Teaching this class was a very character building experience for me, and required me to assess how much space I dominate in classes and conversations, as well as the steadfastness of my opinions. My students witnessed me in my full range of states during the semester that I taught the class, from high energy optimistic, to physically incapacitated and devoid of energy and certainty. I wear my emotions on my sleeve, and it was often easy for students to tell when I was having a bad day, or disinterested in a particular discussion or topic. I worked hard to mask this throughout the semester, and began to reflect on how I carry myself and interact with the people around me. I certainly clashed with certain students ideologically as well as with our personalities, but worked to never let this impact how I treated them in the class or how they were graded.

Students overall spoke very highly of me in reflections and evaluations, and (without attributing them to me) ranked my contributions to the course as some of their favorite
components. My personality and characteristics were limiting for some students, such as one who wrote, “even though I like Francesca, I often felt intimidated or was afraid to share some of my opinions for fear of backlash from her and the class.” Another student viewed these traits as “Francesca has a very big personality”. These are critiques that I am used to, and working to address, and will draw upon in the discussion section. During a conversation with a student who I knew previous to the beginning of the course, and with whom I clashed greatly for the first two years of college, I received the most encouraging feedback of the semester. She said she disliked me when we first met because she thought I was just another “rich white oblivious feminist” but as the course progressed realized I’m “a real ally and a cool person”. For some, the intimidation and dislike fades with time, I take some warming up to, and I like to think that happened with several of the students in the class. The evaluation that I would like to end on, however, is where one student described my contribution to the class with this, “your energy in front of a room is infectious, and definitely encouraged me to get excited about these topics”.


Discussion

Introduction

Many significant themes continued to arise throughout my research over the past year and a half, which given all the time and resources needed, I wish I could explore more deeply. However, given the constraints of this thesis, I have condensed the most significant themes to look at the effectiveness of the non-hierarchical pedagogical approach, the role of identity (specifically gender, race and religion) in class dynamics, and advice for future STS instructors. While I draw on outside literature to inform my conclusions and discussion, it is important to note that all themes discussed and situations that arose are relative to this specific class taught at the University of Vermont in the fall of 2014.

Non-Hierarchical Pedagogy

As discussed throughout this text, the intention of this project is to determine if it is possible to teach in non-hierarchical method, one representative of Paulo Freire’s (1970) Pedagogy of the Oppressed, within the confines of a university setting. There are inherent assumptions made with this research, the most dominant of which is that a non-hierarchical approach to the classroom is more advantageous than blatant hierarchy. These assumptions are foundational to this project, but rooted in critical pedagogy as explored in the literature review. I have found, however, that it is not possible to practice pedagogy of the oppressed within this context, but that, in contradiction to my hypothesis, this is still conducive to effective learning.

While Tyler and I set out with grand hopes to fully deconstruct oppressive hierarchy within this institution of higher learning as a model to do so elsewhere, the result was far from our hope. As is discussed below and in the results section, the implications of assigning grades,
the oppressive interconnection of identities in the classroom, and the inability to navigate certain difficult discussions and issues led instead to largely a reinforcement of classroom hierarchy. While this has been difficult to me to process, these mistakes and challenges are part of the process to deconstruct hierarchy. With her endless wisdom, bell hooks (1994, p. 33) assures that “if we fear mistakes, doing things wrongly, constantly evaluating ourselves, we will never make the academy a culturally diverse place where scholars and the curricular address every dimension of that difference”. Thus, while I made many errors along the way in my facilitation and development of this class, the end result is by no means a failure. Rather, this process has contributed to a deeper understanding of how to facilitate discussions around race and oppression, and how to do so within the confines of a white supremacist, classist, sexist, and altogether oppressive society.

Among the justifications for pursuing a non-hierarchical approach to teaching, was wishing to avoid the “bank” model of educating described by Paulo Freire (1970). Essentially what Freire argues is that through excessive lecturing and emphasis on tests, we are depositing information into student’s minds without developing critical thinkers to analyze and understand the significance of that information. The development of truly critical thinkers actually threatens the reorganization and deconstruction of power structures that is necessary for the collective liberation that Freire calls for. The Marxist critique of the state run education system fits well into the bank system critique, in which students are trained to “reproduce the means of production” including the skills that will allow students to grow into workers within the capitalist system that requires output and monotony (Althusser 1970). This extends beyond simply preparing students for a role in the workforce, “The reproduction of labor power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the
rules of the established order” which allows the continued dominance of certain groups over those with the power to influence the reproduction of means of production (Ibid). Thus, developing truly critical thinkers within this educational system would challenge existing power structures by empowering students to break the labor power structure. Freire argues that in order to transcend the mechanized instrument that is the education system, students must embark on the path of liberation together, with students and teachers as colleagues without a dichotomy constructed by power existing between the two. It is believed that this kind of learning can create the atmosphere in which students can truly reflect on their reality and take the steps necessary to transcend the systems of oppression within which we all live. This was a fundamental principal of the course as I developed it, aiming for this to be a reflective journey for students and instructors alike, through which we could come out more equipped to make changes in our lives and in society. A key element that Freire suggests to create this community within the classroom is through utilization of dialogue, creating a commonality between student and teacher where kindness and compassion can form. This was my intention in developing multiple variations of discussion in the class, and had they been able to form more fully I believe this would have contributed greatly to deconstructing class hierarchy.

While I focus specifically on the hierarchy present when grades are assigned, this is by no means the only oppressive and hierarchical aspect of educating. The mere fact that Tyler and I were the ones setting the agenda, deciding what information would be learned and explored creates a very oppressive classroom dynamic. This was also problematic, because Tyler and I are by no means experts in organizing or pedagogy, and therefore the construction of the syllabus was limited to our breadth of knowledge. This prevented us from teaching truly transgressive organizing models, as we did not have the experience with such models to do so. Freire (1989)
discusses this in depth, exploring the role of agenda setting and the implications of those with privilege dominating the education system, which then makes education largely oppressive itself. The structures that were put in place far before the first grade was assigned created an unavoidable hierarchy, which undermined my ability to educate non-hierarchically.

Grades
Many educators from levels ranging from 1\textsuperscript{st} grade through graduate school have critiqued the process of assigning grades to students, and reflected on the implications that assigning such grades has on the learning environment of a classroom. The process of assigning grades creates a stringent relationship between teacher and student, and can significantly strain the relationship between the two, as well as between students in a class (Kohn 1999). Early in the semester I began to notice the strain that grading was taking on the relationship between my students and me. During the first two to three weeks of the semester, before any graded assignments had been passed back, the class began to form a wonderful community wherein many people spoke up and contributed, and Tyler and I were respected not as authority figures but as partners in this process. The first time that we handed back grades that were of significance was on the first written paper, on intersectionality (most of the class did remarkably well on the first few reading quizzes and the first assignment). The class average on the first paper was a 30/41, equating to a 74\% or C. We made the mistake of handing these papers back in the beginning of the class, and the result was a derailed lesson plan in which students complained, ignored the agenda and critiqued our grading. The largest factor contributing to low grades was an incredibly informal writing style used by many students who believed that as students, Tyler and I would not hold their formal writing ability to the same level of any other 100-level class in the Environmental Studies Program. That class served as a turning point in the
semester, early on, in which students began to view Tyler and me as authority figures who held student’s grades and GPA in our hands.

One of the hardest parts about grading is the lack of unified structure to determine what constitutes an A, what a B, etc. Grades can rarely be fully objective, and are not necessarily representative of a student’s academic ability. Despite attempts for centuries to create a grading system that is the most reflective and accurate of a student’s academic performance as possible, often grades become a summation of both quality of academic work, and quality of student character. It was immensely difficult for me to determine the best and most effective way of assigning grades to students, as I have been subjected to this particular, arbitrary, grading system throughout my time as a student. This presents a very real challenge to educators because grading is something that has been done to each of us during our many years as students, it is hard to change the invalid ‘grading’ schema that has become embedded in our minds. Now, as educators often required to grade students, and because of this embedded schema, we often grade students in invalid ways similar to how we were graded (Allen 2005).

Breaking this cycle is very difficult, and this became a problem similarly when trying to introduce alternative teaching styles into the classroom. It is hard to be what you cannot see, and in the context of grading, I have never participated in a classroom environment in which grades were not assigned, or were done so in a way that I believed to fully represent the learning and abilities of students in the classroom. Of course this in itself presents a biased stance, because students predominately believe grades should reflect effort more than output, whereas teachers maintain emphasis on ability and output (Zinn et. al 2011).
I fully understand the rationale behind assigning grades, the need to evaluate the work of students and in our modern academic setting grades serve almost as compensation for work completed. The impact of grading on this particular topic, however, proved to undermine the content and inhibit the formation of a collaborative non-hierarchical community. The purpose of community organizing is not, and should not be, for compensation or grades. Community organizing is about creating power in numbers, and challenging the oppressive systems, which dictate life in this society. The STS program in itself limits the ability of student teachers to fully break down power structures by practicing alternative grading practices. Tyler and I were required to submit grades for the course, and in the process of developing the syllabus and seeking approval from the faculty we were constrained in our flexibility following that. In this sense, the STS program is almost more hierarchical than a course taught by a professor who is given the flexibility and authority to give up power to students and have them construct their own assessments. By assigning grades, Tyler and I were on a pedestal of power, wherein we were responsible for determining whether a student’s ability to organize or comprehension of the material was up to the standard we set. As much of our work required students to reflect on their identities and explore their place and role within society, assigning a grade to their individual assignments, and finally to their work as a whole with the ultimate course grade, seemed punitive and highly subjective. This class material specifically would have benefitted from a workshop format, a space of voluntary participation where students are motivated to learn not to earn a good grade but to gain valuable skills. I am glad that this class counted for students class requirements at UVM, and that they were motivated to take the course because there was the added benefit given by the university, but that alone is not sufficient motivation for students to effectively undertake the material that we did. The best way I could have created a less
oppressive grading system would have been to include more students in the development of their assessments, reducing that onus from me and Tyler and creating a more participatory classroom, and I highly suggest that approach for anyone considering an STS class in the future.

**Pedagogy of the Privileged**

An important note that may explain why Tyler and I largely failed at creating a non-hierarchal classroom environment through utilizing a Freirean model of the pedagogy of the oppressed, is that we were not in fact educating the oppressed. The class, as will be explored in the identity section, consisted predominately of white students from middle/upper-middle class backgrounds. The intent of the class became teaching those with dominant identities (predominately white students) how to recognize the societal structures that privilege their identities over others. Freire and others who preach pedagogy of the oppressed advocate a collective liberation of the oppressed through this pedagogy, which is not the context of the class I taught. As a result, attempts to utilize the strategies laid out in prominent emergent pedagogical texts failed, because our aim was to, as a predominately white middle class group of students, deconstruct the systems that give us this power and influence in society. What we really needed was a variation of ‘pedagogy of the privileged’, some mechanism for a community of those holding dominant identities to understand and recognize their privilege, while also learning how to relinquish that power.

Those attempting to use Freirean pedagogy with students who hold privileged identity have found similar results, in these situations students are often unresponsive as they find the approaches and literature irrelevant to their lives (Nurenburg 2011). Freire introduces the concept of “Conscientizacao” which Gorder (2007, p. 11) describes as the “the way an individual, through education, comes to learn of the social, economic, and political
contradictions of the world and to address those elements with either passive acceptance or active resistance.” Freire viewed this process as purely collaborative, but also recognized the contradictions in the oppressed pursuing an education of the elite, which can then place them in the role of oppressor. Recognizing the implications on the contrary, Gorder (Ibid) notes:

It is easy to see this same cycle inverted where the privileged do not see themselves directly as being oppressors and are not interested in exchanging the familiar world that they have come to know—and that gives them security and status—to launch out into the terrifying uncertainties of dismantling a world constructed for their benefit.

Therefore, the pedagogy of the privileged that I recommend, could create a space, through education, for the privileged to collectively and individually recognize their role in these systemic power dynamics. Freire (1989) notes the inherently oppressive nature of education, and the ability of the oppressors to set the framework that prevents the oppressed from understanding the reality of their situation, and thus it is important that a pedagogy of the privilege navigate these dynamics to prevent the oppressors, or the privileged, from simply enhancing their power and denying their complicity role in oppression.

While I do not have a fully realized vision for what a pedagogy of the privileged would look like, Freire emphasizes that in the education of the privileged, it is important that the privileged do not further the narrative of those that are oppressed as something that must be fixed or ‘solved’. This dynamic would further empower the privileged at the expense of the oppressed. Instead, this pedagogy must encourage critical reflection in the privileged, a form of conscientizacao, which will enable them to “emerge from their submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled” (Freire 1989, p. 90). This is what I tried to accomplish through the incorporation of discussions and reflective writing in the course.
Through collective conscientização in spaces of privilege, including university settings, a form of non-hierarchical pedagogy may be achieved that can initiate the deconstruction of power held by the privileged through the recognition and understanding of such power.

*Role of Identity*

One of the most significant impacts from this course is the role that both student and instructor identities played in the unfolding of class events and content. The three identities that had the largest impact on our classroom community were: race, gender and religion. While the following sections will explore the intersection of race, religion and gender in the classroom, it is important to note that identities are never fixed or absolute. Everyone holds several fluctuating identities, which impact each of our interactions with and understanding of the world around us. Some identities are placed upon individuals, while others are self discovered and honed, however most of these are societal constructs that work to create a social hierarchy. The identities of our students and of Tyler and myself played a far more significant role in this course than I anticipated when beginning this adventure, and as such it is important to explore these identities, while recognizing the intersection and fluctuation of each. For context: Tyler is a cis white wealthy straight male from a (non-practicing) Christian background. I am a cis white queer Jewish woman from a middle-low income family. From the outset of the course, we have acknowledged between ourselves and with our students the implications of our identities on our approach to teaching, community organizing and the course material. All of our actions come with implicit biases, some of which may align with students, others that differ. Particularly within a class that required every participant to reflect deeply, and often, about how one’s identities relate to the work that we do, it was all the more important that Tyler and I had a firm grasp on our whiteness and the implications of our whiteness on anti-oppression work. I will
discuss in further detail below the significance of identity within this work and class content. This was especially important, because “professors who expect students to share confessional narratives but who are themselves unwilling to share are exercising power in a manner that could be coercive” (hooks 1994, p. 21).

