

## AI 148 HOW TO BE A CULTURAL ACTIVIST- Winter 2007

Loop Campus, Thursdays, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

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### ***Course Description***

Freedom of expression vs. censorship. The artist as agent of change or entertainer of the privileged. Intellectual property vs. freeware. The Slow Food movement vs. Globalization. Teaching evolution or creationism. Public education vs. home schooling.

These are just a few of the controversies that swirl around the arena of American culture. There are many groups working to preserve the widest access to the arts, culture and means of expression. This course has a definite point of view: which is that creativity is an essential component of a vital democracy.

This course will show you several ways to be an organizer around issues of culture and creativity. During this course students will be given an introduction to community organizing strategies and tactics and will be exposed to a number of cultural policy controversies and the key players who are working to make a difference in those areas. We will hear firsthand from cultural activists and learn how to be effective organizers for cultural democracy. This class will combine readings, class exploration and an out-of-class research project where students will pick a cultural cause that is meaningful to them and research that issue and do a presentation on that issue to the class.

### ***About the Instructor***

Tom Tresser is the Lead Organizer for The Creative America Project ([www.creativeamerica.us](http://www.creativeamerica.us)), a national nonprofit, nonpartisan initiative to get artists and creative professionals to lead in the public sector – including running for local office. Tom has acted in some 40 shows and produced over 100 plays, special events, festivals and community programs. He was an arts activist, having organized support for pro-arts candidates and developed a cultural policy think tank at Roosevelt University in the early 1990's, where he taught "Arts & Public Policy." He was director of cultural development at Peoples Housing, in north Rogers Park, where he created a community arts program that blended the arts, education and micro-enterprise development. He served as marketing and client services director at Executive KnowledgeWorks, an executive development consulting firm. Most recently, Tom served as a marketing director and community affairs manager for OurHouse.com, an e-commerce start-up. In 2003 he was appointed Visiting Fellow in Arts and Culture at the DePaul University College of Commerce's Ryan Center for Creativity and Innovation. Tom was elected as a Community Representative to the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School's Local School Council for the 2004-06 term. He is also teaching "Who's Lying to You Now?" and "Producing the Live Performing Arts Event" for the School for New Learning and "The Politics of Creativity" for the Political Science Department.

### ***Competencies Offered***

A3x	Can identify the social and historical context of a particular artist/social activist and explain his/her point of view.
A5	Can define and analyze a creative process.
H1i	Can understand change methodology, plan change within a community, and assess its likely impact.
H2x	Understands cultural activism and can identify and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of social change groups who use creative, non-traditional methods of organizing.

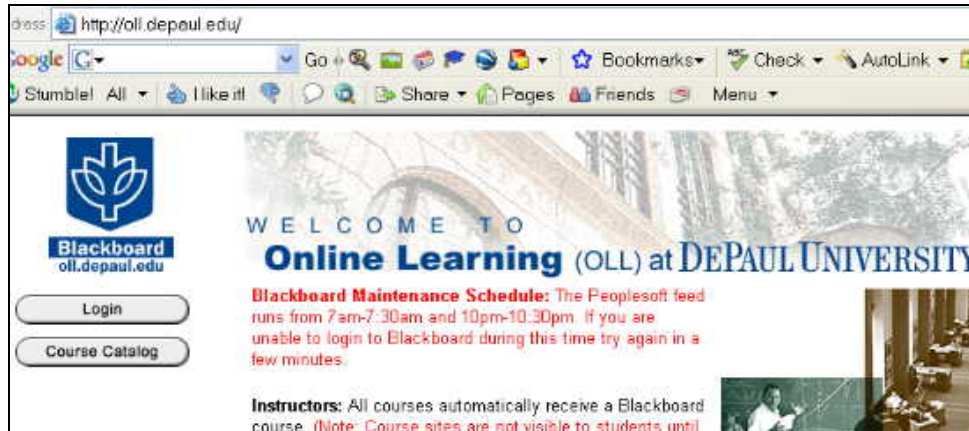
### ***Attendance and Participation***

Regular attendance is required. Attendance will be taken. Students who miss more than two class sessions may be asked to drop the course. Students are expected to be in class on time, and to remain until class ends. Each member of the class will make a name card for their classroom desk. You'll be responsible for your own name card, so please remember to bring it to class.

