

"Social Action: Student Solutions for Challenges in Neighborhoods or Universities"

Bachelor's Degree in Social Work, Module 03, 3rd Semester

Lecturer:

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**Tell me, and I will forget,
teach me, and I may remember,
involve me, and I will understand.**

(presumably Xun Kuang 312-230 BC)

**Power concedes nothing without a demand.
It never has and never will.**

(Frederick Douglass, 1857)

Dear students!

I am very pleased that you are interested in this exciting new seminar format and have enrolled. Below you will find a detailed description of what you can expect and what I expect from you as participants and co-creators in this project.

It also includes an initial insight into the social action approach, requirements and key points for seminar design, and the structure and organization of our joint work, including quality requirements and agreements on examination performance.

*Best regards
Andreas Richter*

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Organization of the seminar

During this social action seminar, you will work in groups to develop solutions to problems or challenges in the neighborhood or at the university that you jointly identify as relevant and feasible at the beginning of the semester. In your group — your team — you will take responsibility and decide together on the specifics of your solution concept, the approach, implementation strategies, and success criteria. You will gain experience in different contexts and discover the potential of the group and yourself, and you will decide in your concrete actions how you will use these opportunities for yourself. Our joint seminar is part of the degree program and is subject to certain conditions. Taking these conditions into account, we will discuss the seminar guidelines presented here at the beginning of our joint work and agree on the structure and organization of our work.

The aim of the seminar is for you and your team to carry out a public action on the topic you have chosen at the end of the semester, in whatever form you choose, in order to initiate the actual implementation of the solutions you have developed.

Through your active participation in this seminar format, you will create learning and experiential spaces for the group and yourself that will enable you to develop and expand a wide range of skills and competencies that will be of great importance in your future professional life, such as goal-oriented action, independence, teamwork, critical thinking, analysis of power structures, building networks and relationships, strategic communication, public speaking, and negotiation tactics.

In the seminar, we will alternate between practical work phases and reflection phases, in which you will learn about and apply various change theories, approaches to public and democratic action, leadership models, and outreach methods.

A special feature of this course is that, using the social action approach, we will also reinterpret and further develop our understanding of the roles of "student" and "lecturer"

or "learner" and "teacher" together. We — that is, you and I together — will become a learning system as a seminar group that will develop its own unique dynamic. We will therefore also repeatedly reflect on our internal group power structures, skills, self-organization processes, and responsibilities.

Important for successful participation is your willingness to actively and continuously work in one of the groups throughout the semester and to take on corresponding responsibility for the success and the joint learning process.

Free choice of issue

In the first three weeks, we will develop possible issues, which you will then work on in teams. Not all of you have to contribute issues; you can also join an existing issue. You should join a issue if you have at least one personal connection to it or if you are truly willing to invest your time, creativity, and energy in it.

As a lecturer, I will not influence your choice of issue, with one exception: extremist, anti-democratic, or ideologies that do not recognize universal human rights — whether political, religious, or ideological — will not be accepted as a basis for campaigns in this seminar. It goes without saying that all activities and actions must be nonviolent.

Attendance and participation

The following points are essential for the success of the seminar and a good learning experience:

- 1) Always attend the seminar meetings.
- 2) Contribute actively to the discussions and reflections.
- 3) Participate actively in your team's work, even outside of seminar hours.
- 4) Document your work progress, research results, and reflections in the agreed manner.

Changing teams

If you wish to leave a group for any reason, please contact me. We will then work together to find a solution (team change). If a team change is not possible, you will conduct a campaign study.

