

URBN 323: Collective Urban Policy Change
Together We Can Change This Place

Spring 2025 • T/Th 12:30-1:45pm • West Campus 200

Instructors: Dr. Austin ("A.T") Harrison& Prof. Gisela Guerrero
E-mails: harrisona@rhodes.edu & *gisela@michamemphis.org*
Office: 219 West Campus
Office Hours: Schedule Appointment

Required Textbook: Scott Myers-Lipton, *CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action,* 2nd Edition (ISBN 978-1032418025)

URBN 323: Collective Urban Policy Change is a course that explores power and democracy in the context of urban policy and Memphis. More specifically, this course examines the topics of…

- aligned self-interest, building power and change theory
- issue development
- campaign planning
- campaign strategy, tactics, and actions
- leadership development and sustaining power

What is unique about URBN 323 is that students do urban policy change rather than just learn about it. In a traditional course, students read about theories of urban policy, analyze social problems, read about campaigns, and develop an abstract understanding of concepts, all with the professor being the "sage on the stage." In the experiential learning model, students read about theories of social change and apply it to real world campaigns in Memphis, as well as define a social problem and develop concrete, quantifiable solutions (i.e., demands). In this experiential collective action model, students choose and lead campaigns and are transformed through a direct experience of democracy, all with the professors being a "guide on the side" where they are de-centered and co-creators of knowledge, in their experiences as trained community organizers.

A key part of the collective action model is that students have the opportunity to enact a policy (i.e., a rule, regulation, norm, or practice of an institution) in the community, with the students choosing and developing the campaigns on their own rather than assigned by the instructor. Another exciting part of this course is that you will hear directly from and work alongside change agents in Memphis.

Importantly, there is no political indoctrination, as students develop and choose what campaigns align with their own self-interest, and can change campaigns at any point in the semester. Furthermore, our role is to offer guidance about strategy and tactics and to help students consider the variety of options available, with the students deciding on how to move forward best.

The topics, strategies, and skills shared in this class build on a long history of collective change that dates back to at least the 19th century Ireland where tenant farmers organized against their landlord, Captain Boycott. Since then, communities across the world have used similar democratic, non-violent means, to push and create the world they want to see. From the labor movement, to decolonization efforts in India, to the civil rights struggle in the U.S. south, to even the Tea Party movement of the 21st century. These are tried and true strategies that have worked time and time again throughout history, so why not now?

Responsibilities and Assignments

NOTE: More detailed guidelines for each assignment will be provided in class and on Notion/Canvas.

Campaign Portfolios + Log

This class is different. In this class, portfolios take the place of exams. Importantly, the portfolio is where you demonstrate your knowledge gained in light of your social action experiences. Therefore, you must integrate the text with your community work throughout each portfolio. Portfolios will be completed as a group based on your campaign.

In addition, each student will keep their own "Social Action Log," which will be shared after our Mini Issues Convention, to keep track of your out-of-class campaign work, and it will be turned in, individually, with each group's portfolio. Your grade will be entirely based on labor and work ethic. These logs will play a large role in your final grade for the course.

Weekly Quizzes

The purpose of these very short quizzes (i.e., less than 5 minutes) is to test for understanding and encourage engagement throughout. In order to encourage engagement, you will be given short quizzes throughout the semester. If you do the reading and engage each class, these short quizzes should be very easy to answer. These short quizzes will test for knowledge that we will apply in our campaign work, therefore the quizzes are designed to make sure you understand key topics *before* applying them in your campaign planning and implementation.

Weekly Reflections

Collective change work is very personal and requires a considerable amount of personal introspection and reflection. Also, this class builds on Frierian liberatory pedagogies that center on *transformative praxis,* a combination of theory, action, and reflection.

Your weekly reflections will be a structured way to reflect on your campaign work as it evolves throughout this school year. This is the place where you can situate the work into a bigger context. All intentional transformations are driven by critical reflection. These journals will be that critically reflective space.



Campaign Binders + Presentations

In place of a final exam, students will give a group presentation on their collective change campaign. As part of this presentation, you will turn in a campaign binder that will be used to sustain the work of these campaigns and sustain the power built in this class. The binders will include all portfolios, all meeting notes, all printed materials, and any other documentation needed for future folks that want to continue your work. True collective change requires that we play the long game, campaigns are rarely won quickly or easily, especially in the U.S. south. These binders and presentations will set us up for that long-term success and empower future students to continue this important work.

