SOC 290 01: SOCIAL ACTION

How Ordinary People Create Extraordinary Social Change
Fall 2026

Course and Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Rosina Hassoun

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Class meetings: Monday and Wednesday , 2:30–3:50 p.m.

Classroom: [Insert room]

Semester: August 31–December 19, 2026

Office hours: Monday 4:00–5:00 p.m.; Tuesday 1:00–2:00 p.m.; Thursday 4:00–5:00 p.m.; and by appointment

My preferred method of contact is email. Please include SOC 290 in the subject line and use Canvas email when possible. You can generally expect a response within 24–48 hours on weekdays. I am not routinely available on weekends.

Course Description

SOC 290 is a special-topics course in social action, open to students from all majors. The course examines how ordinary people work collectively to change policies, institutions, public narratives, and community conditions. Students learn to distinguish charity and direct service from organizing and social action; connect personal concerns to structural inequalities; investigate a community problem; analyze stakeholders and power; identify a specific, achievable demand; communicate with public audiences; engage appropriate decision-makers; and evaluate the results of collective action.

This is an experiential Teaching Social Action (TSA) course. Students work in teams of four or five on one semester-long, real social-action campaign selected by the students. The campaign is the principal way students learn the course material: teams develop an issue, formulate a demand, identify a target, research the issue and power structure, build support, choose strategy and tactics, launch the campaign, implement actions, and evaluate the results. Course projects must use lawful, nonviolent methods and respect informed participation and the autonomy of affected people and organizations. Students may not violate any university rules and campaigns must adhere to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Explain how social action differs from charity, direct service, awareness raising, and the academic study of social movements.
- Distinguish direct service, advocacy, activism, community organizing, and social action.
- Move from a broad concern to a clearly defined problem, constituency, target, and actionable demand.
- Gather and evaluate credible evidence, including community knowledge and public information.

- Construct a stakeholder analysis and power map that identifies allies, opponents, decision-makers, and leverage points.
- Develop and carry out an ethical, feasible, campaign strategy.
- Create public-facing messages and materials suited to specific audiences.
- Work democratically in a team, document contributions, respond to setbacks, and revise strategy.
- Evaluate campaign outcomes without overstating success and reflect on power, accountability, and civic learning.
- All campaigns must not violate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and students may not violate SVSU rules and regulations, nor State or Federal laws.

Instructional Materials

Required textbook: Scott Myers-Lipton, CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action, 2nd edition (Routledge).

The textbook is a working guide for the campaign, not a sequence of reading tests. Only selected sections, examples, and exercise questions directly needed for the current stage of each campaign will be assigned. The instructor may shorten, adapt, combine, or omit portfolio questions. Most assigned exercises will be started or completed during class and incorporated into short campaign deliverables rather than submitted as large chapter portfolios. Additional brief examples, videos, and public documents will be supplied through Canvas when they directly help teams act.

Chapter readings are identified in the course schedule. “Read” means the whole chapter unless Canvas identifies selected pages. “Selected exercises” means only the questions posted or announced by the instructor; students are not responsible for completing every portfolio question in the chapter.

Students may incur no campaign expenses without prior instructor approval. Campaigns should be designed around free or low-cost tactics.

How the TSA Course Works

TSA sequence	CHANGE! chapters	Experiential work	Short deliverables
Issue development & team formation	Ch. 1 Issue Development; Ch. 2 Setting the Tone; selected Ch. 6 Group Dynamics	Issue scan; campaign criteria; team formation; group agreements; choose one issue	Issue Reflection; Issue-and-Team Brief

TSA sequence	CHANGE! chapters	Experiential work	Short deliverables
Change, power & research	Ch. 3 Change Theory; Ch. 4 Building Power; Ch. 5 Research	Define demand and target; historical/target analysis; power map; recruitment and base-building	Research-and-Power Brief; Power Map
Strategy, kickoff & implementation	Ch. 7 Strategy and Tactics; Ch. 8 Campaign Kickoff; Ch. 9 Campaign Plan	Select tactics; prepare messages/materials; conduct kickoff; meet targets; implement and revise	Campaign Plan; Kickoff Materials; Action Log
Evaluation & continuation	Ch. 10 Evaluation; selected Ch. 11 reflection	Assess outputs/outcomes; document lessons; plan continuation or responsible closure; present	Campaign Evaluation; Team Presentation

Assessment and Grading

Requirement	Points	Percent
Issue Reflection and Issue-and-Team Brief	50	10%
Research-and-Power Brief and Power Map	100	20%
Campaign Plan	75	15%
Campaign Kickoff and Action Materials	75	15%
Action Log and Individual Team Contribution	75	15%
Campaign Evaluation and Presentation	75	15%
Preparation, campaign labs, and participation	50	10%
Total	500	100%

Grading scale: A 93–100; A− 90–92; B+ 87–89; B 83–86; B− 80–82; C+ 77–79; C 70–76; D 60–69; F below 60 percent.