Context of the seminar in the BA SozA program

Excerpt from the module handbook. Complete source: https://www.khsb-berlin.de/sites/default/files/modulhandbuch_b.a.-soza_2023_masterversion_.pdf

Module title	Action Theories and Methods of Social Work
No	M 03
Module coordinator	Prof. Dr. Sarah Häsel
Module status	Compulsory
Module content and learning outcomes	This module covers various scientific justifications for social work theories and methods in light of cumulative social problems and needs. The subject matter is the (action) theoretical foundations of methodological action in professional social work. Their implementation in methodological thinking and action is demonstrated using concrete fields of practice in professional social work. Students should be enabled to justify their future professional actions in terms of action theory and methodology and to implement them in a goal-oriented practice.
General Qualification goals:	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are aware of the scientific basis of action theories and methods in social work; • have acquired systematic knowledge and critical understanding of important action theories and methods of social work and can locate them according to their history, conceptual clarification, and theoretical background; • have knowledge of historical, profession-specific methods of social work; • are familiar with research approaches and perspectives in social work, learn how to use them, and have the ability to critically comprehend research results; • are familiar with selected methods of qualitative and quantitative social research and know the essential quality criteria

Module 03.2 2 SWS	Various methods of social work
Contents	Methods can be understood as well-founded and systematic procedures for achieving the best possible results in professional practice. Within the framework of this module, courses introduce and teach various direct and indirect intervention-related methods that are used in the context of social work. In this sense, the structuring, control, and handling of the effects (and side effects) of social work are also discussed.
Prerequisite for the awarding of credits Module 03	The prerequisite for the awarding of credits and the resulting calculation of credit points is the successful completion of the module. This is documented by passing the examination and a certificate of participation in M 03.2 and M 03.3.
Number and type of coursework and examinations	1 exam performance in the module: Term paper, presentation or portfolio
Workload M 03.2	Attendance time: 24 hours/28 teaching units Self-study: 76 hours
Examination requirements in this course	By arrangement portfolio, presentation, or term paper

Seminar-specific learning objectives

Based on the general qualification objectives described in the module handbook, this seminar has the following specific learning objectives, which relate (1) to concrete social action campaign work, but (2) also to your self-management and self-organization skills as well as your personal development in the learning and working process.

(1) With regard to **social action campaign work** after completing the seminar, you will be able to:

- develop a campaign topic and communicate it concisely,
- start a campaign and actively participate in it,
- continuously monitor the progress of the campaign through feedback procedures and evaluate and present it at the end,
- organize power (= capacity to act),
- research and investigate a specific topic (historical analyses, power analyses, analysis of campaign target groups),
- apply various action strategies and tactics,
- work with the press and/or media,
- speak in public.

(2) With regard to your **self-management and self-organization skills** as well as your **personal development** in the learning and working process, during the seminar you will:

- regularly observe and reflect on your own learning process and that of your team,
- further develop your project management, self-management, and self-organization skills,
- experience the importance of your own experiences for the development of your self-image.



About the social action approach

The approach was conceived more than 20 years ago by Scott Myers-Lipton of San José State University (USA) and has been further developed since then. Similarly, Ben Little of the University of East Anglia in Norwich (UK) began working with his students 18 years ago. At first, neither of them knew anything about the other. Recently, the approach has also become increasingly popular in Europe. With this course in the winter semester 2025-26, it will be used for the first time at a German university.

The social action approach, which has been extensively tested in the USA and the UK, enables you as a student to work in a highly structured way on solving social problems within the framework of a semester. This gives you the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills that you can put to good use in your future career. At the same time, you can acquire important basic democratic skills. The approach also makes it possible to work on topics over several semesters. For the exchange of knowledge, there is a growing global Teaching Social Action Community that shares its curricula, campaigns, experiences, and successes. Examples can be found at <https://teachingsocialaction.org/>

- **Consistently democratic:** Social action is part of a democratic culture in which people have the right to address their own demands and proposals for solving problems and grievances to their governments (local, federal, national) or other decision-makers (e.g., universities, businesses) and then negotiate these solutions or demands with those responsible.
- **Focus on change and transformation:** "Social action" (public political action) means that people like you and me join forces to influence public policy decisions and bring about change.
- **Doing it yourself as a basic educational principle:** As students, you independently decide on a topic you want to work on and, as a team, try to change a political regulation (i.e., a rule, law, ordinance, standard, or institutional practice) in the broadest sense by making specific demands on a specific person with decision-making authority.

Types of campaigns

As this is the first run of a social action course at KHSB, there are no student campaigns that could be continued. Neither on the KHSB campus nor in the community. It is the privilege of your year group to lay the first foundations here and start your own campaigns.

You can decide whether to work on an issue that affects the university itself (on-campus) or an issue that is located in the local or regional social space (off-campus).