Class Participation

The purpose of evaluating your participation is to encourage and reward students who prepare for, and engage in, the habits of the mind. Thus, you will be evaluated on the extent and quality of your participation in the class and the labor or effort you put into the course.

Grading Policy:
Labor-Based Contract Grading

What is Labor-Based Grading?
Labor-based contract grading means that we will not be assigning grades to your work. Rather you will choose a final grade (A, B, or C) to work towards at the beginning of the semester and you will complete the amount of work appropriate for the grade you choose. we will provide substantial comments on each assignment, but we will not provide a letter grade on them.

All students will complete the following assignments, according to minimum standards for their chosen grade: (1) Campaign Portfolios + Log ; (2) Weekly Quizzes & Reflections; (3) Campaign Binders + Presentations; (4) Planning and Executing a Campaign Action. However, students wishing to earn an A grade will complete proportionally more work than students wishing to receive a B or C grade. *(NOTE: D and F grades are only for students who fail to complete the work required for a C grade.)*

Why are you Using Labor-Based Grading?

Your instructors view labor—especially in collective change work —to be the key metric in the success of campaigns. In other words, you gotta collectively hustle if you want that collective muscle.

Labor-based grading allows you to determine your grade based on the amount of labor you chose to put into this course. Also, this method can minimize the anxiety and subjectivity with traditional grading. To these ends, contract grading involves our trust in your responsibility, maturity, diligence, and desire to learn.

What Do we Have To Do to Get an A (or a B or a C)?

At the beginning of the semester, you will make a decision regarding the amount of labor you wish to devote to this class vis-a-vis the grade checklists below. we will use the plus and minus system to make adjustments to an initial grade decision as needed.

All students will be involved in collective change. This will require a minimum of 1½ to 2 hours per week of outside class work (25 hours minimum over 15 weeks, with 13 hours or more DOING something, that is, tabling, postering, giving organization raps, rallies, etc.). If you do not do more than 25 hours a semester, you will not receive higher than a C on the overall portfolio grade, since it is difficult to do reflection if you are not doing collective action. Of course, if you want to do more community work, that is great.

Checklist to Earn an A:

- Miss **no more than 2** weekly journal reflections during the semester;
- Fail **no more than 2** weekly quizzes;
- Design, implement, and reflect on a campaign action;
- Present and complete a campaign binder that reflects an **A-level of labor** (as detailed in assignment);
- Log 25 hours of total out-of-class work on your campaign;
- Turn in **all five** portfolios in their entirety;
- Miss **no more than 2** classes (excluding religious or extracurricular exemptions); and
- Submit **all** assignments on time**

Checklist to Earn a B:

- Miss **no more than 4** weekly journal reflections during the semester;
- Fail **no more than 4** weekly quizzes;
- Design, implement, and reflect on a campaign action;
- Present and complete a campaign binder that reflects a **B-level of labor** (as detailed in assignment);
- Log 15 hours of total out-of-class work on your campaign;
- Turn in **four** (of five) portfolios in their entirety;
- Miss **no more than 4** classes (excluding religious or extracurricular exemptions); and
- Submit **no more than 1** assignment late (including weekly ones)**

Checklist to Earn a C:

- Miss **no more than 6** weekly journal reflections during the semester;
- Fail **no more than 6** weekly quizzes;
- Present and complete a campaign binder that reflects a **C-level of labor** (as detailed in assignment);
- Log 10 hours of total out-of-class work on your campaign;
- Turn in **three** (of five) portfolios in their entirety;
- Miss **no more than 6** classes (excluding religious or extracurricular exemptions); and
- Submit **no more than 3** assignment late (including weekly ones)**

*** "Life Happens" Clause (h/t Dr. Charles Hughes & Dr. Laura Taylor): You and/or your group may invoke this clause once this semester— without explanation—and get an automatic 3-day extension for any assignment. If an*

individual already invokes the clause before the group wants to, then the group may not invoke the clause. To invoke this clause, just send me an email the day the assignment is due letting me know.

