

Unleashing Large-Scale Social Movements

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Course Description

There is no shortage of compelling ideas and effective interventions for making the world better but unfortunately very few of them spread. Aspiring leaders of big social change rarely succeed in engaging others in a meaningful or comprehensive way, their passion and their knowledge reaching hundreds or thousands when millions more could benefit.

There are exceptions to this pattern, however, and this course seeks to explain what sets apart the initiatives that become successful large-scale movements, transforming societies and broadly advancing justice. These efforts reliably address three questions in order to have big impact:

- 1 - How can we secure a genuine commitment from others to join us in the hard work ahead?
- 2 - How can we set a strategy that gives us leverage and reach, making the most of our finite resources?
- 3 - How can we take action, day in and day out, in such a way that we meet our aims for growth and impact, optimizing rapid learning and improvement by everyone in our movement?

Drawing on examples from around the world and across the social sector, this course will walk you through these questions and provide you with a blueprint for spreading ideas, innovations and programs that work, allowing you to engage the most people possible to change behavior and social outcomes at scale.

Course Modules

Module A (Weeks One and Two)

Module Title

Commitment

Lectures

1. The Challenge of Large Scale Change (Week One; i.e., please view by first synchronous class meeting)
2. Characteristics of Success (Week One)
3. Purpose and Commitment (Week One)

4. The Nature of the Problem (Week Two)
5. Understanding the Solution, Part 1 (Week Two)
6. Understanding the Solution, Part 2 (Week Two)

Required Readings

1. A brief overview of key considerations for those who seek to orchestrate large-scale change: "[Unleashing Large-scale Change](#)" by Joe McCannon, Becky Margiotta and Abigail Alyesh in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, June 16, 2017. (Week One; i.e., please read/view by first synchronous class meeting)
2. A current perspective on the importance of movement-building: "[Grassroots Organizing and Preparing for the Unprecedented](#)" by Lissy Romanow in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, November 19, 2020. (Week One)
3. Using public narrative to build shared commitment: "[Why Stories Matter: The Art and Craft of Personal Narrative](#)" by Marshall Ganz in *Sojourners*, March 2009. (Week One)
4. PICK ONE: An example of public narrative: Representative Barbara Jordan, Democratic National Convention Keynote Address, 1976. ([Part 1](#), [Part 2](#) and [Part 3](#)) (Week One) **OR**
5. PICK ONE: A second example of public narrative: State Senator Barack Obama, [Democratic Convention Keynote Address](#), 2004. (Week One)
6. Seeing the system in which you operate and the opportunities for changing it: "[Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System](#)" by Donella Meadows, 1997. (Week Two)
7. An examination of institutional change versus cultural change: "[America: Melting Pot or Mosaic](#)" video by Sharat Raju and Valarie Kaur, New Moon Productions, 2008. (Week Two)
8. A set of key attributes for practices and ideas that effectively spread (brief summary of Everett Rogers' thinking): "[The 5 Common Characteristics of Ideas that Spread](#)" by David Burkus in *Adobe 99U*. (Week Two)
9. The key considerations in helping individuals to change (engage reason, motivate emotion, craft environment): [Chapter One](#) of [Switch](#) by Chip and Dan Heath, 2009 (Week Two)

Suggested Readings / Resources

1. Additional examples of personal narrative:
 - [James Croft](#)
 - [Cesar Cruz](#)
 - [Valarie Kaur](#)
 - [Rebecca Onie](#)
2. Reconciling personal needs and ambitions with the needs of others and the world: [1968 Sermon](#) by Martin Luther King, Jr. on "The Drum-Major Instinct."
3. A reflection on understanding local context: "[Community Transformation](#)" podcast by Pastor Raymond Jetson on Oakland Unified School District web site.
4. Looking clearly and honestly at the inequities and imbalances that underpin most societies: Chapter One of [Born on Third Base](#) by Chuck Collins, 2016.