For off-campus campaigns, it is possible to join an existing campaign run by other organizations from the local or wider community and develop an autonomous student campaign under their umbrella. A local association (Karlshorst e.V.) has been secured as a potential local partner for the winter semester.

In the third week, two representatives of the organizations will give a pitch presentation on what the association is currently working on (public welfare-oriented development of the Karlshorst trotting track neighborhood). If some of you can imagine a campaign with the local partner, present your ideas for a student campaign to the partner and then decide whether you actually want to work together.

Requirements for a campaign

The campaign you choose can have a liberal, conservative, social democratic, green, or left-wing perspective; it can also do without such an ideological perspective. Regardless of which campaign you choose, I will accompany you and your campaign and support you in making your campaign a success. My job is to provide you with guidance on the social action approach and advise you on weighing up the available options for action. But here, too, you as students always decide for yourselves how you want to proceed.

The work and selection of campaigns in this seminar are guided by the following criteria:

- **Teamwork** – at least 3 students in a campaign team; more is better; based on the number of students enrolled, I currently expect one to a maximum of three campaigns to be launched.
- **Passion or personal interest** – Bring in a topic or join a topic that you are truly willing to commit to.
- **Change** – Your campaign must aim to change an institutional policy or practice either on our university campus, in the city district, or on a larger scale, e.g., regionally, throughout Berlin, or possibly even nationally.

Reading

To work successfully, you will need to read some basic texts during the semester in preparation for the respective seminar days. The texts are already available on Moodle, and we will discuss together which texts are most suitable for your current needs. Each seminar unit will include time for theoretical classification, reflection, and discussion of the texts read. These texts include:

- Myers-Lipton: **CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action.**
 - Alle Kapitel
- Meier, Penta, Richter: **Community Organizing**
 - Penta: **Die Macht der Solidarität** (8 pages)
 - Meier: **Das Organizing-Dreieck** (7 pages)
 - Richter: **Rolle und Entwicklung von Schlüsselpersonen** (8 pages)
 - Jamoul: **Wie funktioniert eine Bürgerplattform?** (6 pages)
- Alinsky: **Rules for Radicals/ Die Stunde der Radikalen**
 - Wir treffen eine Auswahl im Seminar
- Shel Trapp: Dynamiken des Organizing
 - Kapitel: **Nicht reden, sondern handeln – Aktion** (13 pages)
 - Kapitel: **Nett sein lohnt sich nicht – Macht** (8,5 pages)
- Ev. Stiftung Alsterdorf & KHSB (Hg.): Enabling Community
 - Penta, Schraml, Winterberg: **Community Organizing – ein Weg zur Enabling Community** (8 pages)
- Nixon: Work with source
 - **How to realise ideas** (19 pages)
- **Allgemeine Erklärung der Menschenrechte** (PDF)
- **Grundgesetz** (PDF)

Documentation of campaigns and learning experiences

At the beginning of the seminar, we will agree on the most effective form of documentation. There are various options here, e.g., portfolio, mural, checklists, campaign binder, interim reports, video recordings, interviews. The decisive criterion will be which form of documentation gives you enough freedom to invest most of your time and energy in your campaign while also ensuring that your learning progress is adequately documented and that a meaningful campaign evaluation and presentation is possible at the end.

Campaign binder and sharing the campaign

As a group, you will compile the campaign folder on an ongoing basis until the end of the semester. It will contain all the necessary information, materials, analyses, strategies, reflections, etc. that will enable a future group to take up your topic again and continue working on it. We will develop the exact form together. It can be created in analog or

digital form. Start thinking now about presenting your campaign to the new students next semester with a short pitch and handing over your campaign binder.

Examination requirements and assessment criteria

IMPORTANT: Whether a campaign or action is successful or not does not factor into the assessment!