What if I Want to Change the Grade I'm Getting?

You may decide during the semester that you wish to pursue a higher (or lower) grade than you initially chose. It is also possible that you may find (or your continued performance may prove) that the grade path you have chosen is no longer feasible. Contact me at any time to revise your education plan for the course. If you fail to meet the standards of your chosen grade, we will lower your grade myself and let you know I'm doing so. Open and frequent communication is essential in determining these shifts so we encourage you to maintain steady contact with us throughout the semester. Multiple checklist items are collective projects (portfolios, binders, actions), it will be on each group to ensure they are aiming for the same grade.

Course Calendar

All course readings are available on Notion/Canvas, except required textbooks. This is a general outline of topics and related readings. As the semester progresses, readings may be changed or added.

UNIT 1 - POWER + CHANGE	
Date	**Session Topics, Readings, and Assignments**
1/16 (Th)	Introduction to the Course + Understanding Self-Interest *Assignments Due:* N/A
1/21 (T)	What Is Power? *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Reflection #1: My Stick Figure *Readings/Resources* ● Murray 2017 - "Taming the War on Poverty: Memphis as a Case Study" ● The One on One Meeting - New Organizing Institute
1/23 (Th)	Organizing Conversation + Social Location *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Quiz #1 *Readings/Resources* ● We Make the Future - Guide to Messaging our Freedoms (p. 3 - 17) ● Organizing: People, Power, and Change (p. 9 to 20)
1/28 (T)	Theory of Systemic Change *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Reflection #2: Your Path to Power *Readings/Resources*

	● Climate Advocacy Lab - How to do Relational Organizing (Video + Tip Sheet) ● *The Organizer* (documentary, watch at least first 20-30 minutes)
1/30 (Th)	Tactical vs. Strategic Issues *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Quiz #2 *Readings/Resources* ● The Change Agency - How to Cut the Issue into Bite Sized Chunks
UNIT 2 - Issue Development	
2/4 (T)	Campaign Pitch Day *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Reflection #3: Issues in Your Heart and Gut ● **Portfolio #1: Self-Interest (**Individually) *Readings/Resources* ● Background readings on potential campaigns (on Notion/Canvas)
2/6 (Th)	Mini-Issue Convention *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Quiz #3 *Readings/Resources* ● How to Caucus 101 ● *Understanding Caucus*
2/11 (T)	Background Issue Research *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Reflection #4: Reflecting on Issue Selection *Readings/Resources* ● *CHANGE!* Chapter 5 “Research” (2nd ed)
2/13 (Th)	Target Analysis *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Quiz #4 *Readings/Resources* ● Beautiful Trouble - Choose Your Target Wisely
2/18 (T)	Power Map *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Reflection #5: Early Findings from Issue Research *Readings/Resources* ● Beautiful Trouble - Power Mapping to Design a Winning Campaign Strategy

2/20 (Th)	Campaign Overview *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Quiz #5 ● **Portfolio 2: Target Analysis, History Analysis, and Power Map** *Readings/Resources* ● Rustin (movie)
2/25 (T)	Setting the Tone + Campaign Goals *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Reflection #6: Takeaways from Rustin *Readings/Resources* ● *CHANGE!* Chapter 2 "Setting the Tone" (2nd ed)
2/27 (Th)	Group Dynamics + Roles *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Quiz #6 *Readings/Resources* ● *CHANGE!* Chapter 6 "Group Dynamics" (2nd ed)
UNIT 3 - CAMPAIGN PLANNING	
03/04 (T)	Campaign Launch *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Reflection #7: Your Role and Your Self-Interest ● **PORTFOLIO #3.1: Recruitment/Base Building Plan** *Readings/Resources* ● *CHANGE!* Chapter 8 "Campaign Kickoff" (2nd ed)
03/06 (Th)	Recruitment + Ladder of Engagement *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Quiz #7 *Readings/Resources* ● Beautiful Trouble - Ladder of Engagement ● *CHANGE!* Chapter 4 "Building Power" (2nd ed)
03/11 - 03/13	SPRING BREAK (NO CLASS)
03/18 (T)	Menu of Tactics/Strategies *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Reflection #8 - Plan to Build the Base *Readings/Resources*

