

# Strategies for Social Change

RSFT-4015

1.5 Units

Starr King School for the Ministry / Graduate Theological Union

Intersession 2016

Jan. 19-22, 2016 (1:30-5:30pm)

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## Course Description

This course is open to all interested in social change – whether as a community organizer, congregational leader, activist, scholar, non-profit leader, educator, or in other role/s. We will contrast a diversity of tactics used to assess organizational and community needs, mobilize religious and secular leaders, and build effective partnerships for justice. Central to this exploration is the idea that struggles for justice are interconnected, calling us to build new and diverse partnerships, and expanding analysis of how to make change. Together, participants will bring to life theologies for “collective liberation” – building a world that embodies the inherent worth and dignity of all beings. This interactive course requires reading in advance, and utilizes case studies of social change efforts which employ an intersectional approach: linking class, race, religion, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, ecological, and other issues and identities.

Inspired by the educational philosophy of Starr King School for the Ministry, this course will:

- Invite students to bring their full, authentic selves to the learning community.
- Draw knowledge and wisdom from both academic sources and personal experience.
- Permeate the walls of the academy toward building a global learning community.
- Center the unique learning goals and needs of each student.
- Further Starr King’s commitment to education that counters oppressions, creates just and sustainable communities, and fosters multi-religious life and learning.

## Learning Objectives

During this course, students will:

- Explore the theological and spiritual foundations for their commitment/s to social change
- Draw on diverse spiritual traditions and social movements for insight and inspiration
- Investigate diverse examples on intersectional, spiritually-rooted activism
- Provide and receive peer/collegial support for leadership development

## Learning Outcomes

In completing of this course, students will:

- Articulate the theological and spiritual foundations for their commitment to social change
- Understand foundational concepts and practical skills for community organizing
- Sharpen their strategic analysis of historical and contemporary social movements
- Bring intersectionality theory to life through application of case studies
- Identify their strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities re: social change leadership

## Course Policies

This course relies on the thoughtful and consistent engagement of each participant. All are expected to participate actively and fully in discussions, activities, reading and written assignments. Students are leaders and co-creators of this graduate-level learning experience, generating learning materials for each other, and proactively building a culture of peer support. In the case of missing or late assignments or inconsistent participation, students must notify the instructors as soon as possible, and work out a plan for completion.

## Course Assignments

*Before the course begins,*

- Read the two required texts.

*During the course,*

- Attend and participate fully in all sessions, including individual and small-group activities.
- Develop an in-class presentation for your peers.
- Complete a self-evaluation of your participation, and an evaluation of the course itself.

*After the course,*

- Submit personal statement paper on theological/spiritual foundations for social change.

Detailed instructions for the presentation and paper will be presented and discussed in class.

## Grading and Evaluation

Regular, active class participation constitutes half of the grading rubric. Also required are two additional items of equal weight: the presentation and personal statement paper. Components are designed to enrich the online experience, and equip students with hands-on experiences, theological reflection, and collaborative ethos to build and sustain social change. Your final grade +/- or evaluation will be determined by the following components:

Class Participation - 50%

Presentation - 25%

Personal Statement Paper - 25%

## Required Texts (to be read before the course begins)

“Organizing for Social Change: Fourth Edition”

by Kimberly Bobo, Jackie Kendall, and Steve Max

ISBN-10: 0984275215, ISBN-13: 978-0984275212

Current cost on Amazon: \$39.95 new / \$21.38 used

Now in its fourth edition, this is a comprehensive manual for grassroots organizers working for social, racial, environmental and economic justice at the local, state and national levels. Since 1973 the Midwest Academy has trained more than 30,000 activists in progressive organizations, unions, and faith-based groups. Included in this book are anecdotes about a wide variety of real organizations working on issues concerning labor, the environment, health care, racism, immigration, peace, religion, energy, public campaign financing and more. Whatever the progressive cause, this is the manual that can help guide organizers and ensure that they continue to reach their goals with efficiency and dignity.

## “Social Change and Intersectional Activism: The Spirit of Social Movement”

by Sharon Doetsch-Kidder

ISBN-10: 0230117279, ISBN-13: 978-0230117273

Current cost on Amazon: \$79.68 / used \$34.85

This book finds in oral histories of 'intersectional activism' – activism that addresses multiple forms of oppression or discrimination (racism, classism, sexism, etc.) – narratives of love, faith, and joy that drive, guide, and sustain the practice of social change. Reading these texts in relation to feminist, queer, and race theory and Buddhist philosophy, Doetsch-Kidder argues that an understanding of spirit is crucial to explaining the power that social movements have to change hearts, minds, and social structures and to understanding the ways in which leaders of social change organizations influence others. Focusing on the best of what activists do, the book offers lessons and reminders about the pleasures and wonders of social change and the power of kindness and principled action in the face of injustice.

In addition to these core texts, the course will incorporate a variety of other materials (readings, videos, online resources, etc.) including resources generated or suggested by students.

### **About the Instructor**

Betty Jeanne Rütters-Ward serves as the Visiting Assistant Professor for Transformative Leadership at Starr King School for the Ministry, where she has taught and mentored Graduate Theological Union students and spiritual leaders around the world since 2007. Her courses examine leadership, community organizing, education, social change theory, multigenerational ministry, and more. Betty Jeanne’s approach is distinguished by:

- Linking theory, reflection and action – within and beyond the classroom
- Curricula that respond to students’ unique passions, interests and goals
- Multi-faceted, interactive courses that bring learning to life
- Holistic academic advising, vocational counseling, and personal coaching

Betty Jeanne is a social change practitioner whose work has included ministry, community organizing, writing, public speaking, teaching and training, coaching, organizational and campaign management. She holds a Master of Arts in Social Change, combined with over ten years of leadership in the non-profit, educational, religious, philanthropic, and socially responsible business sectors. Betty Jeanne drives social change through capacity building and by developing effective, sustainable leaders of all ages, with the goal of activating people, organizations and communities in pursuit of the common good.

Betty Jeanne’s passion for social change is fueled by her experiences in spiritual communities. She supports people – of any or no religious affiliations – to develop as leaders, make meaning of their lives, build community, reflect on and enact their values. Betty Jeanne has supported thousands of leaders in achieving success, maintaining balance and developing emotional resiliency amid the often fast-paced, high-stakes, stressful environments in which social change efforts happen. On a larger scale, Betty Jeanne has built powerful religious-secular coalitions for civil and human rights, universal healthcare, youth empowerment, and racial justice. More about her can be found at [www.linkedin.com/in/bruetersward](http://www.linkedin.com/in/bruetersward) or <https://www.sksm.edu/2015/04/17/i-am-starr-king-interview-with-betty-jeanne-rueters-ward/>.