**Gender**

The impact of gender on this classroom was subtle but significant. While one man and woman facilitated the class, Tyler and I challenge many traditional stereotypes of the role of men and women. I am largely extroverted, opinionated, and stubborn and these characteristics have the effect of taking up a lot of space in academic and social settings. Tyler, on the other hand, is largely introverted, more flexible and laid back, and has what I can only describe as a warmer and more accommodating personality. This was actualized during the class as many students associated the most hierarchical aspects of our class (reading quizzes and grading) with me, and some of the more lenient aspects (activities and discussions) with Tyler. This became clear through final course evaluations, as well as through conversations with students. Ironically, Tyler crafted the majority of the reading quizzes and was initially a much harder grader than me (when we co-graded and compared), and I was responsible for developing the vast majority of activities and discussions. This also contributed to a phenomenon quite present in society, wherein men are credited for work largely completed by women.

Gender also had significant implications among intra-student dynamics. In a class with 12 women and 2 men, the expectation should be that women would participate at a far higher rate than men, as there are simply more of them. In effect though, one of the male students was notorious for taking up space, and violating the terms of the group norms we created in the beginning of the course. Many studies have found that the presence of even a proportionally low
number of men in a classroom setting can significantly impact female students participation and involvement in discussions and interactions with professors (see Canada and Pringle 1995; Hall and Sandler 1982; American Association of University Women 1992). Throughout the course, nearly every time we posed a question to the class, one of the two men would be the first to speak and often would continue contributing to the discussion while many women would not speak up even once. To address this, I would work to encourage all students to speak up, ask that those who have not yet contributed speak, or organize small break out groups so that women would feel more likely to speak up in their smaller groups.

Gender dynamics were also heavily prevalent within our class examination of course content, and came out particularly strong involving critiques of Saul Alinsky’s (1971) immensely gendered and sexist presentation of community organizing. To unaware privileged white men, Alinsky’s presentation of the ideal community organizer as a white, educated, wealthy, straight, male, may be missed because the reader can easily identify and picture oneself in that role. For literally anyone else, the further into Alinsky you read, the clearer it is that his vision of the ideal organizer is not fit to include you. In many instances in the classroom, discussion would be steered off course in order to highlight these facts to male students. Gender and class also became a significant point of discussion towards the end of the semester when I introduced the alternative organizing model discussed by Stall and Stoecker (1997) who heavily critique the Alinsky model of organizing. They present what they refer to as the “women-centered model of organizing” in which community organizing’s main focus is not taking power from those who have it but rather building power within communities. This model was designed to recognize the limitations of professional organizing to low-middle income working women, who often hold significant familial responsibilities that limit their ability to attend protests and rallies and work
professionally as organizers. The way this model is presented makes assumptions about women, but was developed through working in low-income communities with predominately women of color whose need to organize is fueled by discrimination they face. Many white female students in my class were vehemently opposed to this model, as they believed it was assuming that women are inherently weaker than men and can not keep up with Alinsky’s power driven organizing model. This discussion, and the paper that students wrote surrounding the two organizing models, helped our class deconstruct the power dynamics and dominant paradigm, which enables systemic oppression. Gender is inextricably linked to race and class, as no one woman experiences womanhood, nor sexism, the same. The anger that many white female students in my class felt towards the women-centered model of organizing is reminiscent of their socialization to believe that women must work within the status quo to gain the power that men have for so long possessed. This paradigm is inherently problematic and a function of this course was to bring to light the flaws in that process. Critical feminist theory explores the power dynamics that lead women to pursue the power of men, and as bell hooks (1984) suggests:

> If more feminist women had actively re-conceptualized power, they would not have, consciously or unconsciously, shaped feminist movement using the class and race hierarchies that exist in the larger society. They would not have encouraged women to emulate men, the so-called ‘enemy’.

Gender dynamics between instructors and students, in addition to between students and in relation to course content, was also a significant factor that influenced the course. Due to the way in which I carry and present myself, I had the effect of intimidating certain female students, as was noted in the results section. One female student in the class began to disrespect me openly in the classroom, while continuing to show Tyler respect and courtesy. This student would interact
with Tyler well during lectures and activities, but would undermine my information and presentation when I facilitated. Many other students began to notice these dynamics and comment on it in the reflections. This is not entirely uncommon in classrooms, women are socialized to view each other as competition, and as a result certain female students feel more comfortable interacting with male professors and instructors (Canada and Pringle 1995). One impact of these interactions was a sort of ‘play the parents’ effect, where students would ask me for something (extension on a paper, counting an event towards extra credit, etc.) and if I said no they would go to Tyler and ask the same question hoping for affirmation. Tyler and I began to notice the way in which individual students interacted with us differently, and began to require that the both of us vetted every decision before giving a response to students.

The gendered dynamics between Tyler and me became advantageous in the context of certain one-on-ones we conducted with students. The one female student who was consistently disrespectful towards me shared many characteristics of mine that I have worked to subdue and refine over the past several years. I determined that her reaction to me in the classroom was likely a result of female competition and steadfastness. During a one-one-one with her, I brought up many of these points about women, power, socialization, etc. and talked about how I have had to work over the past several years to change the way I interact in professional and academic settings, including taking up too much space, being misunderstood by peers and professors, and oppressing other’s opinions when they conflict with my own. She began to cry during our meeting, and talked about the frustration of people misunderstanding her because she is much more outspoken and opinionated than the societal expectations of women. This is something I continue to work on and deconstruct every day, and the camaraderie we shared in this meeting is one that Tyler would have been entirely unable to facilitate and nurture. With other one-on-
one’s, however, Tyler was much more suited to take the lead in talking to female students because of the interactions and characteristics that they share. With certain male students, Tyler was immensely effective in meeting with them one-on-one and talking through his experiences understanding the impact of his whiteness and gender on his social, professional and academic interactions. After these one-on-one’s Tyler and I noted to each other that we would have been unable to effectively facilitate these meetings individually due to the limitations of our experience. This is among the many reasons that I believe having a dual gendered STS instructing team is very beneficial to class dynamics, and can create a better community.

Religion and Race

The dynamics of race and religion played a very interesting role particularly while teaching about forms of oppression and discussing individual experiences with forms of oppression. For reference throughout this discussion, of the 14 students in the class, 7 identify as practicing or culturally Jewish, as do I, meaning that half of the students, and half of the instructors are Jewish. There were two men in the class, with one male instructor, and 12 female students with one female instructor; there was one person of color in the class, and 12 white students with 2 white instructors. From the outset of this course, my intention was to have a critical analysis throughout exploring the role of whiteness on organizing and social movements. As bell hooks (1994, p. 43) notes, “it is so crucial that ‘whiteness be studied’, understood, discussed – so that everyone learns that affirmation of multiculturalism, and an unbiased inclusive perspective, can and should be present whether or not people of color are present”.

Within the context of my classroom students were challenged to recognize the interconnectedness of their identities, and transcend the traditional victim/oppressor binary that tends to pit one group against another. Despite attempts at facilitating this evolution of thought
and self evolution, the result was a strengthening of this binary which evolved into what can only be described as a type of Oppression Olympics.

Throughout situations in which we talked about historical oppression in the U.S. relating to race and gender, a select few of the Jewish students would relate the history of black slavery in the U.S. to the historical slavery and oppression of Jews. The intended purpose of drawing this connection was for the Jewish students to presume that they understood the current plight of black people in America who are exposed to systematic, and in certain cases deadly, violence and discrimination. In many instances, two particular Jewish students in the class made many offensive and ignorant comments regarding race in the U.S., which amounted to frequent microaggressions and tokenizing of the one person of color in the class. When attempting to diffuse in-class situations, and point out how certain comments and actions were oppressive, Tyler and I received heated objections from these students whose defense amounted to “I’m Jewish and know what it’s like to be discriminated against, therefore I can’t discriminate towards others”. This is what Hancock (2011) would refer to as a result of the Oppression Olympics, or “Victimization Olympics” as Novick (2000) refers to it, where this mindset creates “a persistent vision of oneself or one’s groups as solely victims”. As students in the class attempted to compare the plight of various oppressed groups, it became hard for individuals to separate the historical oppression and marginalization of one of their identities (the ‘victim’) from the oppressive impacts of their actions.

The history of religion and race, particularly between Jews and blacks in the U.S. is heated and controversial. While Jewish people in the U.S. experienced significant discrimination before and during WWII, with even the president of Harvard University explicitly stating he did not want Jews attending the university, by the 1950’s, American culture was much more
accommodating of Jewish people (Brodkin 2002). As Brodkin (2002) explains in *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America*, many Jews of the WWII generation believed that their success and prosperity in the U.S. was largely due to a “pick yourself up by your bootstraps” approach. In reality, however, Jews largely became accepted less as immigrants, and more integrated in the mainstream white society. In the 1950s and 60s, with the Holocaust still a recent memory, many Jews took an active role in the civil rights movement, even constituting a sizable portion of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and of the Freedom Riders (Greenberg 2012). While many polls suggested in the 50s and 60s that the American Jewish population was among the most sympathetic to the civil rights movement, polls today suggest that these inclinations are declining significantly (Ibid.). While debate rages regarding the implications of Jew’s actions towards blacks and vice versa, essentially a debate of anti-Semitism versus racism, (see Martin (1993) and Lefkowitz (1996) for just one example of such heated debate), the purpose of introducing the concept to the Oppression Olympics is to argue that there is no need for validating these conflicting histories, as they can operate simultaneously. To transcend the victim/oppressor binary, it is fundamentally important to recognize that ones intersecting identities does not preclude one from the capacity of discriminating. Jews were subjected to inexplicable horrors during the Holocaust, just as Africans were during the hundreds of years of slavery in the Americas, and countless other ethnic and religious groups have been subjected to similar atrocities throughout history. With these facts all remaining true, no one group is given a free pass for oppression.

In order for the classroom discussions around race to be effective, Tyler and I needed to succeed at instilling in our students that the binary of victim/oppressor is not absolute. In
exploring our identities and recognizing the fluidity of these, we hoped students would be able to understand the way that systems of power are inherently oppressive to all. Instead what happened was certain Jewish students devalued the experiences of black Americans by claiming a right to the status of victim. This “comparative suffering debate” works to act “as if suffering is a limited commodity…[and] must be especially guarded, lest its attribution to other groups lead to a diminution of its value” (Beachler 2011). In order to navigate the discussions around race in the classroom, particularly in the context of the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement in the fall of 2014, those who hold a victim narrative around their own identity needed to relinquish that binary perspective and recognize that multiple groups face oppression. During this immensely controversial and emotional time, particularly with both the Michael Brown and Eric Garner grand jury non-indictments occurring during the course of this semester, Tyler and I found a unique opportunity to work with our predominately white students to explore what functions of society enable continued, nearly unpunished, racial discrimination in this country. Working to understand the role our whiteness has played in our successes and navigation through life to this point, we worked with our predominately white students to deconstruct the white supremacy present in our society. We attempted to use an approach wherein “white people listen to other white people” and aimed to alleviate the burden of people of color having to explain to white people why they are oppressive. Students repeatedly misunderstood this point, as they were caught up on the victimization of their Jewish identity (or queer identity, poor identity, etc., in this context the oppression Olympics was not solely prevalent among Jewish students in our classroom) and were unable to recognize the ability to also benefit from a white supremacist society. Certain students would place the onus on the person of color in the class, asking them to explain cultural appropriation, or the implications of terms such as ‘ghetto’ or racial implication
of whites having dreadlocked hair. Tyler and I repeatedly interjected and attempted to diffuse these situations, however attempts to address these issues in class proved immensely challenging. bell hooks (1994) recognized this exact dilemma by acknowledging that “transforming these classrooms is as great a challenge as learning how to teach well in the setting of diversity. Often, if there is one lone person of color in the classroom she or he is objectified by others and forced to assume the role of ‘native informant’”.

After consultation with colleagues at Hillel and mentors in multiples departments at UVM, I began to address this in class by specifying the importance of recognizing whiteness, on the work of organizers. As the course developed and we began to flush out the concept of intersectionality, it became easier to explain that while a student may be Jewish, they can also be white, or straight, or wealthy, which puts them in a place to be an oppressor. I used myself as an example often, I hold several marginalized identities, however my dominant identities put me in a position to take up too much space, invalidate other’s experiences, and oppress marginalized groups. With time this began to register more with students, however it took a lot of work and careful facilitation in class and in one-on-one’s in order to influence the way students viewed their Judaism in relation to their whiteness. While focusing on identities, we also challenged students to look at the power dynamics in our society as a significant signifier of oppression and take a more critical perspective on these issues.

The dominance of the Oppression Olympics narrative significantly hindered the advancement of our class’ understanding of the systems of power, which influence and enable systems of oppression in the U.S. With every attempt to have students challenge these narratives and view victimization not as a limited commodity but rather as a wound representative of societies many ills, we found ourselves navigating a terrain of an Oppression Olympic
victim/oppressor narrative. It was this dynamic playing out, with a tug of war between race and religion in the classroom, that I believe accounts for the concluding “what is the system?” uproar in the final class.

Advice to Future STS Instructors

My journey as an STS instructor has been simultaneously one of the most intellectually and personally challenging experiences of my life, as well as one of the most rewarding. Through all of the challenges faced during this experience, what kept me going was an unyielding passion for the content and dedication to my students and our classroom community. For anyone considering teaching an STS course, the most important piece of advice I can give is to make sure that you are willing to, and more importantly want to, live and breath this class and topic for a solid year of your life. Imagine the most stressful, overwhelming week of your life, and then add the STS class to it: that class better be a light at the end of the tunnel and not a gate blocking it off. This is not something to enter into lightly, but it will be worth every sleepless night, early morning prep, and last minute lesson planning. With that said, this is ultimately a learning experience for both the students and the instructor, take a step back and be willing to let this class take you places you can never imagine. It’s ok to mess up and stray from your plan, there is no way to do this perfectly, and the sooner you throw out the expectation of perfection the better the entire experience will be for you and your students.

The guiding philosophy I used throughout this experience was to look at myself as ‘a search engine and not a fact book’. I certainly did not have all the answers to my student’s questions nor the experience to introduce all the necessary components of this material. Use the resources of the people around you, faculty, staff, students, professionals, friends, everyone has great wisdom and can provide more depth than imaginable to the class. Understanding your role
as a facilitator is key, STS instructors are not professors, we are students who are engaging in a very unique learning experience, our role is to facilitate the learning of our students but not define or confine that learning.