	● *CHANGE!* Chapter 7 “Strategy + Tactics” (2nd ed) ● Methods of Non-Violent Action
03/20 (Th)	Campaign Design *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Quiz #8 *Readings/Resources* ● *CHANGE!* Chapter 9 “Campaign Plan” (2nd ed)
03/25 (T)	Draft Campaign Plan *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Reflection #9: Evaluating Your Campaign Plan ● PORTFOLIO 3.2: Campaign Plan/Midwest Academy Chart *Readings/Resources* ● Community Organising Fellowship - Campaign Monitoring & Evaluation
03/27 (Th)	Preparing to Act *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Quiz #9 *Readings/Resources* ● Beautiful Trouble - Action Logic ● Beautiful Trouble - Expressive & Instrumental Actions
UNIT 4 - CAMPAIGN ACTION	
04/01 (T)	Goals of Collective Change - Build the Base *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Reflection #10 - Feelings About Actions ● **PORTFOLIO 4.1: Action Plan** *Readings/Resources* ● The Same Storm, but Different Boats: The Safe and Equitable Conditions for Starting LAUSD in 2020-21 ● Rutgers - Concrete Examples of Bargaining for the Common Good ● Speaker: Rev. David Gerth, Gamaliel Network
04/03 (Th)	Goals of Collective Change - Leadership Development *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Quiz #10 *Readings/Resources* ● Broken Ground Podcast ● Speaker: Keshaun Pearson, Memphis Community Against the Pipeline

04/08 (T)	Goals of Collective Change - Strategic Campaign *Assignments Due:* ● Weekly Reflection #11 - Reflecting on Campaign Implementation *Readings/Resources* ● Montgomery Bus Boycott ● Rosa Parks Clips
04/10 (Th)	Goals of Collective Change - Build the "Organization" Assignments Due: ● Weekly Quiz #11 *Readings/Resources* ● ACORN & The Firestorm ● Speaker: Wade Rathke, Chief Organizer, ACORN International
04/15 (T)	Goals of Collective Change - Build the Movement Assignments Due: ● Weekly Reflection #12 - Reflecting on Campaign Implementation ● **PORTFOLIO 4.2: Movement Building Plan** *Readings/Resources* ● Zinn, SNCC New Abolitionists (excerpts) ● John Lewis Clips
04/17 (Th)	*NO CLASS EASTER*
04/22 (T)	Campaign Evaluation + Reflection Assignments Due: ● Weekly Reflection #13 - Action Reflection *Readings/Resources* ● Reflections on UFW Experience by Dolores Huerta
04/24 (Th)	Sustaining Power for the Long Haul Assignments Due: ● Weekly Quiz #12 - Action Reflection *Readings/Resources* ● *CHANGE!* Chapter 10 "Campaign Evaluation: Passing It On" (2nd ed)
04/29 (T)	Campaign Binder Workday Assignments Due: ● Weekly Reflection #14 - Individual Reflections on Semester ● PORTFOLIO 5: Campaign Reflections *Readings/Resources* ● NO READINGS

05/01 (Th)	<u>Campaign Presentations</u> Assignments Due: ● Campaign Presentations (10 minutes each) *Readings/Resources* ● NO READINGS
05/05	**CAMPAIGN BINDERS DUE (by midnight)**

Additional Classroom Policies

Attendance/Absence Policy: Students are expected to attend every class meeting. Outside of the religious observance and extracurricular activity policies below, all absences are treated equally (i.e., there is no distinction between an "excused" and "unexcused" absence). Advance notice of an absence is appreciated but not required. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to obtain notes and other relevant class information from fellow students.

- ***Absences for Religious Observances:*** Absences for religious observances are excluded from this policy. Please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester if you predict a conflict with classes, examinations, or other assignments because of a religious practice or belief, and we will work with you to provide reasonable changes. In order for an absence to be excused, you must: (a) let the instructor know in advance; *and* (b) complete the assigned reading response for the missed class. All absences not approved in advance will count as regular absences.
- ***Absences for Extracurricular Activities:*** Students with extracurricular activities officially related to the college (e.g., athletics, mock trial, ensembles) that will require them to miss class will be excused if you: (a) let me know in advance; *and* (b) complete the assigned reading response for the missed class. All absences not meeting these criteria will count as regular absences.
- ***Automatic Failing Grade:*** If a student misses ***8 or more*** classes (excluding approved religious or extracurricular exemptions), they will automatically fail the course.