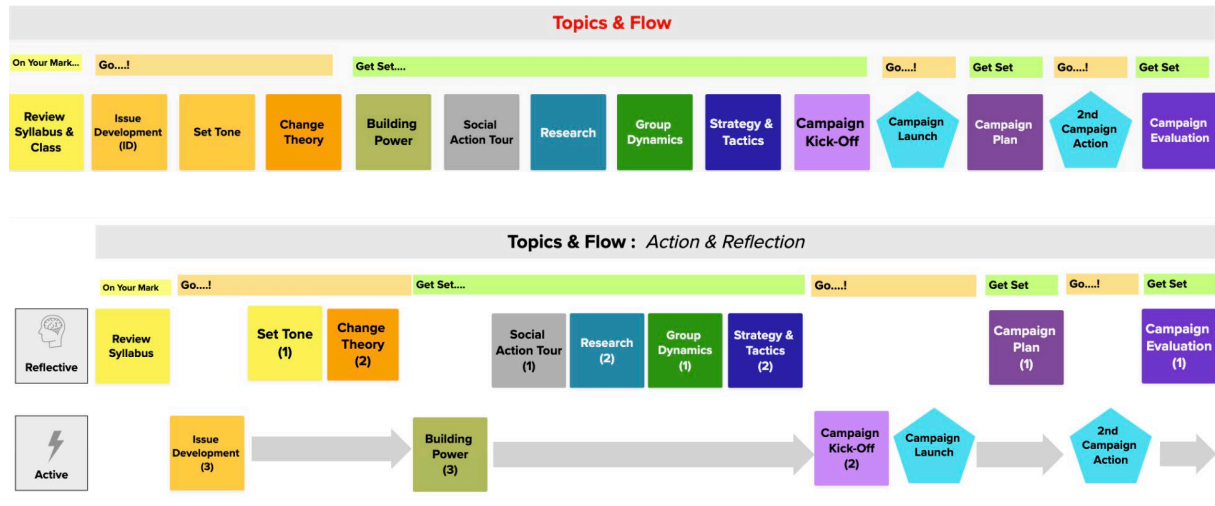
However, it is expected that a public action of some kind will be carried out with demands made on a target person. If you succeed in doing this, you will have already fulfilled 80% of the requirements for a graded exam. The assessment also takes into account: the quality of group collaboration, the informative value of the campaign documentation, and the quality of your reflection on your own learning and development process, including the theoretical connection to discussed change theories, approaches, and other campaign examples.

We will define the quality standards and specific assessment criteria together at the beginning. A simple way of self-assessment and mutual assessment would be, for example, a rough grading of expectations as "met," "not met," or "exceeded."

Once the campaign teams have been formed, we will set out the criteria developed and other agreements on cooperation in a contract to be concluded between the members of each team and myself as seminar leader.

Flowchart and schedule

Standard outline according to Scott Myers-Lipton:



Draft schedule for our seminar

The seminar is inspired by the standard social action model. Due to the shorter semester and a bridge day, our schedule will have to be slightly different.

On your marks	Go					"Get set..."					Christmas break		Go			Get set
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	X	X	?	11	12	13	
Getting acquainted	Start finding issues	Visit local partners	Form teams and agree on collaboration	Change theory	Begin building power	Research	Review group dynamics	Strategy & Tactics	Campaign kick-off			[Bridge day]	Campaign launch – Action	Action	Evaluation & Presentation	

Some activities, such as power building, extend over several weeks. The overview shows when we plan to deal with them for the first time.

The 90-minute attendance phases of this course are primarily intended for planning or reflecting on things together. The operational work on the campaigns and the actions themselves will take place during the time designated as "self-study time" in the module handbook. You will agree on the exact when and how in your groups by week 4 at the latest.

"Prototype" social action seminar day

This is how a typical seminar day could be structured. We will see together whether this format actually meets our needs.

Time	Duration	TOP	Goal/Reaction	Material
12:00	05 min	Welcome		
12:05	05 min	Check-in round <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urgent topics • Open questions 	Update, Group dynamics	
12:10	20 min	Theory/reflection section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 05 min Relevant experience report • 15 min Theory/reflection 	Reflection, inspiration	Videos Texts
12:30	50 min	Work on the campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 05 min Progress check in plenary • 45 min Group work 	Planning activities and actions, making progress	Documentation Mural board
01:20	10 min	Work planning until the next meeting & check-out	Establishing commitment	Mural Board
01:30		Farewell & end		