In regards to the specific class that I taught, which itself was adapted from a previous STS course taught by Connor Gibson and Jessica Serrante, there are a few key changes I would make. In hindsight I believe the least effective aspect of this class was the skills trainings. We spent a majority of the class teaching students how to recruit, fundraise, message, etc. and many of these skills could have been taught in half the time and overall more efficiently. I believe there is a significant gap at UVM in regards to anti-oppression discussions among students holding dominant identities. The great strength of the STS program is that students can work together in the learning environment to challenge socialized preconceptions of power, and can deconstruct that collectively and collaboratively. As every evaluation throughout the semester said, students want time to discuss these issues in more depth, and I believe that a solid discussion formatted class is the best way to facilitate an STS course. The entire course syllabus and the work that went into producing this class is available in the appendices, it is my hope that students in the future adapt these lessons and this material into an even better and more effective class. While my research found that there is no such thing as truly non-hierarchical teaching in an environment in which grades are assigned, this does not undervalue the significant progress that can be made when students embark on a challenging learning endeavor with their peers.

In the months since completing the course, several of my former students have approached me around campus to tell me, quite enthusiastically, how much the class has changed them and contributed to their learning in other classes. Several professors have approached me as well to tell me that they currently have some of my students and those students reference
material from my course often. Teaching this course and the research that went into developing it has helped me find focus and purpose in my life, and has significantly shaped my goals for the future. I am excited to see how STS courses continue to develop in the years to come, and I look forward to being a resource for anyone seeking to pursue this project.

Limitations

Every observation and conclusion in this thesis is limited to the confines of this one class developed and taught at UVM. I aim to make no generalizations from my findings, but rather to tie in other research, which has yielded similar and significant results. My results are a synthesis of my observations, the coursework completed by students and the student evaluations; all of which are subjective and should be challenged and critiqued. There is no way to ensure that student’s reflections and evaluations are entirely representative of their experiences in the class, and it is likely that many of the students have yet to fully recognize all that they learned during that semester. As bell hooks (1994) notes of her decades in academia, “I have found through the years that many of my students who bitch endlessly while they are taking my classes contact me at a later date to talk about how much that experience meant to them, how much they learned”.

The limitations extend merely beyond the research aspect of this course. Tyler and I taught this class in our first semester of our senior year at UVM, we built the course content around our experience working for a variety of organizations, each of which are worthy of critique. There is no right and wrong way to teach the material we did, and we made several mistakes as a result, but each mistake informed future successes. Given the vast array of material I collected throughout my research, there are dozens of unique and equally interesting avenues I could have pursued in this thesis. Specifically, exploring the role that grading has on our academic system; the implications and privilege associated with teaching a class on organizing to
a group of students who will have the opportunity to choose which campaign they may or may not work on; and the privilege associated with teaching this class at an institution of higher learning. Many of the most significant, influential and effective community organizers in history had no formal training or education, they learned out of necessity. This entire course, both in content and logistics, is rooted in deeply seeded class privilege, which I was not able to fully explore due to the restrictions on my research and discussion.
Conclusion

The aim of this class was to create a non-hierarchical learning environment through the facilitation of a students-teaching-students course, I realized early on that is an impossible feat. Where grades are assigned, where work is evaluated and a select few control the content and workload of the larger group, and where students of different identities come together, there is an inherent hierarchy. This hierarchy did present several limitations throughout the course, including limiting our ability to thoroughly explore the role of our identities and presence within the larger context of oppression in our classroom, university and in the U.S. While much of the pedagogical approach I aimed follow during this project proved too difficult to maneuver, the class itself had several benefits. The students enrolled in ENVS 197 passionately took on social justice and environmental campaigns as a requirement for this class, and nearly all of them continue to work on these campaigns today. In the months following the end of the fall semester, students I have seen around campus enthusiastically mention how much they learned in this class, and how grateful they are for the experience. I have grown immeasurably as a result of the work and research I put into this class, as well as the time I spent facilitating class discussions and activities and evaluating student’s work.

After over a year of preparation and anticipation, and 26 class sessions in the fall of 2014, ENVS 197: Community Organizing and Environmental Activism came to an end with Tyler, Stephanie Kaza and myself submitting final grades in the Bittersweet. This was a bittersweet moment for me, as Tyler and I sat there determining the final grades of students with heavy subjectivity. Every insightful and inspiring conversation, challenging activity and oppressive act, every living, breathing memory from this course was drawn to an end once these 12 letters were entered, as grades, identifying the work and accomplishments of each individual student in this
course. The moment of determining final grades for students, comparing one’s work to another, was highly defeating, while immensely empowering. It marked the end of this wonderful journey, while highlighting the paradox of the STS class. We tried to create a community, encourage students and instructors to learn alongside one another vulnerably, yet in the end this experience is registered as 12 grades ranging from an A+ to a C-, determined by Tyler and myself with guidance from our advisors.

As I believe I have made clear in this work, there is no one simple way to define the results of this project. I have found that it is possible to teach the basic skills of community organizing through the facilitation of an STS class, however this approach is limited by its very nature. What is not fully possible or ideal with the facilitation of an STS class is the conversations and collaboration needed to deconstruct the power that enables systems of oppression in order to dismantle that and make way for a just society. By no means was I aiming for this class to accomplish that large feat, but I did hope that at the micro level, in our classroom at the very least, we would be able to work towards that goal. Luckily, this is just the beginning of the learning experience. From here, students will develop their critical thinking and application of skills through the campaigns that most continue to work on, and through conversations on oppression with their peers and mentors. This is a journey that I know I will continue on for the remainder of my life, and I hope that my students will as well.
References


Appendices
Appendix 1: Course Syllabus

**ENVS 197: Community Organizing and Environmental Activism**

“We must continually remind students in the classroom that expression of different opinions and dissenting ideas affirms the intellectual process. We should forcefully explain that our role is not to teach them to think as we do but rather to teach them, by example, the importance of taking a stance that is rooted in rigorous engagement with the full range of ideas about a topic.”

“Do not burn yourselves out. Be as I am - a reluctant enthusiast...a part-time crusader, a half-hearted fanatic. Save the other half of yourselves and your lives for pleasure and adventure. It is not enough to fight for the land; it is even more important to enjoy it. While you can. While it’s still here. So get out there and hunt and fish and mess around with your friends, ramble out yonder and explore the forests, encounter the grizz, climb the mountains, bag the peaks, run the rivers, breathe deep of that yet sweet and lucid air, sit quietly for a while and contemplate the precious stillness, the lovely, mysterious, and awesome space. Enjoy yourselves, keep your brain in your head and your head firmly attached to the body, the body active and alive, and I promise you this much; I promise you this one sweet victory over our enemies, over those desk-bound men and women with their hearts in a safe deposit box, and their eyes hypnotized by desk calculators. I promise you this; You will outlive the bastards.”
— Edward Abbey

**Instructors:**
Francesca Hall - fahall@uvm.edu
(Cell: 310-869-9175)

Tyler McFarland - tmcfarla@uvm.edu
(Cell: 603-205-6129)

**Meeting:** MW 4:05-5:20pm, Lafayette 202

**Course Description:**
This course will explore the history of social, economic, and environmental organizing in the United States in order to understand how certain organizing techniques affected the American political system and brought about systemic change. This course will also develop strong organizers, by teaching hard-skills necessary for effective organizing and providing a place for students to implement these skills. The overall goal of this course is to equip students with the skills necessary to execute a campaign, while also providing the historical context for such actions.

This course will encompass a service-learning component, where students will be expected to work in small groups and engage with community and campus organizations. While there is an emphasis on environmental organizing, the course will study the history of various social justice movements including but not limited to: farm workers, civil rights, women’s suffrage and labor rights. Students are expected to be involved with a campaign (through collaboration with local non-profits, on-campus groups, or self-
started campaigns) throughout the course of the semester and implement the skills gained during the course in conjunction with these campaigns.

This class is a largely collaborative effort, and will operate as a learning community in which all members, facilitators and students alike, contribute to the class materials and discussions openly and inclusively.

Course Guidelines
1) **Reading** -- You will benefit most from the assigned readings if you read them before the class on the topic. The reading serves as background for the class discussions and trainings which will cover additional material as well as underscoring the ideas in the reading. All readings will be posted one week in advance on blackboard. You are responsible for checking regularly to stay up to date on readings.

2) **Classes** -- You are expected to attend all classes and arrive on time. Class will begin promptly at 4:05pm; announcements will generally be made at the beginning of the class. Cell phone use is not permitted in this class. Please respect the instructors and guest speakers by practicing active listening.

3) **No exams**. We will be using the full length of our listed final exam time on December 8 from 1:30pm to 4:15pm for the final project.

4) **Participation** -- Participation is mandatory in this class. We will work as a group to create an environment where all students feel comfortable expressing themselves. Participation is 15% of the grade in the class, and will be monitored weekly.

5) **Extra Credit** -- There will be some opportunities for extra credit (e.g., films, seminars, guest lectures in ENVS and other departments) that you can take advantage of, if you learn of any events that you think would be relevant please get approval. Each option is worth up to 5 pts. and you are eligible to receive a total of 25 extra credit points for the semester. Please turn in a minimum 500 word reflection on the extra credit event that you attend. The reflection should include: 1) 1-2 paragraphs on the who, what, and when of the event as well as a general overview of what was presented and 2) 2-3 paragraphs on the connection between the event and what has been covered in class and 3) 1-2 paragraphs of your own thoughts and opinions. Think critically.

6) **Instructor Meetings** -- We will not be holding office hours this semester, if you would like to meet with the instructors please set up an appointment.

Course Policies
1) No cell phones or laptops.

2) **Attendance** -- will be taken every class and will factor in to your final grade. Absences are not "excused" unless cleared by both Francesca and Tyler.

3) **Academic Honesty** -- You are expected to follow the academic guidelines issued by the University of Vermont. Cite what needs to be cited. Do not cheat. If you are having trouble with the class talk to the instructors, we will help you.

4) **Class Norms** -- In the beginning of the semester we will collaboratively establish a set of class norms that all students are expected to respect and abide by throughout the course of the semester. Respect for classmates and instructors is vital for the success of the entire group, and we will all work to hold each other accountable.
5) **ACCESS** – Please inform instructors of any necessary accommodations

**Grading:** *Rubrics for assignments will be posted on Blackboard*

- **Attendance:** 25 points (5%)
- **Participation:** 50 points (10%)
- **Quizzes:** 50 points (10%)
- **Papers:** 125 points (25%)
- **Assignments:** 125 points (25%)
- **Campaign Plan/Presentation:** 50 points (10%)
- **Final Project:** 75 points (15%)

---------------------------------------------------------------------

**Total:** 500 points

*Extra-Credit: up to 25 points (5%)*

**Course Materials:**

All readings will be posted at least one week in advance on blackboard, please check regularly. Class topics are subject to change, stay on top of announcements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M Aug. 25</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story of Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Aug. 27</td>
<td>What is organizing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Campaign Project Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Sept. 3</td>
<td>History of Social Activism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>EXTENDED CLASS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Potluck at Tyler's House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Sept. 8</td>
<td>History of Environmental Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Sept.10</td>
<td>Anti-Oppression Training/Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Sept. 15</td>
<td>Intersectionality of Movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Sept. 17</td>
<td>Systems Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paradigms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Sept. 22</td>
<td>Strategic Campaign Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vision, Goals, Strategy, Tactics (SMART)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Sept. 24</td>
<td>Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Petitioning, Tabling, Class Raps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Sept. 29</td>
<td>Targeting &amp; Power Mapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Oct. 1</td>
<td>Opposition Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Oct. 6</td>
<td>Messaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tea Party Vs. Occupy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Oct. 8</td>
<td>History of Civil Disobedience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need for Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Oct. 13</td>
<td><strong>EXTENDED CLASS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NVDA Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Oct. 15</td>
<td>Writing a Campaign Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Oct. 20</td>
<td>Giving/Receiving Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Oct. 22</td>
<td>TBD: What do you want to learn?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Oct. 27</td>
<td>Campaign Plan Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Oct. 29</td>
<td>Decision Making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Nov. 3</td>
<td>Media Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Nov. 5</td>
<td>Training for Trainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Nov. 10</td>
<td>Coalition Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Nov. 12</td>
<td>Fundraising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Nov. 17</td>
<td>Avoiding Burnout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Nov. 19</td>
<td>Touch Base/TBD Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Dec. 1</td>
<td>Where Organizing Failed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NGO Industrial Complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Dec. 3</td>
<td>Future of the Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 8</td>
<td>FINAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final Project Presentations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assignments:**

Assignments are meant to strengthen your knowledge and familiarity with the skills we present during class sections. These often involve hands on activities, such as working outside of the classroom to practice petitioning, giving class raps, or developing a campaign plan using the in-class trainings. We are looking for you to make an effort to incorporate these skills outside of the classroom, and as a result you will be graded on 1) actually doing the assignment and 2) your reflection on the activity. Every student is responsible for familiarizing themselves with a real life campaign (either on campus or off) in order to carry out these assignments.

Late assignments will be deducted 1 point for every day late, they will not be accepted after more than 7 days. *We’d rather you take an extra day to complete the assignment for a deducted point than rush it and not have time to fully process the material.*

**Papers:**

Papers are designed to encourage a more in depth analysis of the class readings and discussions. We encourage you to critically consider the readings and challenge the material. While some papers are more straightforward, we will accept creative takes on the prompts, as long as you have reputable sources that add to the depth of knowledge. We will discuss each prompt more thoroughly in the week before it is due.

Papers must be typed to receive credit and are due the day they are listed. One point will be deducted for every day they are late, and will not be accepted after one week. Include your name, date, and the number of the paper, double space and use 12 point font. Each paper is expected to be between 1,000 and 1,500 words. You must fully answer each prompt. Sources must be properly cited using MLA or APA format. We will drop your lowest paper grade at the end of the semester. Each paper is worth 41 points, there will be 4 assigned throughout the
semester, of which 3 will count towards your final grade, you get two points for submitting all 4, although you can choose to lose those 2 points and only submit 3.

