

**Loyola University**  
**Master of Arts in Social Justice**

**SOCIAL CONTEXT**

IPS 532-002

Water Tower Campus, Lewis Towers, room 913

Instructor: Judy Hertz

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14 Wednesdays, Aug. 27 – Dec. 3, 8:45am – 11:15am

(No class on Nov. 26)

This course provides a model and practical skills for social analysis and strategies for social change to facilitate action and ministry in the face of complex modern problems. We will examine some theories and methods of social analysis, and then use three case studies to put practical skills to use in the field. Through a brief analysis of the mortgage crisis and more extensive examination of transit issues and food in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we will learn more about the tools of social analysis, and what is necessary for action to make social change. We will use organizing manuals, oral histories, books, articles, newspaper clippings and videos for background information, and extensive field work to gather first hand information about specific social issues. We will examine our values and those of others who are involved in these social problems, and will analyze how power is distributed in US society, and what that has to do with the creation and solution of social issues.

**Required Texts:**

Holland and Henriot, "Social Analysis: Linking Faith to Justice" (New York: Orbis Books, 1983)

Bobo, Kendall and Max, Midwest Academy Manual, Organizing for Social Change (Seven Locks Press, 2001)

**Fieldwork, Writing and Portfolios**

Our examination of each social problem (the mortgage crisis, mass transit, and food) will begin with reading to develop a base of knowledge. (For the mortgage crisis, this will be all we will do.) We will then outline what more we want to know in order to analyze the situation. This will involve interviewing both people on the street and selected experts and participants in the social problem under consideration. Students will need to plan ahead to build the appropriate time into their schedules, to set up interviews in a timely way, and to accomplish data collection within the assigned time. Students will write summaries of their data collection for each person interviewed/method used, and these summaries will be compiled into a portfolio. Along with a final reflection on each of the three issues, this will constitute the main writing assignment for the course.

## **Weeks 1 – 3: Introductory Elements**

We will spend the first three weeks examining the nature of social analysis. What is this task we have set for ourselves, how should we think about it, and what is involved? We will look at a couple of methods that have been used, and lay the base for our semester's work.

### **Week 1 – Intro to course**

Introduction to class  
Introduction to instructor  
Introduction to fellow students

Exercise: Three versions of rat story

What is social analysis?

What do we need to know?

How do we find out?

How do our biases, values and self-interest influence what we see?

Who interprets the data?

What is necessary for action?

### **Week 2 – Intro to theory/methods**

#### Reading:

Asset Based Community Development:

*Building Communities from the Inside Out*, by Kretzmann and McKnight –  
Introduction pp. 1-11

Popular Education:

*We Make the Road by Walking*, Myles Horton and Paulo Freire, pp. 38-95  
*Social Analysis*, Henriot and Holland – preface, chapters 1 and 2, conclusion and  
afterward (71 pages)

#### Optional Reading:

ABCD website, <http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/abcd/>

Highlander website, <http://www.highlandercenter.org/index.html>

### **Week 3 – Intro to practice**

#### Reading:

Shel Trapp, *Dynamics of Organizing*, shopping carts chapter

One-on-ones introduction

Greg Piece, *Activism that Makes Sense*, self-interest chapter

Michael Ignatieff, "The Broken Contract"  
*Midwest Academy Manual*: chapters on choosing issues, recruitment  
Oral history: "The Heart of Hammond"

Writing: Email me a letter telling me about yourself (values, social analysis, future directions)

How do activists gather information for community analysis?  
How are decisions made about which issues to address?  
What is self-interest, and what role does it play in social action?  
What other values are involved in analysis and action?

## **Weeks 4 – 5: The Mortgage Crisis**

We will examine the mortgage crisis which has been so much in the news, looking at it from a variety of perspectives. We will use this issue to discuss the nature of power, as well as what it takes to organize "to scale".

### **Week 4 – Power and Predatory Lending**

Reading:

*Midwest Academy Manual*: chapters on power; strategy  
Oral history: "Private troubles, public issues"  
Predatory lending news articles

Understanding predatory lending, mortgage meltdown, and financial crisis  
What is power, who has power, what role does power play?  
Tools for analyzing power  
Strategies for making change

### **Week 5 – No Analysis in a Vacuum (Power and Predatory Lending, part 2)**

Reading:

This American Life: "The Giant Pool of Money" podcast  
News articles about the national and international mortgage situation

Writing: Make a strategy chart for one of the assigned organizations in the predatory lending story. Focus on what power the organization has and how they can best use their power to help their constituents! Visit the website of the organizations to assess the nature of the organization and its power.

## **Weeks 6 – 9: Analysis of Transit Issues**

We will collaborate with an organizer who is developing a plan to organize for better mass transit in Chicago, and conduct field work and analysis to support his efforts.

### **Week 6 – Case Study: Transit**

#### Reading:

Transit readings, to be determined  
CTA map/RTA map

#### Begin analysis of transit:

Make spider map  
List sources and information desired, divide it up  
How to conduct an interview: objective, subjective, and action-oriented  
Develop questions for person in street interviews

### **Week 7 – Transit Analysis (with Mary and Will)**

#### Assignment:

Conduct person in street interviews  
Other data collection and analysis as determined in Week 6

#### Writing:

For semester portfolio, students will write up all the data they collect. Each student will gather data at least once in each of several listed categories for the portfolio.

Presentations of data gathered

Evaluate information gathered to date

How does the average person experience this problem?  
Who has power related to this problem?  
What is determined at the city, state, national level?  
What are some possible issues to organize for change?  
What else do we need to know?

Determine other information needed, make assignments

### **Week 8 – Transit Analysis**

#### Assignment:

First person interviews

Other data collection and analysis

Presentations

Evaluate information gathered to date

Determine other information needed

### **Week 9 – Transit Presentation**

Presentation and discussion of results of analysis

Hand in portfolio materials

## **Weeks 10 – 14: Analysis of Food Issues**

Food seems simple enough, right? We will conduct social analysis to discover why we eat what we do, what the industrial food complex has to do with our choices, and some of the reasons why there is an epidemic of obesity in the US while people in other countries go without.

### **Week 10 – Case Study: Food**

Reading:

Articles and chapters to be determined

[http://www.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1626519\\_1373664,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1626519_1373664,00.html)

How did Americans get their food 100 years ago, and what is different now?

What is the industrial food system, and what role does it play in what we eat?

Spider analysis of the food system

What information do we want to collect?

### **Week 11: Food**

Reading:

To be determined

What is the industrial food complex?

How much corn do we really eat? Why?

Who influences what Americans eat?

What impact do our choices have?

What field data do we want to collect?

## **Week 12: Food**

### Reading:

Mark Santow, "Running in Place"  
Other readings to be determined

Analyze field data

Determine further field data assignments

Running in Place: further examinations of power and its limitations

## **Week 13: TBD**

## **Week 14: Food Presentation and Conclusions**

Presentation and results of analysis on food issue.