### ***The Learning Experience***

We will use a combination of lecture, discussion and presentations. Our required text is "Organizing for Social Change – Manual for Activists" (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) by the staff of the Midwest Academy. This paperback is available at the DePaul Loop Campus Bookstore in the DePaul Center, as well as from online bookstores. Other readings will be posted on the course's Blackboard website.

You should be familiar with the Blackboard environment. Log on at <http://oll.depaul.edu>. When you log on you should see links to all the classes you have registered for. This class will have a website inside this environment.



An introduction to Blackboard can be found online at:

<http://www.itd.depaul.edu/website/faculty/TechnologyTools/Blackboard/Introduction.asp>

There will be a writing assignment that will be due in Weeks 6 and 9 (students registered for two competencies will be doing two writing assignments):

Choose the assignment that matches the competence you are seeking:

A3X - Prepare a short profile of an artist who has been effective or powerful in social justice, political organizing or community change. Bring in a sample of this artist's work and explain it to the class.
A5 – You have just been appointed the new Director of a social change organization. Explain how you will bring creativity to the organization – what steps will you take to use creative methods to accomplish its mission?
H1I - Research an organizing tool or tactic and discuss the pros and cons of this tool and tell us how it might be used in a creative manner to advance social or political change. Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of this tool.
H2X – Analyze a group that is using non-traditional, creative or theatrical tactics for social change (a group not covered in the mini-case histories) and prepare a short report describing their methods and philosophy and discuss their strengths and weaknesses.

- Detailed instructions will be available at the first class and posted on the Blackboard site.
- Please identify the topic(s) that you will be covering and submit a paragraph explaining your topic at the Week 4 class. If you know the topic(s) you'd like to cover, you can submit the proposal sooner
- The first paper will be due Week 6 and the second, if you are doing a second, Week 9. Your papers must be submitted electronically – that is you may hand in a hard copy but you MUST email the instructor a Word document as well.
- Students will make individual presentations of their findings at the final class

### January 11 (#1) – Introduction

- Statement of the instructor's limitations and biases
- Pretest
- What is creativity and why is it so important?
- What are some ways to look at culture as a basis for civic engagement?
- Introductions where students discuss their own activism interests and history
- What does "winning" look like?
- For this class: Read "Chapter 2, "Models of Community Organizing" from *Democracy in Action* (posted on Blackboard course site)
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### January 18 (#2) – Introduction to Organizing

- Students submit their grade preference: Letter grade or pass/fail
- Guest lecturer on organizing in Chicago
- Discuss readings

- Class discussion on cultural issues facing America
- Class votes on the issues we will focus on for the rest of the class
- Class divided into teams of three people each for investigation of the chosen issues
- Framework for team work will be presented, assignments given
- For this class: Read Chapter 2, “The Fundamentals of Direct Action Organizing” from textbook, *Organizing for Social Change*.

### **January 25 (#3) – Creativity & Organizing**

- How can creativity be applied to the tasks of organizing for social change
- Framework for applying creative strategies to the organizing process
- Case study: The Yes Men
- For this class: Read Chapters 3, 4 from textbook, *Organizing for Social Change*.

### **February 1 (#4) – First Reports of Issues Teams**

- Discuss readings
- Teams A, B, and C will give their first reports to the full class
- These presentations will be designed to give an overview of the issue that the group has been investigating
- Case study: Billionaires for Bush
- For this class: Read Chapters 11, 12 from textbook, *Organizing for Social Change*
- Description of proposed writing assignment(s) due.

### **February 8 (#5) – Arts and Social Change**

- Students complete “My Learning Progress” self assessment
- Discussion of reading – how best (if at all) should artists and other creative people participate in social change and challenges to power?
- Case study: The Guerilla Girls
- Next team assignment given for field work
- For this class: Read “Artists in Times of War” by Howard Zinn (posted on Blackboard course site)

### **February 15 (#6) – The Politics of Hip Hop**

- Introduction to the players and positions of hip hop activists
- Guest artist
- Case study: National Hip Hop Political Convention
- For this class: Read articles: “Hip Hop as a Political Tool,” Principles of 2006 National Hip Hop Political Convention, “Where Politics and Hip Hop Collide,” “Hip-Hop, Ghetto-centricity and the Commodity Fetish” (all posted on Blackboard site)
- First writing assignment due

### **February 22 (#7) – Field Reports from Teams**

- Evaluation forms for the team presentation will be distributed so everyone can rate the presentations on the same set of criteria
- Each team will present their report from their research on an organization that is working on the issue they are studying, including account of meeting or public action that organization has sponsored.