Selected TSA Exercises and Campaign Deliverables

- Issue Reflection and Issue-and-Team Brief (Weeks 2–3): Use selected exercises from Chapters 1, 2, and 6 to identify feasible issues, select one campaign, form a team of four or five, and establish working agreements.
- Research-and-Power Brief and Power Map (Weeks 4–7): Use selected exercises from Chapters 3–5 to state the demand and target, complete only the historical and target research needed for action, map power, and identify a base of support.
- Campaign Plan (Week 8): Use selected Chapter 7 and Chapter 9 exercises to connect the demand, target, strategy, tactics, timeline, roles, ethics, risks, and indicators of progress.
- Campaign Kickoff and Action Materials (Weeks 9–10): Use selected Chapter 8 exercises to prepare and carry out a first public action. Materials may include a flyer, commitment card, script, press release, meeting request, testimony, fact sheet, or digital content—only those needed by the campaign.
- Action Log and Individual Team Contribution (Weeks 10–14): Maintain a concise record of outreach, actions, target responses, team decisions, individual contributions, and changes in strategy.
- Campaign Evaluation and Presentation (Week 15 and Finals): Use selected Chapter 10 exercises to evaluate process and outcomes honestly, identify unfinished work, and present a responsible plan for continuation or closure.

Typical Class Meeting

A typical 80-minute meeting will devote approximately 15–25% of the time to a focused mini-lesson or discussion of the selected textbook material, 50–65% to team campaign work, practice, outreach preparation, or action, and 15–25% to reporting back, peer consultation, and reflection. These proportions will shift when teams are preparing or carrying out major actions.

Participation, Teams, and Community Ethics

Because this is a workshop- and campaign-based course, regular attendance and preparation are essential. Participation includes completing the selected portions of the textbook, bringing needed campaign information or materials, contributing to in-class campaign labs, giving useful peer feedback, carrying out agreed team responsibilities, and treating classmates and community members respectfully. Students should notify the instructor promptly about emergencies or barriers to participation. Documented emergencies will be handled individually; team obligations must be communicated and reassigned rather than silently abandoned.

Students may not speak on behalf of SVSU, a community organization, or an affected group without authorization. No student is required to disclose personal experiences, political affiliation, or protected information. Projects may not involve partisan electioneering, harassment, deception, trespass, unsafe activity, fundraising, or collection of research data from human participants without appropriate review and instructor approval. Community engagement should be reciprocal: students will listen before proposing solutions and avoid promising outcomes they cannot deliver.

Course Schedule

The schedule may change to support student learning, community-partner needs, or the responsible development of campaigns. Updated readings and precise due times will appear in Canvas.