The rubric for papers is:
25 points: depth of analysis, creativity and accuracy
10 points: sources and use of relevant readings
6 points: clarity of expression (grammar, organization, clear writing style)

Quizzes:
We will have 10 pop quizzes throughout the semester, each are worth 5 points. We are not faculty and do not have the breadth of experience that other professors at this university do. For that reason, it is especially important that students have done the reading and are prepared for class. The readings will largely inform our discussions and provide a theoretical basis for the skills trainings. Students who consistently do not come prepared to class will lose participation points as well as fail the quizzes. These quizzes will largely be short answer, and will be graded on a scale of -1 to 5. If you are bullshitting and are clearly not prepared for the quiz, you will be wasting our time and you will get a negative grade. If, for whatever reason, you are not prepared simply say so on the quiz and you will get a 0.
Appendix 2: Prompts for Papers 1-4

Paper #1: 41 Points
Due: Monday, September 22

Papers must be typed to receive credit and are due the day they are listed. One point will be deducted for every day they are late, and will not be accepted after one week. Include your name, date, and the number of the paper (and which prompt you selected), double space and use 12 point font. Each paper is expected to be between 1,000 and 1,500 words. You must fully answer each prompt. Sources must be properly cited using MLA or APA format, a minimum of 3 sources is required (feel free to use more).

The rubric for papers is:
25 points: depth of analysis, creativity and accuracy
10 points: sources and use of relevant readings
6 points: clarity of expression (grammar, organization, clear writing style)

Choose ONE of the below prompts to respond to:

1) Using two case studies (specific, real world examples), discussed in class/readings or discovered in your own research, examine the need for intersectionality within anti-racist, anti-colonialism, anti-classism, feminist, and environmentalist dialogues. How has fragmentation within social and environmental justice movements led to unsuccessful attempts at changemaking?

OR

2) Building on Stuart Hall’s essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” frame an answer/response to his rhetorical question:

“How can we stage this dialogue so that, finally, we can place it, without terror or violence, rather than being forever placed by it? Can we ever recognize its irreversible influence, whilst resisting its imperialising eye? The enigma is impossible, so far, to resolve. It requires the most complex of cultural strategies” (Hall 1989; 233-234).

Further, what role do social movements and forms of organizing play in reframing the dialogue surrounding identity and oppression?

Required Reading:
http://www.rlwclarke.net/Theory/PrimarySources/HallCulturalIdentityandDiaspora.pdf

Other Readings to draw from:

Paper #2: 41 points
Due: Monday, October 20

Papers must be typed to receive credit and are due the day they are listed. One point will be deducted for every day they are late, and will not be accepted after one week. If you turn it in late, you must bring a hard copy to the next class session. Include your name, and date, double space and use 12 point font. Each paper must be between 1,000 and 1,500 words. You must fully answer each section of the prompt. Sources must be properly cited using MLA or APA format, a minimum of 4 sources is required (the three required readings are Alinsky, Atack and Gelderloos, and you must chose one of the case studies to analyze).

Prompt:

Use the required readings to inform your analyses of one of the case study articles (listed below). Answer all of these questions in essay format:

Was violence/nonviolence strategically useful in your case study? Explain.

Is your case study an example of pragmatic or principled nonviolence? Explain. If given the resources would violence have been utilized? In Alinsky’s chapter “Of Means and Ends,” he argues that even those who claim to practice principled nonviolence do so purely for strategic purposes. Think critically about the circumstances of the case study you chose.

Using How Nonviolence Protects the State, make a case for the use of violence in your case study, and discuss the limitations and advantages of nonviolence more broadly.

Required reading:


Case Studies: chose one


The rubric for this paper is:

25 points: depth of analysis, creativity and accuracy ___/25
- Addresses the use of nonviolence/violence in the case study
- Discusses and distinguishes between pragmatic and principled nonviolence
- Includes a counter-argument for the use of violence
- Critically looks at the reasons for the use of nonviolence in the case study
- Clearly articulated in your own words, and demonstrates a clear understanding of the material

10 points: sources and use of relevant readings ___/10
- Correct in-text citation of all sources
- Use of, at minimum, the *four* readings (3 required, 1 case study)
- Inclusion of a Works Cited

6 points: clarity of expression (grammar, organization, clear writing style) ___/6
- Paper does not contain spelling, grammatical errors
- Information is presented in an organized manner
- Paper is between 1,000-1,500 words
- Proofread!

Total: ___/41
Paper #3: Organizing models (DUE: Wednesday Nov. 19)
41 Points

Prompt:
Over the course of the semester, we’ve largely drawn from the Alinsky and Ganz organizing models. These are by no means representative of the only, or even most effective, organizing models that exist. For this paper, review and discuss the organizing model that Stall and Stoecker put forth, referred to as the “women-centered model”, and summarize the Alinsky model as portrayed throughout Rules for Radicals.

Include a brief explanation of the two organizing models, and then analyze which you believe to be the most effective. Do not simply relay the same information Stall and Stoecker present, you must build off your experience to answer this question. Which is the most effective? Perhaps an integrated version of the two are. Does it depend on the situation/campaign/community?

Which model does Marshall Ganz’s organizing draw upon? Is focusing on taking power the most effective way to change society, or is it building community?

Think critically about the model of organizing we’ve presented throughout the semester, which draws on the Alinsky model.

Required Readings:


Rubric:

**Analysis**

- Brief summary of the different models of organizing
- Compare/Contrast the models
- Analysis of which is more effective, incorporating an educated opinion
- Critical look at where Ganz fits in
- Include *your* definition of community organizing
- Thorough use of the readings to clarify arguments

---

**Sources**

- Proper citation in APA or MLA
- Inclusion of a Works Cited!!!! (Even if you do endnotes/footnotes)
- Use of all three required readings
- Proper in-text citations
- Proper use of quotes (don’t just copy and past whole sentences!)

---

**Clarity**

- Well-structured and well formatted
- 1,000-1,500 words
- No grammar/spelling errors
- Your own thoughts/opinions, no plagiarism!
- Arguments are clearly articulated
Paper #4: Application of a skill to a case study
Due: Wednesday, December 3, 2014
41 points

Papers must be typed to receive credit and are due the day they are listed. One point will be deducted for every day they are late, and will not be accepted after one week. If you turn it in late, you must bring a hard copy to the next class session. Include your name, and date, double space and use 12 point font. Each paper must be between 1,000 and 1,500 words. You must fully answer each section of the prompt. Sources must be properly cited using MLA or APA format.

Prompt: Pick any one training/ skill from the semester from the following:
  fundraising
  recruitment
  messaging & framing
  intersectional organizing
  tactics
  targeting
  direct action
  media
  opposition research
  coalition building

  Find one article that describes how an organization either utilized this skill well or did not. This can be a popular article, but must be a reputable source (i.e. not a blog or Wikipedia). Analyze the organizing that occurred in your case study, do not merely re-write the article. What were contributing factors to the success or failure of the organizing? Who were the people involved? How did they organize? What did their work do for the movement? What was the response of the public to the organizing? What repression did the organizers face? What did they do about it?

  For your article to be appropriate, there must be a clear outcome to the campaign. How else can you analyze whether the skill was effectively utilized? If you can find the original goals set forth that will help inform your analysis.

  Use class readings to inform your analysis of this case!!! How do these readings and theories apply to your case study. In finding appropriate class readings, a good start is looking at the reading that coincided with that particular skills training (these will often be Midwest Academy or Marshall Ganz readings).

Examples include: the ALS ice-bucket challenge (fundraising); 1999 Seattle WTO protests (direct action); Obama 2008 campaign (recruitment); Occupy Wall Street (messaging); etc.
Some of you may find the article you used for your 5 minute in class presentation useful.

**Required Readings:**
1. The article case study.
2. Two readings from class that accompanied the particular skill training.
   Ex. The direct action training was accompanied by work by Martin Luther King Jr., Henry David Thoreau, Atack and Gelderloos.

**Rubric:**

25 points: depth of analysis, creativity and accuracy __/25
- Addresses the particular skill, with an identification of what qualifies as a successful application of the skill
- Brief summary of the case study
- Analysis of how the skill was used in the case study
- Clearly identify and explain whether this was a success or failure
- Implications for the movement as a whole, including public response
- Addresses the hardships, if any, faced by the organizers, and how they overcame it

10 points: sources and use of relevant readings __/10
- Correct in-text citation of all sources
- Use of, at minimum, 1 article (case study) and 2 class readings
- Inclusion of a Works Cited

6 points: clarity of expression (grammar, organization, clear writing style) __/6
- Paper does not contain spelling, grammatical errors
- Information is presented in an organized manner
- Paper is between 1,000-1,500 words
- All work is your own, no plagiarism
- Proofread!

Total: __/41
Appendix 3: Prompts for Assignments 1-4

Campaign Project Assignment: 125 Points

Throughout the course of the semester, students must engage with a campaign either on or off campus. You will be responsible for attending meetings and staying up to date on developments in the campaign. This class incorporates a lot of practical skills, and in order to maximize your learning it is important to practice these skills in a real setting. Each campaign will have 3-4 students working on it, you may work together and use each other as a resource to stay up to date on any campaign developments. However, all work submitted must be completed individually. The organizations you may choose from are:

- UVM Fossil Fuel Divestment Campaign (Student Climate Culture)
- VT Fracked Gas Pipeline (Rising Tide)
- VT State Divestment Campaign (350 VT)
- Vermont Students Towards Environmental Protection (VSTEP - campaign TBD)

*Other campaigns may be acceptable, please get pre-approval

Timeline of due dates (subject to change):

**Monday September 15:** Assignment 1: Find a Campaign

Attend a meeting of one of these organizations and become familiar with the campaign. Turn in a one page (minimum) write up of the meeting, including date/time/location. There will be five assignments throughout the semester asking you to work on behalf of this campaign (either creating fake or real scenarios), so it is important that you know enough about the purpose and goals of this campaign in order to accurately complete assignments. Talk to at least two people at the meeting and get some background on the campaign and why people are there.

**Monday September 29:** Assignment 2: Recruitment

Complete one hour of recruitment on behalf of the campaign you are working with. This can be petitioning, tabling, class raps, phone banking or some other form of recruitment necessary for the campaign. Talk to the leaders of the movement or speak up at a meeting in order to find where you will be most useful in advancing the campaign. Submit a copy of the signatures you acquire during the campaign, along with a 500 word write up of the experience, including the who/what/where/when/why of your recruitment. If you need assistance finding a campaign in need of recruitment speak with fellow classmates or the instructors.

**Monday October 6:** Assignment 3: Power Map

Construct a power map of the targets of the campaign you are working with. You may not be entirely familiar with the targets, but use the research methods discussed in class to create the power map. Can be hand drawn. Include a brief paragraph explaining the significance of the power map, and how that particular target strategically relates to the campaign.
**Monday October 13: Assignment 4: Letter to the Editor**

Write a 200 word letter to the editor of a relevant news outlet (Burlington Free Press, the Cynic, etc.) about a current topic relating to the campaign you are working with. This can be a semi-fictionalized LTE, but should be rooted in some truth about the issue and the work being done.

**Monday November 10: Assignment 5: Press Release**

Write a press release for a real or fictionalized event relating to the group and campaign you are working with.

**TBD: Assignment 6: Training for Trainers**

Prepare a brief, 5 minute training on any skill that you’d like to teach the class. Have fun!
Assignment #3 - 25 Points: Due Wednesday October 8, 2014

There are four separate sections to this assignment, you must complete each aspect of this.

1. Construct a power map of the targets of the campaign you are working with. You may not be entirely familiar with the targets, but use the research methods discussed in class to create the power map (talk to people familiar with the campaign to learn more about the target!). This part can be hand drawn.

   Fill out this Power Map: look up the specific names of people!! (i.e. instead of wife, write Susan)

   ![Power Map Diagram]

2. Translate your powermap to an axes of high/low influence (proximity to target) and with us/against us (level of sympathy to the cause) like below.
3. Include a brief paragraph explaining the significance of the power map, and how that particular target strategically relates to the campaign. *Typed.*

4. Respond to the following questions: *Typed, 1-3 sentences each.*

1. What are the interests of your constituency?

2. Who holds the resources needed address these interests?

3. What are the interests of the actors who hold these resources?

4. What resources does your constituency hold which the other actors require to address their interests?
Assignment #4 Media; 25 Points
Due: Wednesday November 12

In this assignment you will practice creating material for the media. Consider submitting these to actual publications! You will receive 5 points extra credit if your piece ends up being published. If published, you must upload the proof to the Extra Credit section on BlackBoard. Chose one of the following two options:

Options: Choose one!!!
1. Write both a Letter To the Editor and a Press Release pertaining to your campaign. Write about an event or current development. This should be a real thing that happened in your campaign, or a fictional event that you wrote about in your campaign plan. If you choose this option you must turn in an LTE and Press Release. The Letter To the Editor must be ~250 words responding to an article published in that periodical recently. This must be written to a real publisher (Burlington Free Press, The Cynic, Water Tower, etc.). Online publications must be cleared with both Francesca and Tyler, aim for a print source. Your Press Release must be no longer than one page but must adhere precisely to the criteria and format outlined below. The LTE and Press Release should be regarding a similar event.
2. Write an Op-Ed concerning your campaign issue. Op-Eds should have a word count of between 500 and 750 words. Adhere strictly to the attached format.

Rubric 1:
12 points: LTE
  5 points: content/accuracy
  5 points: creativity
  2 points: clarity
12 points: Press Release
  5 points: content/accuracy
  5 points: creativity
  2 points: clarity
1 pt: overall clarity

Rubric 2:
10 points content/accuracy
10 points creativity
5 points clarity
Appendix 4: Assignment 5 (Final Course Evaluation)

Assignment 5: 25 Points
Due: Tuesday December 9, by 4:30pm in the Bittersweet (ENVS 197 Mailbox)

ENVS 197: Course Reflection/Evaluation
This assignment is mandatory, you must complete each section. Make sure to put your 95 number as the only form of ID, on the assignment. Tyler and Francesca will not read these until after final grades are turned in. As long as every question is answered, you will receive full points. Please give 3-4 sentences on questions. We are operating under an honor code, and expect that each of you will take time to reflect on the course as a whole, including readings, papers, assignments, projects and class lectures, activities and discussions. Please use proper spelling/grammar, 1" margins, 12 point font, single space for formatting clarity, and write clearly. Excerpts of this assignment may be quoted or analyzed in our theses, but all responses will be anonymous. Please don’t hesitate to be critical, but we’d appreciate respect. Respond to each question, where appropriate, in 3-4 sentences, the entire assignment should be about 3-4 pages, there is no length maximum.

Workload
1. How many hours a week on average did you spend on this class?
   _____< 1 hr  _____ 1-2 hrs  _____3-5hrs  _____ 6-8hrs  _____>8hrs

3. What percentage of the readings did you complete?
   _____ 90-100%  _____ 70-90%  _____ 50-70%  _____25-50%  _____< 25%

4. How many hours did you spend?
   _____ per Paper  _____ per Assignment  _____ per Reading

5. How did the workload for this course compare to other 100-level courses you’ve taken?
Comments:

Readings and Reading Quizzes
6. Were the assigned readings useful to your learning? If so, how? If not, why?
   -List specific readings and explain (reference blackboard for assistance)

7. Did the readings aid in your comprehension and completion of class discussion, trainings, assignments and papers, etc.? Explain.