### **March 1 (#8) - Creativity and Community Change**

- How do the arts build communities? Discussion of readings
- Case story of instructor’s experience as Director of Cultural Development at Peoples Housing
- For this class: Read: “Packing for the Trip” and section on the Village of Arts and Humanities from *Beginner’s Guide to Community-Based Arts* (posted on Blackboard course site)

### **March 8 (#9) – Creativity and Personal Development**

- Discussion of individual creativity and innovation
- What stops us from being creativity?
- How can build our own creativity “muscles”?
- For this class: Read article on creativity posted on Blackboard site.
- Reminder of final presentations
- Second writing assignment due (if student is doing two writing assignments)

**March 15 (#10) – Final Class – THIS CLASS MAY RUN TO 11PM TO ACCOMMODATE ALL PRESENTATIONS**

- Post test
- Presentations by students
- Summary by instructor

**Evidence to be Submitted**

For each competence there will be one writing assignment as outlined above. More detailed guidelines will be distributed in class. The paper shall be at least six pages (typed/word processed, double-spaced, 1” margins on all sides) and reference at least five outside sources.

**Grading and Evaluation**

Attendance	10 points
Class participation	15 points (no or little participation = 0 - 5, Infrequent participation = 6 -10, frequent and spirited participation = 11 - 15)
Team work	20 points
Individual writing/research assignment(s)	50 points (35 for content, 10 for presentation)
Post test	05 points
Bonus for attending all 10 classes	05 points

**Written Work Will be Evaluated As Follows:**

A = designates work of high quality; reflects thorough and comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand; reflects a clearly identifiable thesis and argument that demonstrates cogent and creative development and support of idea.

B = designates work of good quality; reflects clearly organized and comprehensive understanding of issues at hand; presents substantive thesis and argument with evident development and support of ideas.

C = designates work which minimally meets requirements set forward in assignment; reflects some organization and development of ideas but develops argument in superficial or simplistic manner; may only address part of the assignment or be otherwise incomplete.

D = designates work of poor quality which does not meet minimum requirements set forth in the assignment; demonstrates poor organization of ideas and/or inattention to development of ideas, grammar, and spelling; treatment of material is superficial and/or simplistic; may indicate that student has not done reading assignments thoroughly.

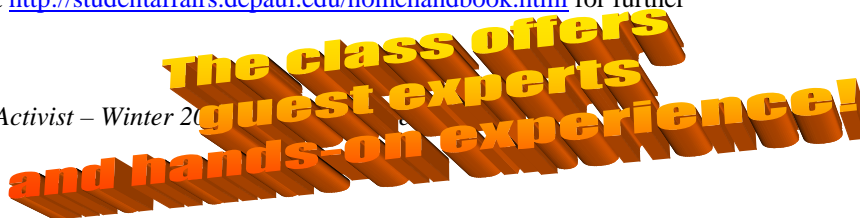
**Policy in the Issuing of Incomplete (IN) Grades**

Undergraduate and graduate students have two quarters to complete an incomplete. At the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) following the term in which the incomplete grade was assigned, remaining incompletes will automatically convert to "F" grades. Ordinarily, no incomplete grade may be completed after the grace period has expired. Instructors may not change incomplete grades after the end of the grace period without the permission of a college-based Exceptions Committee. This policy applies to undergraduate, graduate and professional programs.

NOTE: In the case of a student who has applied for graduation and who has been approved for an Incomplete in his or her final term, the incomplete must be resolved within the four week grace period before final degree certification. The SNL student who wishes to receive the grade of IN must formally request in writing that the instructor issue this grade. This request must be made before the end of the quarter in which the student is enrolled in a course.

**DePaul University Academic Integrity Policy**

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students’ own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university’s academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html> for further details.





We had a number of guest experts when this class was offering in the Spring of 2006. Above, members of the Billionaires for Bush come in costume.



The activist hip-hop performance duo AquaMoon perform in class!

**STUDENTS FROM THE SPRING 2006 SESSION RATED THE CLASS 4.64 OUT OF 5.0 on the measure:  
"Overall, I would rate the value of what I learned in this course"**

One student wrote in their evaluation: *"The theory of the principles of direct action organizing (Midwest Academy) has helped me realize why my community group has been ineffective. I have brought some of the ideas from class to my group and we received a grant from an area church to carry out or plan."*



Members of the class investigated the issue of immigration and participated in the May 2006 rally!

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