Week / dates	TSA focus	Campaign laboratory	Selected CHANGE! material	Milestone
1 • Sep 1 & 3	Issue Development	Define social action; issue scan; distinguish an issue from a broad problem; generate possible campaigns	Read Ch. 1, Issue Development; selected exercises	Campaign possibilities
2 • Sep 8 & 10	Issue Development	Sept 8: no class. Sept 10: test possible issues for specificity, feasibility, constituency, demand, and target	Review Ch. 1; complete assigned issue-development exercises	Issue Reflection
3 • Sep 15 & 17	Setting Tone & Groups	Form teams of 4–5; choose one issue; define leadership, accountability, roles, and group agreements	Read Ch. 2, Setting the Tone, and selected parts of Ch. 6, Group Dynamics	Issue-and-Team Brief
4 • Sep 22 & 24	Change Theory & Power	Connect the issue to a theory of change; draft a specific demand; identify the decision-making target	Read Ch. 3, Change Theory, and Ch. 4, Building Power; selected exercises	Demand and target
5 • Sep 29 & Oct 1	Research I	Conduct focused historical and issue research; identify what must be known before acting	Read Ch. 5, Research: historical-analysis section and assigned exercises	Research lab
6 • Oct 6 & 8	Research II	Conduct target analysis; identify formal authority, interests, vulnerability, and likely response	Ch. 5, Research: target-analysis section and assigned exercises	Target analysis
7 • Oct 13 & 15	Building Power	Create power map; identify allies and base; practice recruitment and one-to-one outreach	Review Ch. 4; Ch. 5 power-mapping section and assigned exercises	Research-and-Power Brief; Power Map
8 • Oct 20 & 22	Strategy & Tactics	Choose strategy; generate and sequence tactics; match tactics to target, capacity, and risk	Read Ch. 7, Strategy and Tactics; selected Ch. 9, Campaign Plan, exercises	Campaign Plan
9 • Oct 27 & 29	Campaign Kickoff	Plan first public action; assign roles; create only needed materials; rehearse and troubleshoot	Read Ch. 8, Campaign Kickoff; assigned kickoff exercises	Kickoff plan and materials
10 • Nov 3 & 5	Launch	Carry out or complete campaign kickoff; document response; debrief and revise	Review Ch. 8; read selected Ch. 9, Campaign Plan, sections	First public action
11 • Nov 10 & 12	Implementation	Outreach, target contact, public education, media, or disruption as appropriate; peer strategy clinic	Ch. 9, Campaign Plan: assigned implementation exercises	Action cycle 1
12 • Nov 17 & 19	Implementation	Continue campaign; assess target and public response; revise tactics and division of labor	Review Ch. 7 and Ch. 9 sections needed by the team	Action cycle 2
13 • Nov 24 & 26	Implementation	Nov 24: campaign check-in or approved action. Nov 26: no class (Thanksgiving recess)	No new common reading	Team check-in

Week / dates	TSA focus	Campaign laboratory	Selected CHANGE! material	Milestone
14 • Dec 1 & 3	Implementation → Evaluation	Complete final feasible action; organize evidence; distinguish activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact	Read Ch. 10, Evaluation: Passing It On; selected exercises	Action Log and contribution record
15 • Dec 8 & 10	Evaluation	Evaluate process and results; plan continuation or responsible closure; rehearse presentations	Review Ch. 10; selected Ch. 11 reflection	Campaign Evaluation draft
Finals • Dec 14–19	Passing It On	Team campaign presentations; democratic reflection; transfer materials and next steps where appropriate	No new reading	Evaluation and Presentation

Course Policies

Canvas, Due Dates, and Late Work

Assignments must be submitted through Canvas unless otherwise directed. Students are responsible for confirming that the correct file was uploaded. Because campaign assignments build on one another and affect teammates, late work can disrupt the project. Contact the instructor before the deadline whenever possible. Late individual work may receive a deduction unless an extension has been approved; documented emergencies will be considered individually.

Academic Integrity and Generative AI

Students are responsible for their own work and must follow SVSU's Academic Integrity Policy and Student Honor Code. Generative AI tools, including ChatGPT and AI writing assistants, may be used only when the instructor expressly authorizes them for a specific assignment or activity. Authorized use must be documented and cited. Students remain responsible for accuracy, sources, ethical judgment, confidentiality, and the final submitted work. Undisclosed or unauthorized AI-generated work may constitute academic dishonesty.

Respectful Dialogue and Inclusive Participation

Social-action work involves disagreement. Critique ideas, strategies, policies, and systems—not people. Listen carefully, avoid personal attacks, protect confidentiality, and do not expect classmates to represent an entire identity or community. We will practice democratic discussion, shared responsibility, and constructive disagreement.

Commercialization of Course Materials

Dr. Rosina Hassoun does not allow commercialization of class materials. You may not sell or make commercial gain from lectures, slides, assignments, study materials, recordings, or other course content. You may resell books that you own.

University and Student Support

Accessibility

Students who need accommodations should contact SVSU Accessibility Resources and Accommodations and notify the instructor as early as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Please do not wait until immediately before an assignment or presentation when advance planning is needed.

Title IX and Safety

SVSU is committed to a learning environment free from discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct. University employees may have reporting responsibilities under Title IX. Students can consult current SVSU resources for confidential support, reporting options, and emergency assistance.

Writing, Learning, and Mental-Health Support

Students are encouraged to use SVSU tutoring, writing support, accessibility services, and the Mental Health and Wellness Center. Seeking support early is a strength and can prevent a temporary difficulty from becoming a larger obstacle. Current locations, hours, and contact information are available through SVSU's student-resources webpages.

Important Dates and Syllabus Changes

Students should consult the official SVSU academic calendar and Registrar for add/drop, refund, and withdrawal deadlines. The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus and schedule to facilitate learning and respond responsibly to campaign circumstances. Students are required to track announcements and revisions in Canvas.