8. Do you feel the quiz grades adequately represented your completion of readings?
   Comments:

Assignments
9. Did in-class trainings help you to complete assignments? Explain.

10. Did coordinating with a real campaign work for you and help you learn? Explain.

11. Which assignments were the most/least effective in helping you learn? Explain.
   Comments:
Papers
12. Did class discussions help you to complete papers? (If so, which? Be specific)
13. Did the papers help you learn, and/or provide better comprehension of readings? If so/not, how?
Comments:

Midterm (Campaign Plan/Presentation)
14. How did you use skills from class to complete the campaign plan?
15. What did you learn from writing the campaign plan?
Comments:

In-Class
Discussions
16. How did the class dynamics work with your learning? (i.e. peer-to-peer relationships; peer-instructor relationships) Please describe.
17. What kind if class discussion helped you learn best? (i.e. breakout groups, partners, whole class discussions, free writes)

Trainings
18. Did the trainings equip you with useful skills? Explain (Be specific, which trainings)
19. Did guest lectures contribute to your learning in this course (Connor Gibson, Greenpeace & Anna and Will, Rising Tide)?
20. Did the combination of discussions and trainings throughout the semester provide you with a more well-rounded understanding of organizing for social and environmental justice?
Comments:

Co-Teaching:
21. Did co-teacher dynamics help you learn (i.e. when Tyler & Francesca shared class sessions)?
22. Did solo-teaching (i.e. last few weeks of the semester) help you learn?
23. Which was most effective? Explain.
Comments:

Tyler
24. Rate Tyler as an instructor.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   
   Circle all that applies:
25. Tyler helped me learn about: the history of environmental/social justice
   skills that I can use on a campaign
   understand the foundational theories of organizing

26. Tyler encouraged me to: contribute to class discussions
was available for help when needed
feel comfortable exploring my identity

Comments:

Francesca
27. Rate Francesca as an instructor.
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

   Circle all that apply:
28. Francesca helped me learn about: the history of environmental/social justice
    skills that I can use on a campaign
    understand the foundational theories of
    organizing

29. Francesca encouraged me to:
   contribute to class discussions
   was available for help when needed
   feel comfortable exploring my identity

Comments:

Overall
30. Will you continue to organize or practice activism when the semester is over?
31. Would you recommend this course, or another STS, to others?
32. Are you content with having taken this course?
33. How well did each instructor contribute to reaching the course objectives:
   A. Educate students on the history and fundamentals of successful and unsuccessful
      social movements
      T: 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
      Explain:

      F: 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
      Explain:

   B. Explore a range of educational techniques to enhance student learning
      T: 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
      Explain:

      F: 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
      Explain:

   C. Empower students with the skills of democracy and encourage the use of these skills
      on social/environmental justice campaigns
      T: 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
      Explain:
Grades

34. Do you feel the grading accurately reflected your work in the class? Explain.
35. Do you think you were graded on what was important to your learning? Explain.
36. Did the grading process impede the peer-to-peer dynamic inherent with students-teaching-students courses? Explain.
Appendix 5: Reading Quizzes 1-12

Reading Quiz #1 - 9/3/14

1. Name one of the community programs set up by the Black Panther Party. (1 point)

2. How did Natives in the Dennis Banks reading and members of the Black Panther Party in the Mumia Abu-Jamal reading handle police injustice in their community? (2 points)

3. According to bell hooks, how was the lack of a unified definition of the word “feminist” hurt the women’s movement? (2 points)

Reading Quiz #2 - 9/8/14

1. Name three issues that Magdoff & Bellamy-Foster believe environmental activists should prioritize as part of a short-term agenda:

2. Name two organizations and one piece of legislation that resulted from the rise of environmentalism in the United States:

Reading Quiz #3 - 9/24/14

1. What do SMART goals stand for?
   S
   M
   A
   R
   T

2. What does IPSUAPS stand for?
   I
   P
   S
   U
   A
   P
   S
3. In *The Purpose* what does Alinsky propose the Have-Not's take from the Haves?

**Reading Quiz #4 – 9/29/14**

1. “All great leaders, including Churchill, Gandhi, Lincoln, and Jefferson, always invoked ‘moral principles’ to cover naked self-interest in the clothing of ‘freedom’ ‘equality of mankind’ ‘a law higher than man-made law’ and so on… *All effective actions require the passport of morality*” (Alinsky, p. 43-44). Describe one of the examples Alinsky uses to claim a great leader used nonviolence purely for “pragmatic”, as opposed to “moral”, reasons. (Short Answer - *Be specific.*)

**Reading Quiz #5 – 10/6/14**

1. What messaging mechanism have conservatives successfully employed to win public debate?

2. Give one example of how Lakoff advises you respond to conservatives. Assuming you identify as “progressive” etc.

**Reading Quiz #6 – 10/8/14**

1. Fill in the blank: In Alinsky’s chapter on communication he advises that, as an organizer, not to go outside of your people’s __________________________.

**Reading Quiz #7 – 10/22/14**

1. Name two options for using the media:

2. What’s one tip for interacting with the media?
Reading Quiz #8 – 11/3/14

1. The Leadership Cycle outlined by Ganz consists of these three elements: __________________, ____________________, ____________________.

2. In Alinsky, what must an organizer gain from the members of a new community before they can begin to organize effectively?

Reading Quiz #9 – 11/5/14

1. What are three of the rules of power tactics?

2. Name one the examples of a tactic that Alinsky discusses

Reading Quiz #10 – 11/10/14

1. __________________ decision making is a creative and dynamic way of reaching agreement between all members of a group.

2. __________________ is a process to make meetings run more smoothly.

Reading Quiz #11 – 11/12/14

1. In your opinion, should the purpose of community organizing be to take power from the Haves and give it to the Have-nots? Draw on Alinsky and Stall & Stoecker and think about what role college activists play in on-campus organizing. How have you, if at all, been disadvantaged by, or experienced, activist privilege? (Childcare responsibilities, work interfering with actions, need for a paying job, thriving in the public sphere, etc.)

Reading Quiz #12 – 11/19/14

1. What on earth is a leverage point??

2. What is Meadows’ #1 leverage point?

3. Are there exceptions to the list of leverage points?
Appendix 6: Prompt for Campaign Plan Midterm

Campaign Planning Midterm
Due: 10/29/14 (PowerPoint for presentation due at 12pm via email!)
Campaign Plan: 40 points
Presentation: 10 points

There are three parts to the assignment, plus a five-minute powerpoint presentation in class on October 29th. You are to work on these alone. We want your creativity to come through in this project - do not consult the other students working on your campaign (unless to discuss lay of the land and research).

Much of this will involve a heavy amount of creativity. Don't get absurd (no, Mickey Mouse will not be delivering your campaign message), but as many of your campaigns won't adhere strictly to this plan, you may use your informed creativity to map out where you think the campaign should go and how. This is why it is important not to discuss this with the other students in your campaign group - each of you should focus on your individual campaign plan, and then you may pick up the best bits from each to apply them in real-time to your campaign.

Part 1: Midwest Academy Strategy Chart - 5 points
Part 2: Campaign Plan Layout - 25 points
Part 3: Calendar - 10 points

Part 1: Midwest Academy Strategy Chart
Please fill out (typed) answers to the questions on the Midwest Academy Strategy Chart. (This must remain in chart form - you can use a spreadsheet or word document to format this!)

Part 2: Campaign Plan Layout
Please answer the following sections in paragraph form satisfactorily. On occasion, it may be appropriate to use bullet points (with full sentences) to outline specific points. Use subheadings to clearly identify sections of the campaign plan.

1. Focus Issue
   - What is the problem and the solution? Who are the main actors?
     Who/What/Where/When etc. of the issue.

2. Background Research
   - Present the most concise and important research on your issue. Cite sources properly, this is the only section where you really need sources. Look at the broader issue in society, and the specific details relating to your campaign.
   - (i.e. for divestment: history of divestment globally (apartheid, etc.), and then more specifically where UVMs money is invested in fossil fuel companies)
3. Lay of the Land
   a. What is the Lay of the Land?
      i. political? economic? social?
      ii. strengths and weaknesses?
      iii. allies and opponents?
   b. What resources does your team have access to?
      i. volunteers? budget? time? etc.

4. SMART Goals
   - What are your goals? What’s your overarching vision?
     - Campaign Goals:
       - Long (How long will it take to accomplish your goal? ~6 months-3 years),
       - Medium (~6-9 months),
       - Short (~1-3 months)
     - Organizational Goals:
       - Long (1 year)
       - Medium (6 months),
       - Short (3 months)

5. Strategy
   a. What is your strategy? (litigation, grassroots pressure, media, etc.)
   b. Pick your primary and secondary targets. Why did you choose them?
   c. Powermap your primary target. - include power map just like for Assignment 3,
      update your power map to correct any inaccuracies. Again, this may be attached
      hand drawn.

6. Tactics
   a. Brainstorm creative tactics. Pick your top three tactics. Write at least one
      paragraph describing each tactic in detail and how it is strategic.
   b. Outline where your tactics fall in the 3 stages of your campaign.
      i. Creating Demand
      ii. Agitation
      iii. Taking Delivery

7. Campaign Communications
   a. Develop a campaign message. Include three one-sentence messages and a
      one-paragraph campaign story. How did you get to where you are now? Where
      are you going?
   b. What is your campaign slogan? (i.e. “We are the 99%”)
   c. Who are the best messengers of your message?

Part 3: Calendar
d. Create a calendar for Spring 2014 semester. This should be a calendar on a spreadsheet that includes realms and activities for each realm weekly.

e. Divide realms: Who would head up what realms on your team? What responsibilities would they have for the semester.

Calendar Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Realm/ Week</th>
<th>Point People</th>
<th>Sept. 1</th>
<th>Sept. 8</th>
<th>Sept. 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>Cleo/ Michelle</td>
<td>20 petition signatures</td>
<td>30 petition signatures</td>
<td>35 petition signatures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>Erica/ Kristine</td>
<td></td>
<td>LTE in Burlington Free Press</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Media</td>
<td>Carolyn/ Simon</td>
<td>2 memes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobbying</td>
<td>Rosie/ Tori</td>
<td>Meeting with Administrators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Action</td>
<td>Noelle/ Michael</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50 Letters to Decision maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Development</td>
<td>Honorine/ Jenny</td>
<td>Petitioning training</td>
<td>Petitioning Training for trainers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In-class Presentation
On **Wednesday, October 29** each student will present their campaign plan to the class in powerpoint format. Each presentation **cannot exceed 5 minutes in length**. We will cut you off and you will be graded on those five minutes. This is out of respect to your classmates as every student must present on the 29th. There will be no opportunity to make up a presentation. The order of presentations will be decided randomly the day of, therefore you must arrive promptly and be prepared.

**You must email the PowerPoint to us by 12pm 10/29!**

Your presentation should cover:
- Issue/Solution
- One nugget of important research
- SMART Goals
- Strategy/Strategies
- One message
- Slogan
- One tactic
- Briefly highlight your calendar

The presentation will be **peer-graded!** Everyone will have a score sheet on the day of, and will be responsible for assigning a grade to each presentation (so you must pay careful attention to each presentation!). Tyler and Francesca’s grades will be included among them, so that each presentation grade is an average of 14 grades.
Situation: Green Mountain Power, which is a subsidiary of Gaz Metro, has proposed siting a new coal plant in Winooski, VT (the first coal plant the company will operate). While Vermont is one of only two states in the country with no coal-fired power plant, with the decommissioning of Vermont Yankee, Gaz Metro has seen an opportunity to provide a larger percentage of the state’s electricity needs through imported coal. The coal plant will cost approximately $300 million, and will provide hundreds of jobs over the next 50 years. The proposed location is in one of the lowest-income neighborhoods of Winooski.

In order for the coal plant to be approved, the Winooski City Council must approve the permits for the location of the plant. The four-member City Council is elected to four year terms by community members, the next election is in 2016.

At 3:30pm on Monday, December 8, 2014, the City Council will hold a public comment hearing to gauge the public’s perspective on the siting of this new coal plant. Hundreds of community members who have yet to take a position on the matter will be attending the hearing. This is a pivotal time for proponents and opponents to clearly identify their main arguments and influence the general public and the city council.

City Council Members:
Ingrid Nelson: Ingrid is a local business owner and mother of four. She runs a bookshop in the Old North End, and is a graduate of the University of Vermont, where she was active in anti-apartheid activism in the 1980’s. Her children all attend a public elementary school, located four blocks from the proposed coal plant. She is two years into her first term as a city council member.

Jaclyn Devino: Jaclyn is a retired farmer, who worked on a cooperative farm at the Intervalle for many years. She has been a member of the city council for 15 years, and is expected to retire in 2016.
Francesca Hall: Francesca is a corporate lawyer based in Burlington, she lives in a very wealthy section of town far from the potential siting of the coal plant. Many of her clients work in the energy industry, however the city council deemed there is no conflict of interest in this case. She works closely with the Chamber of Commerce and aspires to see Winooski’s economy revitalized.

Tyler McFarland: Tyler owns and operates a brewery that gets its water from the Winooski River. He’s been on the City Council for 6 years.

Stakeholder Groups:
Winoooski Concerned Citizens Association (WCCA): This is a neighborhood organization, whose main interest is to ensure a safe and healthy community for residents, preserve the property values of homes in the area, and create a unified voice for the town’s residents.

Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce: Organization of local businesses who operate in the county. The Chamber of Commerce is committed to serving the 2,500 member businesses by growing the economy, and providing member-exclusive innovative programs and services.

OurFuture: Local student organization in Chittenden County, consisting of college students from UVM, St. Michael’s College, Burlington College, Community College of Vermont, and Champlain College who live and attend school in the county.

Local Media:
News Editor: Caroline DeCunzo
DeCunzo.Caroline@gmail.com
518-223-6615

Your Assignment: You have until 3:30pm to prepare for the public comment for the Public Service Board. WCCA and OurFuture are working together and will be graded together on their demonstration, public comment, press release, and interview. The Chamber of Commerce group will be graded separately on the same criteria. The demonstrations will occupy the same time (3:30-3:45). The Chamber of Commerce in a sense will be holding a counter demonstration. The City Council will allow one speaker in favor of the plant and one against speaking at 3:50pm. Your grade will be an accumulation of the reporter, peer, and “city council member” grades. Your personal grade will be the group’s grade divided by the peer grade.