Technology: During class, you may use electronic devices to access course readings and view digital resources (e.g., Google Slides), but regularly using electronic devices during class time for non-course activities will have a negative effect on your grade (and an awkward conversation neither of us wants to have). If you need to respond to a text or take a call, you are welcome to step out of the classroom for a few minutes – you don't need my permission to do so.

Honor Code: All papers and assignments in this course must be your own work. Work turned in for this course is to be completed in accordance with Rhodes' Honor Code. Students are expected to be familiar with the requirements of the Code and to conduct themselves accordingly in all classroom matters.

- **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the use of someone else's information or ideas without proper citation. If you have questions about the correct use or citation of materials, please consult with me, or in the

Writing Center. If you wonder if something should be cited, it probably should. Papers with evidence of plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council.

- **Generative AI:** Generative AI, like ChatGPT or Midjourney, can inhibit the development of the writing skills this course aims to develop. For this reason, we ask you to refrain from employing AI tools for course assignments; if you feel generative AI might be useful for a specific purpose, please speak with me and we can determine if that use aligns with course objectives. However, attempting to pass off AI-generated work as your own (e.g., in a reading response or in a paper) will be treated as a violation of academic integrity.

Sexual Misconduct Disclosure: we do my best to help any student who comes to me with non-course-related concerns. Please keep in mind, however, that all faculty members are mandated to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that comes to their attention. That means that we cannot keep information about sexual misconduct confidential from the college if you share that information with me, but the college has specific confidentiality and anti-retaliation protections in place. The Rhodes Counseling Center or the Student Health Services Staff can advise you confidentially. The student policy is in the Student Handbook and can be found on the Rhodes Title IX site.

Access and Accommodations: ***we*** will provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities or other documented conditions that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with such conditions are encouraged to contact me as soon as possible to discuss their individual accommodations. Students must register with the Office of Student Accessibility Services to qualify for modifications to course assignments.

Additional Readings & Resources

Keeping Up with the News: We encourage students to get in the habit of reading a daily newspaper. The most useful papers are the **New York Times**, the **Los Angeles Times**, **Washington Post**, and the **Wall Street Journal.** You can get a subscription to any of these publications or read them on-line. There are also many publications (with websites) that look at politics and policy from a particular perspective -- conservative, moderate, liberal, progressive, libertarian, religious, feminist, environmental, and others. Here are a few of them:

Progressive or democratic socialist - The Nation, American Prospect, Dissent, The Progressive, In These Times, Mother Jones, Jacobin, YES!, Ms., and Teen Vogue (no kidding).

Liberal - New Republic, The Atlantic, Talking Points Memo, Washington Monthly, Politico, and Vox

Conservative – Weekly Standard, The Bulwark, American Spectator, National Review

Web Sites About Collective Action: You can use the internet to connect to the larger worlds of public policy, advocacy, and organizing. There are many organizations and political networks. Here are several key sites with which you should familiarize yourself with.

- Indivisible
- People's Action
- Faith in Action)
- Center for Popular Democracy
- Working Families Party
- Black Lives Matter,
- One America,
- Community Change
- Mijente
- United We Dream
- 350
- Sunrise Movement
- Industrial Areas Foundation
- Power Switch Action
- Dream Defenders
- Black Youth Project 100
- Right to the City
- MoveOn
- Sierra Club
- Planned Parenthood Action Fund,
- Poor People's Campaign
- Democratic Socialists of America
- American Friends Services Committee
- Gamaliel Network

Many of these national organizations have **local affiliates.**

- MICAH
- Black Lives Matters-Memphis
- Decarcerate Memphis
- Stand for Children TN
- Memphis for All
- Memphis Tenants Union

Podcasts

- Listen, Organize, Act! Organizing & Democratic Politics
- Craft of Campaigns by Training for Change
- Assembly Required with Stacey Abrams
- Fundamentals of Organizing