You will be graded by the groups outlined above on the following:

/ 25 points Quality of your demonstration
Appendix 8: Francesca Hall STS Biography

Francesca Hall – STS Biography

I have been involved with organizing informally for the past four years, starting mostly with political campaigns and slowly moving towards campaigns relating to environmental and social justice. My two main areas of focus in organizing are fundraising and leadership development, the latter of which is just one of my motivations behind teaching this grassroots organizing course next fall. During my last three years at UVM, I have expanded my breadth of experience relating to teaching and facilitating. In the summer of 2012 I spent a month in Atenas, Costa Rica developing and teaching an English-language course for beginners ages 11-13. Not including two Teaching Assistant positions in high school (for AP European History), this was my first formal experience developing and teaching a course. Then during the fall of 2012, I worked as a Resident Advisor in the Living/Learning Center on campus. This included a three-week training program that emphasized the role of RA’s as community leaders and focused on the importance of diversity and inclusion, creating safe spaces, facilitation and conflict resolution, all of which will be extremely beneficial in teaching this course next fall. My experience being an RA strengthened my role as a facilitator, as I regularly held community meetings and met with residence in small groups and one-on-one to work through various conflicts.

The majority of my formal organizing skills are the result of the three-month Greenpeace semester that I participated in during the spring of 2013. This was essentially a study abroad program in Washington, D.C. during which I learned about the history of the environmental movement and social activism, bore witness to the detrimental effects of climate change first-hand, and learned the hard skills that lead to effective activism. All of the trainings that are included in our syllabus were covered in-depth during the semester, including strategic campaign planning, messaging, etc. During my time with Greenpeace I spent two weeks working in Raleigh, NC, in the community as well as on the NC State campus recruiting and organizing on their Duke Energy campaign. Along with the skills gained with Greenpeace, my background as a Political Science major (I’m pursuing a dual degree - POLS in Arts & Sciences and ENVS in Rubenstein) has allowed me to explore the theory behind civil disobedience, which we plan to incorporate alongside the skills-trainings in our course.

On campus and in Vermont, I have been involved with various forms of organizing, which qualify me to teach this course. In the fall of 2012, I ran the Burlington branch of the successful re-election campaign of VT Senator Philip Baruth. During this time I honed my skills messaging and working with local media, as well as canvassing and getting to know the Chittenden County community. This past fall I worked with Energy Action Coalition as one of two Vermont coordinators of Power Shift, a national youth environmental activist conference that took place in Pittsburgh, PA in October 2013. I was also the UVM Power Shift Coordinator, and oversaw the entire organizing effort to recruit students, raise funds, and organize transportation, food and housing for the 54 UVM students we took down for the conference. During this time I worked to train first and second year students so they could assist with the organizing effort, and have since worked with many of the students that went to the conference to help them get involved organizing on campus. Following Power Shift, I co-founded the
Vermont Student Climate Coalition with a student from Middlebury College. The VSCC is a network of Vermont students committed to fighting for sustainability and climate justice as a medium for intersectional social and economic progress. Through democratic student power, we are fostering a community that supports campaigns at both the institutional and statewide level and develops strong leaders to sustain long-term action for systemic change. I was awarded the 2013/2014 Ian Worley Award for my work founding this coalition, and I used these funds to hold the VSCC’s first retreat last month and am in the process of planning the first full-scale conference taking place at UVM April 26.

My experiences working as a facilitator in various capacities, along with my work as an organizer on-campus, in Vermont and nationally will be vital in aiding my teaching of this STS course next fall.
Appendix 9: Class by Class Reflections

Introduction to the Course and Organizing

August 25, 2014
Subject: Introduction to the course
Readings: None
Agenda:  
- First day quiz  
- Introductions  
- Francesca & Tyler Story of Self  
- Course Overview  
- Questions
Evaluative Measures: Intro Quiz (not for credit) – used to determine what foundational knowledge students had prior to the course.

We started the first class with an Albert Einstein quote; “Any fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius – and a lot of courage – to move in the opposite direction.” This served to set the tone for a semester of learning to organize against the status quo. We provided recycled manila folders, and had students make a nametag to put in front of them. While this was happening every one went around and said their name, pronoun, hometown, year and major, so that we could get a sense of who was in the classroom. I introduced the context for STS courses, and together Tyler and I introduced ourselves and our backgrounds through the presentation of our “Story of Self”. We then pulled up 350.org’s Story of Self guidelines and informed the class they would each prepare one to present to us at a class potluck the following week. I thought it was immensely important to recognize the inherent biases and privileges Tyler and I hold, that would influence the course material. We are both trained in organizing through large multi-national NGOs, we’re white and come from a privileged background of organizing that is not representative of all organizers.

There were some logistical difficulties with the first class, as there weren’t enough chairs for everyone in the room. Tyler and I spent 10 minutes before class running around trying to find any spare chairs to use. Otherwise, the first day went off pretty much as planned.

Student Reflection: None for the first day.

August 27, 2014
Subject: Introduction to Organizing
Reading:  
- “What is Organizing” by Marshall Ganz  
- Rules for Radicals, by Saul Alinsky, pp. 72-80
Agenda:  
- Group Norms  
- Introduce Campaign Project  
- What is Organizing?

We started class this day with acknowledgements for students who did particularly well on the introductory quiz the previous class. To set the foundation for the day of exploring the role of an organizer, we quoted one student who defined the role of an organizer on the quiz as
“to facilitate networking and communication between individuals and groups; empowering groups of people to meet one common goal”. The first ten minutes of class were dedicated to creating a set of group norms, a standard practice among organizers, which serves as a contract among the class regarding behavior in this particular space. The list of norms that the class came up with were: step up, step back; ouch, oops; intent vs. impact; don’t yuck each other’s yums; hand signals: sparkle fingers and snaps. These were all written on a piece of butcher-block paper so that we could post it in the room for every class (which only lasted for the first few weeks).

I facilitated the discussion on the semester long campaign project, which made up the Assignments and midterm. There were several questions regarding what types of campaigns students were expected to work with, and I answered their questions and flushed out how this project would unfold. Next, I facilitated a mini-lecture about the three types of organizers (my own categorization): Situational, Professional, and Need-Based. Immediately every student took out their note pads and began taking notes. Tyler then facilitated a group brainstorm about why we organize, and I led a discussion on the two readings for the day. Throughout the discussion there was a lot of interruption by various students, and it became clear that we would need to revisit the group norms.

Student Reflections:

Overall, students appreciated the creation of group norms, although one student (who consistently violated group norms throughout the semester) claimed “I’m not sure [the creation of group norms] was necessary because I feel that most students here are adults and behave accordingly”. Students also praised us making a safe space through creating group norms, and appreciated that as facilitators Tyler and I encouraged all students to speak up and have their voices heard. There were some significant critiques, however, as one student felt that we made initial assumptions about the ideological/political leanings of the group and another student who felt we needed to incorporate more opposing ideas. One student asked that we make more time for slower processors to answer questions and participate in the discussion.

History of Social Movements

September 1, 2014
Class cancelled for Labor Day.

September 3, 2014
Subject: Social Activism: Women’s Rights and Civil Rights
Readings:  
- “We AIM Not to Please” in Ojibwa Warrior by Dennis Banks (2012)
- “Feminism” in Feminist Theory by bell hooks (1984)

Agenda:
- Discussion on Social Activism (Lecture, Group Breakout, Discussion)
- Introduction of Campaign/Movement/Organization presentations
Evaluative Measures: Reading Quiz

We began class by having everyone share their “rose, thorn and bud” and by revisiting the group norms we set on the first day, as I had already noticed students speaking out of turn and interrupting one another. We then gave the first reading pop quiz, and reminded students that that night we were having a class dinner at my house directly following class. Tyler gave a short lecture on the interconnectedness of movements and the social, economic and ecological implications of several movements. This began the dialogue on environmental justice and systems of oppression that continued throughout the course. I then facilitated my first discussion activity, in which students were divided into four groups and each were given one of the four readings for that day to discuss and asked to produce two discussion questions, which they believed would help the class dive deeper into that text. After the time for the breakout groups ended, each group wrote the discussion questions they crafted on the board, and we read each allowed. By class vote, we chose which two we would focus on for the remainder of the class, the two questions were: 1) based on Angela Davis’ introduction of the concept of commercialized oppression, how does this present itself in our society today? 2) Drawing on bell hooks, how do race and class affect modern feminism? We didn’t have much time to delve into both questions, so we planned to continue this during the next class.

Student Reflections:

The student’s evaluations for this class were overwhelmingly positive. Multiple students praised the breakout groups, and the discussion as a whole, thanking us for democratically choosing the discussion questions. One student remarked that they were “happy we’re using the diverse knowledge of classmates as a resource” by allowing anyone who has experience with a given topic to share their insights. Many students praised the readings, and asked for more along that vein. The largest critique was that we did not have enough time to discuss all of the readings, and more time would be appreciated.

After this class on September 3, all students came to my house for a Story of Self share and dinner provided by Tyler and Myself. This was a fantastic opportunity to hear about everyone’s backgrounds and discover what led them to UVM and to taking this course. It was a laid back conversation, everyone went around in a circle while sitting on the grass outside. Students were incredibly successful and we learned many ways in which our lives connected before entering this classroom. Students discussed taking this class for a broad range of reasons, from experiencing oppression themselves and wanting to learn the skills to combat systemic oppression, to having years of experience organizing but questioning why we act nonviolently and wanting to reevaluate their own stance on issues.

September 8, 2014
Subject: Environmental Activism
Readings:  - “The Planetary Ecological Crisis” and “An Ecological Revolution is Not Just Possible – It’s Essential” in What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know about Capitalism by Fred Magdoff and Jeremy Bellamy Foster (2011)
Evaluative Measures: Reading Quiz

This class was started with an introduction to the various groups on campus that work on environmental issues and social justice campaigns. Tyler wrote on the board the day, time and location of each club’s meetings so that students could begin to work on their semester long campaign project. We also had some housekeeping to attend to, as students had been complaining about the pop quizzes, thinking that they were unfair and punitive. We asked everyone to include on that day’s reflection what method would be best to make sure that everyone completed the readings in time for class.

Before diving back into the discussion on social justice movements, I introduced the concept of intersectionality to the class, which had been touched on last class but not flushed out. I showed a video of Staceyann Chin, Chinese-Jamaican spoken-word poet and LGBT activist, which beautifully describes intersectional oppression. This led to a discussion with two leading questions: 1) Why do we, as privileged American “activists” (in the media/education/etc.) often separate these movements and not recognize the interconnectedness of oppression? (Facilitated by Tyler) 2) How does systemic, commercialized oppression affect the environmental movement? (Facilitated by me). Following a lively discussion, I led a mini-lecture on the different types and roles of organizations (i.e. research, lobbying, education, litigation, government, etc.) and asked students to provide examples for each based on that class’s reading. I then transitioned into facilitating a discussion on our individual roles within the call for revolution that Magdoff and Bellamy-Foster write about.

Throughout the class some students were texting on their phones and not paying attention to the course, there was also again a problem with certain students speaking out of turn.

Student Reflections:
Overall the student’s viewed this class positively, with many praising the video and introducing visuals into the course. Many were appreciative of us opening the discussion regarding quiz format to the class, and every student asked for an open note quiz, with most suggesting a Blackboard quiz. Other praises for the class surrounded the open discussion style, and incorporating the readings into the lecture and discussion. One student critiqued our straying off topic, and two students asked that we have small group discussions instead of the large class ones. One student asked for shorter readings overall, but praised the content.
- Case Studies: Warren County, NC; Alberta, Canada; Camden, NJ; Houston, TX

This was, in my opinion, one of the most important and hardest classes of the entire semester. Environmental justice in the U.S. is my personal field of study, and determining which case studies were the most significant to share was a difficult task. In the end, Tyler and I determined that using videos and blogs to relay the information of the case studies was more appropriate, as we did not feel comfortable sharing other’s stories when social media has created a platform for individuals who live in environmental justice communities to share their own. As this is my area of work outside of school, I facilitated most of this class, although Tyler also has experience studying EJ communities, particularly with native groups, and contributed case studies.

The class started with some housekeeping including the decision Tyler and I made to conduct in-class open-note pop quizzes, and a reminder of upcoming assignments. After that, I facilitated an activity surrounding the definition of environmental racism and environmental justice. Tyler and I then switched off presenting various case studies, each for about 15 minutes. I introduced the class to EJ View, a resource through the EPA that allows you to track a communities demographics based on census data in relation to toxic waste facilities, coal plants, oil refineries, hydroelectric dams, etc. After each video, graph and fact presented to the class about the oppression of native peoples, role of capitalism in the exploitation of land, labor and communities, we provided a space to debrief the material. We recognized that this is heavy material, and I was appointed to make sure students felt the classroom was a safe space to feel uncomfortable and question their own identities within this.

Student Reflection:
Most students were on the exact same page with their response to this class. Nearly everyone appreciated the videos and visuals for putting a face to the issues discussed, and they liked the brief discussions about the case studies. Multiple students were also fascinated by EJ View and appreciated learning about that resource. However, nearly everyone wished there was more space for discussion and fewer videos overall, and multiple students noted that there was a lack of chronology to our presentation. A few noted that the material is depressing, but that it was supposed to be. Overall, this class got mixed results but the content challenged everyone to think more deeply about the course material and their own lives.

September 15, 2014
Subject: Anti-Oppression Training
Reading: - “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” By Peggy McIntosh (1988)

Agenda:
- Housekeeping
- Defining Terms
- Isms Exist
- Jay Smooth Video
- Free Write, partner share
- Reading Discussion re: White Privilege
Evaluative Measures: Collect Assignment 1; Assign Paper 1 (Due September 22)

As soon as I agreed to teach this class, I knew we would have to incorporate an Anti-Oppression training early into the semester. Originally Tyler and I planned to bring in an outside, more experienced, facilitator for this training. In the end, however, we determined that the content would be of more value coming from us, and that this could help to solidify the classroom community we sought. Before the class we spoke with nearly a dozen friends, colleagues and mentors about what material to focus on and what format to use. We chose to wait a few weeks into the semester so that a community could begin to form, and students would know each other well enough to feel safe during the conversations and themes presented.

After collecting Assignment 1 and assigning Paper 1, I began class with a Left Hand/Right hand activity in which I asked one right handed student to come up, and asked four questions: 1) when was the first time you realized you were right handed? 2) How many times a week are you reminded that you’re right handed? 3) How do people remind you that you’re right handed? 4) Can you easily find accommodations in the classroom? I think asked a left handed person in the class to come up and asked the same questions regarding left-handedness. This pointed to the stark differences that those with underrepresented identities experiences in our society. It was meant as less triggering approach to highlighting difference than focusing on one’s gender or race, since handedness rarely leads to legitimate oppression.

Through a PowerPoint, Tyler introduced the definition of terms we used throughout this training. I then facilitated “isms exist” in which I introduced the concept that Power + Privilege = Oppression, and that reverse isms (sexism, racism, etc.) do not exist. There was push back from many students claiming to have experienced reverse racism or sexism, but after a carefully facilitated conversation in which I genuinely encouraged students to ask any questions they may have and not be embarrassed or afraid to speak up, we flushed out these concepts. The Jay Smooth video we presented next, serves as a useful tool when confronting people who say racist things, and led to a great discussion on the need for individuals to confront oppressive acts, if possible, when they witness any. Following the presentations, discussion and video, we read a quote relaying anti-oppression to a moving walkway, in which you are complicit until you turn around and actively walk against the moving walkway. We then had students spend 5 minutes describing a specific oppressive moment in their life, one that they felt comfortable sharing with a partner, in which they were either a bystander, friend of victim or oppressor. We then had students break up into pairs of two, and discuss what they could have done differently in that situation. With time at the end, we provided a space for someone to share with the group as a whole. The one student who shared discussed in depth an experience feeling oppressed as a Jewish woman in an orthodox quarter of Israel.

Following the AO training one student in the class, with whom I’d had a history of tension and misunderstanding before the class started, came up to me and told me “before the class I thought you were just another rich oblivious feminist, but now I realize that you’re a real ally. Thank you.” This was a very humbling moment for me and I am so grateful that the work I put into creating an inclusive community in the classroom was felt and appreciated by students.

Student Reflections:

Students overall expressed a great appreciation for this class, and many noted that this was the first time being exposed to anti-oppression and the isms. As far as methods, many students said that the pair break out and free write made their time for reflection on material and
sharing much easier with such sensitive material. Hearing from other students helped individuals understand and relate more, as did the hand activity. Many appreciated that the video gave solutions and actionable items, so that people could understand how to approach this subject with others. The PowerPoint received mixed feedback, several students needed it to understand the key concepts and definitions, while others found it exhausting. Nearly everyone wished there was more time to share and discuss with each other, and one student wished there was a way to “calm down the offended white people”.

Skills Trainings

September 17, 2014
Subject: Goals, Strategy, Tactics
Agenda: - Housekeeping
   - What is a campaign?
   - Vision, Goals, Strategy, Tactics

Class started with hanging back Assignment 1, and discussing how everyone did; then I passed out a copy of the U.S. Constitution for every member of the class and offered reading it and writing about something new they learned as an extra credit opportunity. I then facilitated a discussion about what constitutes a campaign, using many visuals distinguishing between a movement, organization and campaign, and a graph showing the different stages of a campaign. The class offered several real world examples of campaigns, including those that they were working on. Tyler then facilitated a mini-lecture on the difference between vision, goals, strategies and tactics. We passed out several worksheets to students that form the foundation of many campaign organizing, and did an activity in which students had to practice differentiating between each. We then spent the last 10 minutes of class time work shopping, where students broke up into groups based on their campaign and had to determine what the vision, goal, strategy and tactic was for that specific campaign.

Student Reflections:
The majority of evaluations were very positive, all but one student appreciated the visuals on the board and handouts as an aid to their learning and note taking. Several students also noted that the workshop time dedicated to each student’s individual campaign was useful and helped contextualize the learning. Per usual, a few students requested that there was more time for discussions, some noted that they wanted more visuals/examples while one student remarked that the visuals were too distracting. There was also a request to revisit the group norms, as some students had been consistently violating step up, step back.

September 22, 2014
Subject: Intro to Recruitment
Reading: - “The Purpose” in Rules for Radicals by Saul Alinsky
   - “Recruiting” in Organizing for Social Change by Midwest Academy
The weekend prior to this class was the People’s Climate March in New York City, in which an estimated 400,000 people from all over the country converged in the largest climate march in history to demand action. More than half our class attended, and Tyler and I had postponed the due date of the first paper to the following class period as nearly every student said they would not be able to complete it in time. We spent the first 15 minutes of class debriefing PCM, and hearing the reflections of those that attended. This was a great segue into recruitment, as they had all been recruited in some way to attend PCM. Tyler and I put three butcher block papers around the room, each with a question: 1) Why do people join groups? 2) Why do people stay in groups? 3) Why do people leave groups? We divided the class into three groups, and assigned each group one of those questions and provided 10 minutes for students to brainstorm and write down their conclusions. Each group then presented their list in addition to one member’s specific example with either joining/staying/leaving a group.

We then began an activity that was to be continued the following class in which students learned IPSUAPS, and began to write a sample petition rap for their specific campaign. The assignment due a few weeks after this required students to gather signatures for their campaign using the rap developed in class. There was not much time to finish writing in this class, so we continued in the next session.

Student Reflections:

Students very much enjoyed the small group breakouts, and thought that helped them learn, as did giving time to write pitches and relate to specific campaigns. Most people wanted more time for writing their pitch, which we gave the following class. Students also expressed an interest in seeing/hearing an example of a pitch.

September 24, 2014
Subject: Recruitment Continued
Reading: (Technically for Paper 1, following the Anti-Oppression Workshop)
- Cultural Identity and Diaspora by Stuart Hall (1989)
- Ain’t I a Woman: Revisiting Intersectionality by Brah/Phoenix (2004)
- Constructing Race, Creating White Privilege by Pem Davidson Buck (2001)
The first paper was due this class, after having been postponed to accommodate students attending PCM, the topic was on intersectionality following the Anti-Oppression and Environmental Justice classes. We did not have much time to debrief them, but Tyler and I realized we would have to dedicate more time to discussing the readings for the essay another time.

Continuing the recruitment lesson, we gave students 15 minutes to peer edit each other’s scripts in pairs using IPSUAPS for feedback. Tyler created a recruitment how-to packet from his notes over years of attending and leading recruitment trainings, and passed them out to students and we went over all the pointers as a group. We then took the class outside for half an hour to practice petitioning on the CBW green. Students broke up in pairs and practiced walking by and giving a pitch as if their partner was a stranger. After a few tries we encouraged students to practice on actual passerby, although only a few felt comfortable doing so.

Student Reflection:

The reflections for this class were overwhelmingly positive; every single student listed the hands-on practice outside as the most useful and best part of the class. The only negative feedback stated that we should have spent less time on the how-to packet, and that it did not need to be printed out and could have been made available online.

September 29, 2014
Subject: Targeting/Power Mapping
- “Of Means and Ends” in Rules for Radicals by Saul Alinsky, p. 24-47

Agenda: - Petitioning Recap
- Discussion
- Power Map

Evaluative Measures: Reading Quiz; Assignment 2 due

After housekeeping, including collecting assignment 2 and assigning assignment 3, we spend a few minutes recapping student’s petitioning experiences. I then led a 30 minute discussion on who holds power, drawing on the readings for that day. Next I passed out a power mapping handout, and discussed the importance of power mapping, the historical significance, and drew on the readings for that day. Tyler started the specific training on how to craft a power map, and I completed it with the two types of physical maps/graphs you create when power mapping. Much of this was training them to complete assignment 3, in which they had to power map the target of their campaign. Students were having some trouble visualizing the actualization of a power map, so I took 5 minutes and power mapped myself, pretending the ‘campaign’ was students trying to pressure me to give them an A in the course.

Student Reflections:
The students rated this class very highly, with most students appreciating my spur of the moment example of power mapping myself. The visuals were once again highly praised; while again several students wished there had been more time and less reading.

The power map of myself I created to help my students better understand the assignment.

October 1, 2014
Subject: Opposition Research
Readings: - The Debunking Handbook by John Cook (2011)
- Several videos
- “Koch Brothers Produce Counterfeit Climate Report to Deceive Congress” in Greenpeace Blogs by Connor Gibson (2012)

On my 21st birthday, we invited Connor Gibson, UVM’10, former STS instructor and current Greenpeace investigative researcher to give a guest lecture on opposition research. Connor’s presentation started with a background of his work, as well as what researching is and means in the context of a large NGO. Most of his presentation consisted of examples of campaigns he has worked on, research he has done and truths he has uncovered. There were several people who attended this class who were not our students, as Connor has quite a
following among activists on campus. When I worked with Greenpeace I actually participated in a research training by Connor, so this was not new information for me, however it was great to be a participant in our classroom instead of facilitating the activities.

Student Reflections: None were collected for this class.

October 6, 2014
Subject: Introduction to Messaging
Reading: Lakoff Manifesto by George Lakoff

Agenda:
- Citation Workshop
- Lakoff Discussion
- Kurt Vonnegut: types of stories
- Battle of Story
- How-To

Evalutative Measures: Reading Quiz

After having graded student’s papers and assignments, it was clear that many of our students struggled significantly with proper citations, which was impacting their grades but also their ability to adequately convey information in their writing. In order to address this, I led a 10 minute citation workshop with the class, covering mostly in-text citations in APA format, and the rules regarding when to cite, when to use block quotes, etc. Tyler then facilitated a synopsis of the readings for that day, and I tried to introduce a Kurt Vonnegut video but never made it to showing the video due to disruptive and blatantly rude students.

I was feeling sick this day, and did not have enough energy to conduct the majority of the lesson plan as I was set to do, since I do a lot of research around political messaging. I jumped in with examples of slogans such as “we are the 99%”, and we got slightly off topic with me introducing John Stewart’s appearance on Crossfire as a good example of a counter narrative. Tyler took point for the remainder and tried to discuss the how-to’s of effective messaging and do’s and don’ts; but student derailed this lesson entirely off course.

Throughout the class many students had residual questions on power maps, so we deviated from plan and spent about 10 minutes going over examples of power maps to help students out. One student in particular was being immensely rude to me regarding her lack of comprehension of the power mapping assignment, which made navigating the conversation particularly difficult. In general this was a very difficult class to facilitate as I was sick and Tyler is often unable to control the class when they get rowdy and off topic. This class felt very defeating, as though no one respected me and did not want to do the upcoming assignment.

Student Evaluations:

One student said quite straightforwardly, “I didn’t learn anything from this lesson,” which pretty much sums up how this class went. Some were very grateful for the time we spent revisiting power maps, others thought it was unnecessary and repetitive. Some students were grateful for the citation workshop; others (while admitting they never cite correctly) complained that it was unnecessary. A few students noted that the one student who was being very rude to me made them uncomfortable as well, and complained that we got way off track in this class.
Overall the class was very divided on this lesson, and Tyler and I were pretty disappointed with how the lesson went.

**October 8, 2014**
Subject: Messaging continued
Reading: “Communication” in *Rules for Radicals* by Saul Alinsky

**Agenda:**
- Emotions from Francesca
- Reading Discussion
- Vonnegut Video
- How to
- Spectrum of Allies

Evaluate Measure: Reading Quiz

As last class got entirely out of control, the intention was for this class to be reeled in a bit more with stricter control of the content and focus on the importance of messaging. After meeting with our advisors regarding certain students acting disrespectfully in the classroom, I was advised to have an “emotional moment” with the class and remind them that this is a learning experience for Tyler and me as well as for the students. The merit of this advice was very gendered, and Tyler and I felt uncomfortable with the prospect, but I gave it a chance and had a heart to heart with my students about the need for respect and patience. Following that we dove into content and had students divide into groups of 3 and discuss examples of good communication they have seen in organizing. After a report back and larger group discussion on Lakoff from last week, I introduced and showed a 5-minute Kurt Vonnegut video in which the author describes and graphs the three paths nearly every story takes. We then talked through the key points of writing an LTE and Op-Ed, and introduced the next assignment for students, utilizing the board to draw out key concepts. The quiz for this day was just one fill in the blank, designed to be immensely easy to any student that actually did the reading.

**Student Reflections:**
Most students viewed this class positively and commented on us maintaining control of the agenda and staying on topic. Multiple students praised the balance of presenting videos, discussions and writing on the board. Due to our determination to stay on topic, some students felt that we stifled the flow of the conversation by not allowing it to venture off into tangents as usually happens. Per usual, many students wished there was more time for discussion. The best piece of advice came from one student who said, “a strong story from our activist peers would have added a lot of clarification”. The inclusion of storytelling fell largely short throughout the semester and was something we hoped to include more of.

*Theoretical Implications of Organizing*

**October 13, 2015**
Subject: Non-Violent Direct Action Training

*Facilitated by Will Bennington and Anna Shireman-Grabowski from Rising Tide Vermont*
The NVDA training was one that Tyler and I had been planning for many months, and incorporated into our budget and syllabus as a 3 hour extended class during which our students could learn some of the basics of why and how to conduct civil disobedience. Tyler and I participated in all the activities as students, not facilitators or spectators. After introductions and agenda setting and a great activity where we all recited an uplifting organizing chant, Will and Anna spent the first hour introducing the history of NVDA, and the different types and purposes. The first hour became almost propaganda like history of Rising Tide’s actions, and then we moved into learning specific strategies and roleplaying. One section that had the most engagement from the class was called “know your rights” in which we learned about how police can legally interact with you and what rights we have to resist detainment and questioning.

The first activity turned the room into a grid with one axis being strategic/non strategic and effective/ineffective. They’d then present a ‘hypothetical’ scenario (all real events) and describe the kinds of NVDA employed, and the group had to go to the spot on the grid which most aligned with how strategic/effective they found that action. After each story we’d discuss why people had distributed the way they did. This is where me participating as a student and not as a facilitator became slightly problematic, as many students would look to see where Tyler and I had placed ourselves and adjust their original placement accordingly. Tyler and I by no means are experts on the strategy and effectiveness of NVDA, so for the last few rounds we sat out and observed. Another activity they did was having everyone break up into pairs, and form two long lines going across the room facing each other. We then each took time yelling as loud as we could at our partner with them attempting not to have a reaction. I partnered with Tyler and there was definitely an emotional release in the room after we all completed the activity.

The final activity was a role play in which we were broken up into groups, and given a scenario in which we’re shutting down an office building and half the group are the activists, a few students are workers in the office who need to get in or they lose a day’s pay, two students were the media and three were cops. This was silly and fun, but not necessarily entirely educational or productive.

Student Reflections:

We asked students to complete a long write up of this class, and then spent the beginning of the next class debriefing the training. Overall students enjoyed the training and got a lot out of it, although nearly everyone said it was too long and that the section on the history of Rising Tide was not necessary and went longer than needed. Most students highly praised the “know your rights” information, and were surprised at how it felt to practice yelling at someone and being yelled at. Students also appreciated the intentionality of the facilitation, asking consent before performing any activity or role-play and setting norms for how the training would proceed. Several students claimed they didn’t learn from the role-playing, and found it childish. Some students definitely felt uncomfortable with how radical Anna and particularly Will are, but understood that this is common among organizers and felt that they were great facilitators for this activity.
Students practicing a soft blockade during the NVDA training facilitated by Will Bennington (Right) and Anna Shireman-Grabowski (not pictured)

October 15, 2014
Subject: NVDA/Violence Discussion
Reading:   - “Of Means and Ends” in Rules for Radicals, p. 24-47
- “The theory and practice of nonviolent political action” in Nonviolence in Political Theory by Ian Atack (2012)
- “Nonviolence is Ineffective” in How Nonviolence Protects the State by Peter Gelderloos (2007)

Agenda:   - Debrief NVDA Training
- Violence
- Non-Violence
The weather was extraordinarily beautiful and warm, so I decided to have class outside on the CBW green, and brought out butcher-block paper so I could write down key points from the discussion. Originally I had conceived of our post NVDA class as a discussion on the merits of violence, both in war and organizing, by bringing in Colonel Tim Knoth, who runs ROTC at UVM. Scheduling did not quite work out, so instead I facilitated a discussion that was based around discussions I’d had with Tim in the past.

The NVDA debrief went well, we had everyone break up in groups of two and discuss and take notes on what they learned, how they learned best, what they would have changed, and what they wanted to learn more about. We then went around and had one person from each group share. The true bulk of this class was a discussion I facilitated on Violence. It began with a go-around and having each person say the first word that comes to mind when they hear the word “violence”, I wrote the responses on the butcher block. Examples included “white people”, “men”, “war”, “America”, “pain”.

The questions I used to facilitate the fluid conversation that followed included: does violence only exist between humans? Does it count if violence is against animals/terrorists? is there such a thing as acceptable violence? What constitutes acceptable vs. unacceptable? When do the ends justify the means? Who/what are casualties? After a solid 45 minutes on this, I transitioned to a discussion on non-violence and explored whether nonviolence is a privileged concept, who has access to violence/nonviolence, who is respected in their use of either, and can you truly ever practice truly moral (non pragmatic) nonviolence. This was one of my favorite classes of the semester to facilitate and because of group involvement.

Student Reflections:
From a combination of written reflections at the end of class, the final assessment at the end of the semester, and conversations with multiple students during and after the course this has been listed among the top classes of the entire semester. Nearly every student admitted that they were challenged to think beyond their preconceived notions of violence and analyze why they hold those beliefs. Multiple students appreciated the new ideas that were brought forth, the fluidity of the conversation and the overall though provoking discussion accompanied by thought provoking reading. The high reviews for this class might also be attributed to the wonderful weather and the outdoor class.

October 20, 2014
Subject: Writing a Campaign Plan
Reading: None
Agenda: - Campaign Plan Assignment Overview

Evaluative Measures: - Paper 2 due

This class was pretty laid back, as there had been a lot in the last few classes and we were assigning another large, involved assignment: the midterm. After presentations from students I walked the class through every component of the campaign plan and took questions. Certain aspects included re-explaining how to do certain things, again power mapping came up as a question, but overall the class was seamless.

Student Reflections: None for this class.
October 22, 2014
Subject: Intro to Media
Reading: - “Using the Media” in Organizing for Social Change by Midwest Academy

Agenda:
- Why Media?
- Principles of Media
- What is a hook?
- LTE’s

Evaluative Measures: Reading Quiz

This class was almost entirely lecture format, with Tyler and I running through all the principles of media work, and the important points to keep in mind when working with the media. We started class with a presentation by one student on the movement to ban male circumcision, which led to a wildly interesting discussion that had absolutely nothing to do with course content. It was too enthralling to all students, however, for Tyler and I to deviate so we allowed the discussion to go on slightly longer than other discussions around student presentations did. We then assigned the next assignment, which was to write a letter to the editor so Tyler walked through how to write an LTE, and provided an example that we analyzed as a class. Tyler took point on most of this class as he developed a lot of the how-to’s on media work. There happened to be a copy of the Cynic in class, and I opened it and we read examples of LTE’s and Op-Eds, which provided further examples.

Student Reflections:
Per usual, students wanted more time for discussion, which in this particular case was not class related discussion. Students really appreciated the real example of an LTE, and one student noted that they were pleased that Tyler talked more than usual.

November 3, 2014
Subject: Course Check-In
Readings: - “In the Beginning” in Rules for Radicals
- “Leadership” in People, Power and Change

Agenda:
- Free Write
- What have you learned activity
- Discussion

Evaluative measure: Reading Quiz, Free Write

This class served as a point to check in about how students were doing in the class, and to determine what subjects students were the most interested in learning about with the remaining class sessions. We asked students to complete a 10 minute free write responding to these questions: 1) what’s the most important thing you’ve learned (can be a skill, mindset, theory, history, etc.) 2) what learning styles helped you the most, which the least? 3) What would you like to learn in the last four weeks? We then had everyone break up into three groups of three
and spend 5 minutes sharing what they wrote. I then handed out index cards with a theme on it (soap opera, poem, song, interpretive dance, & silent film) and had each group collectively determine the most important thing they’ve learned thus far, and the method that contributed the most to their learning and spent 10 minutes adapting that to their theme. The results were absolutely wonderful, with elaborate soap operas depicting discussions around violence, and poems about oppression. This was fun, but also a great way for students to reflect on the course. This then opened into a great full class discussion around what has worked and what could be improved upon for the remainder of the course.

Student Reflections:
With the exception of one student, every student rated this class a 10/10 and appreciated the creativity involved and diversity of activities. It was fun and light hearted, but also helped us determine how to craft the remaining class sessions.

*After this point in the semester, all but the last class was solo-taught. I will not include a class-by-class analysis for November 5 (Media part 2), 10 (Decision making/Facilitation) and 19 (Systems Thinking) as they were independently crafted and taught by Tyler without my input or participation.

November 12, 2014
Subject: Models of Organizing Discussion
Reading: - “Community Organizing or Organizing Community” by Stall & Stoecker

Agenda: - Alinsky Discussion
- Stall & Stoecker Discussion

Evaluative Measures: Reading Quiz, Assignment 4 Due, Assign Paper 3

This class was immensely important to the foundational concepts of the course. After months of reading Alinsky’s model of organizing, I presented the class with a feminist perspective on community organizing that is a direct challenge and response to Alinsky’s. The model was particularly troubling for certain students who hold a very white-centered neoliberal perspective on feminism, and were put to task for recognizing intersectionality within female oriented organizing. This class had the result of forcing the majority female class to reflect on their identity and the privileges that afford them great flexibility in their organizing style. I had the class break up in two groups, one focused on discussing Alinsky’s model of organizing, the other focused on Stall & Stoeckers, after 20 minutes I had the groups switch, and we came back together after another 20 minutes and discussed the acquisition of power. I personally loved this discussion and was pleased with the level of critical thought students exhibited, and the clear development that had occurred throughout the semester. The reading quiz for this class was an opinion based free write, which served for me to evaluate that they read, while also hearing how they interacting with this very dense and nuanced text.

Student Reflections:
This class received nearly across the board amazing reviews, with one student reflecting, “this was one of my favorite classes,” another declaring this “the best class all year” and
another claiming this conversation was one that “will stay with me for my life”. There were, however, three students with very legitimate critiques, with one claiming that they “felt discouraged and like what I had to say wasn’t valuable,” another saying they “felt uncomfortable to share my opinion [and] wish people thought more of step up – step back,” the overall class dynamic was summed up by yet another student quite well who claimed it was a “very opinionated day”. This topic was meant to be divisive and challenging, which is why it was placed deep into the semester and given ample time (a full class session and a paper) to debrief and process it.

November 17, 2014
Subject: Fundraising
Reading: none
Agenda: - Power Shift Debrief
- ALS Video
- Reasons to Fundraise
- How-To
- Gender and Money
- Workshop

The day before this class, November 16, the organization that I founded and run, the Vermont Student Climate Coalition, hosted a statewide conference called Vermont Power Shift in Putney, VT that focused on organizing for justice. Half the class attended for extra credit, and we spent the first few minutes debriefing the conference. I had also sustained a very severe back injury that weekend that left me highly medicated and nearly immobile, so I held class in my living room because I could not walk. This led to a very relaxed class session, on an issue that everyone admitted they did not find exciting, but knew they needed to know. I am the go-to fundraising trainer in Vermont, and have led this workshop dozens of times so I was able to facilitate well even while immobile and medicated.

I started by showing a video of the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, which was a social media phenomenon a few months prior and which raised over $100 million for the ALS foundation in a matter of months. I then led a conversation on why fundraising is important, followed by a how-to presentation, with step-by-step guide to grant writing, asking for donations and self-fundraising. I then led a discussion on the gendered implications of fundraising which students were highly participatory in. The final 10 minutes were dedicated to works hoping as a group around student’s specific fundraising ventures, and we helped brainstorm resources for activities ranging from fundraising for personal travel, to raising money for the Hillel Student Board.

Student Reflection:
One student very accurately described the method of teaching as “rant style teaching” in an endearing way, reflecting the state I was in. Overall the reviews were very positive and many students expressed that this was the first time they viewed fundraising as a means to achieving great things. One student reflected “this was super helpful for me – made my dreams/projects seem possible” and multiple students appreciated the time to workshop and work through their individual projects.
December 1, 2015
Subject: Avoiding Burn-Out
Readings: None
Agenda:  
- Brainstorm  
- Sustainable lifestyle  
- Workshop

This class had been planned since the very beginning, and was always intended to be one of the final classes of the semester, as that is when students would be most likely to appreciate a class dedicated to working through burn out. I began class with setting the intentionality of this being a safe space for students to speak openly without judgment and find individualized solutions that fit their lives. I facilitated a group brainstorm (with writing on the board) about what burn out looks like in their lives, what leads to it and how they work through it. I passed out a sheet of butcher block paper and colored markers for each student and introduced a “what makes me happy” activity in which students were tasked with creatively making a poster listing the things that make them happy, to be displayed in their rooms as a reminder to practice self care. I challenged every one to set goals for self care in their lives, such as spend an hour a day reading for pleasure, or getting a full night sleep every night. While we were spread out making and decorating the charts, I carried on a conversation about the sustainability of the activist lifestyle. This led to a conversation around who wants to organize after college, and how it is very difficult to separate your work from your personal life when your work is so connected to justice.

This class was very therapeutic for me, and I let down many of the barriers that often divided students/teachers in the classroom. I emphasized destigmatizing self-care, and brought awareness to resources on campus such as CAPS, and talked about my own relationship with self-care. This was a very emotionally raw moment for me, and the affectionate and warm response from students was representative of the great classroom community that Tyler and I fostered over the semester.

Student Reflections:
Students were very appreciative of this class, with one student saying “I needed this today, thank you”. There was no perfect way to discuss self-care and burn out, but students appreciated an activity that was tailored to individual needs within a group setting.

December 3, 2015
Subject: Where do we go from here?
Reading: - “The Activism Industry” in The American Prospect by Bootie Cosgrove-Matter

Evaluative Measures: Paper 4 and Assignment 5 Due

Agenda: Debrief

Minutes before class began, the grand jury in the New York case investigating the death of Eric Garner at the hands of a white police officer, released their decision to not indict the officer responsible for Garner’s death. For weeks tensions were arising all around the country, adding to the fury and widespread distress following the Ferguson grand jury in November not
indicting the white officer who killed Mike Brown. In addition to the immense tension in the class surrounding the decision, this was the first class in which Tyler and I were both present in a month, and this was also the least structured class of the semester.

After announcing to the class the grand jury decision, and allowing time for the gravity of the information to sink in. Tyler and I posed the question of “where do we go from here?” as a discussion about our next steps and what we are all taking away from this course. This conversation understandably took the tone of “what do we do about systemic oppression that is leading to the unpunished killing of young black men across the country”, which led to the events that followed. After an entire semester of exploring forms of oppression in the United States, the historical factors leading to modern systems of oppression, and the theories and skills utilized by organizers to deconstruct this oppression, one student (a wealthy, straight, white, male) condescendingly and almost mockingly asked “what is ‘the system’ you’ve been referring to all semester?” as if to imply ‘the system’ is some conspiracy. After an immensely uncomfortable silence, one student broke, stood up and yelled at him for his blatantly oppressive behavior that had been present throughout the entire semester, exclaiming that “do you know what it’s like to be a person of color on this campus?! In this country? Fearing for our lives, and living in the blatant denial of fucking white folks.” One student spoke up, as I prayed they would come to that student’s defense and call out in-class oppressive behavior, that student said “calm down, I think you’re taking what he said out of context” at which point the other student stormed out and I followed. I sat in the hallway with her for about 15 minutes talking through what happened and making sure that she was all right and supported. I then came back into the classroom to see Tyler attempting to facilitate a discussion about what had happened, and I took over and chastised the entire class for, after months of learning how to stand up to oppressive behavior when they’re confronted with it, sitting there and allowing the only student who spoke up to be in defense of the oppressive and triggering student.

A few students were crying in the aftermath of what happened, and everyone had shock stamped on their faces. After I completed my rant about the disaster that unfolded, there was a significant silence in the room. This silence was followed by one of our quieter students asking in a pleading tone, “what can we do? Allyship is really hard and I feel like we can never talk about that in these spaces”. The class ended up staying for more than half an hour after the scheduled ending time, in a deep and thoughtful conversation about how our whiteness impacts the work we do, and what role white allies have in deconstructing the systems of oppression from which we benefit.

This class felt immensely defeating, but ended on a tone of optimism, a place for us to all go home and reflect on our identities and roles in organizing. I know that class session will forever be stamped in my memory, and hopefully it will in the minds of my students as well, and serve as a reminder of the work we do and the impact it has on real people, real lives.

Student Reflections: None

All was well.