5. A case study on a farmworker movement in Florida: "[The Fair Food Program](#)" by the Bridgespan Group, October 2017.
6. A masterful appeal to both the "rider" and the "elephant" in service of starting an historic movement: "[Silent Spring – 1](#)" by Rachel Carson in *New Yorker*, June 16, 1962.
7. A case study on public safety in Vietnam: "[Motorcycle Helmets in Vietnam](#)" by the Bridgespan Group, October 2017.
8. An overview of the "Model for Unleashing" large-scale change, rooted in the story of the 100,000 Homes Campaign: Becky Margiotta and Joe McCannon, complete [keynote from Carnegie Foundation Summit](#), 2017.

Discussion Questions

Each week please provide a 400-word answer to one of the questions offered for the week, noting the question you're answering and posting your answer on the class discussion board. Also comment on your classmates' posts (100 words).

1. Why do *you* think great ideas and practices don't spread? What would you add to the set of explanations offered in the video lecture? (Week One; i.e., please complete by first synchronous class meeting)
2. What is the most effective social movement you've observed in the last year (2020)? What stands out to you about it? (Week One)
3. When have you observed public narrative in action in your work or in your life? What made it effective in organizing change? (Week One)
4. The Barbara Jordan and Barack Obama speeches are famous examples of public narrative. What in them do you find most effective? What about them inspires you? (Week One)
5. Consider the four examples of public narrative from James Croft, Cesar Cruz, Valerie Kaur and Rebecca Onie. What stands out for you about their stories? Which moments do you find most powerful and inspiring? Why? (Week One)
6. In your experience, what are the most effective ways to "see the system" in which you operate? How do you most effectively understand the needs of the communities you serve? How do you best honor the voice of the community? (Week Two)
7. Consider the Donella Meadows "iceberg model" that was discussed during lecture. How does it relate to the "Melting Pot or Mosaic" video? Where in the iceberg do you (and others working on the same problem as you) tend to focus? Is that effective? (Week Two)
8. Share an example of a movement that you know of that shifted from focusing on the top of the iceberg to focusing on the bottom (i.e., institutional forces, entrenched mindsets). Was it successful? (Week Two)
9. How has the racial justice movement - in the US and abroad - shifted the public's attention to systemic and institutional forms of oppression? (Week Two)
10. Where do resources and funding – or lack thereof - fit into our map of the system? (Week Two)

11. Why do you think people fail to address the key considerations for innovation design articulated by Rogers, the Heaths and others? Why do they tend to focus more on the “rider” than the “elephant?” (Week Two)

Assignment (due February 1st)

Develop your “statement of purpose” using the supplied template. To be complete it should contain the following:

- A social problem that you seek to address;
- A brief description of what calls you to the work, using the challenge-conflict-resolution structure from the Ganz personal narrative framework;
- An explanation that ties your story to the values of others in your community (Story of Us);
- A description of what you and your community will work on now in service of those values (Story of Now);
- An image of the system you will operate in, with particular attention to the oppressive institutions and mindsets that are at the “bottom of the iceberg” (Meadows);
- A specific solution, intervention or idea you seek to introduce, and two ideas for how you can make your solution more spreadable and compelling, referencing the Rogers and Heath frameworks.

Module B (Weeks Three and Four)

Module Title

Strategy

Lectures

1. Leveraged Strategy (Week Three)
2. Clear Aims (Week Three)
3. Creating Compelling Aims, Part 1 (Week Three)
4. Creating Compelling Aims, Part 2 (Week Three)
5. Experimenting Forward (Week Four)
6. Building Awareness (Week Four)
7. Building Will (Week Four)
8. Changing Behavior (Week Four)
9. Diagramming Your Drivers (Week Four)

Required Readings

1. Discussion of the distinction between social enterprise and social movements. "[Social Enterprise is Not Social Change](#)" by Marshall Ganz, Tamara Kay and Jason Spicer in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Spring 2018. (Week Three)
2. A reflection on the rapid growth of a current movement: "[Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in U.S. History](#)" by Larry Buchanan, Quoc Trung Bui and Jugal Patel in the *New York Times*, July 3, 2020. (Week Three)
3. A reflection on how to effectively raise awareness and engage attention: "[How Should We Talk About What's Happening to Our Planet?](#)" by Dan Zak in *Washington Post*, August 27, 2019. (Week Four)
4. Research on what motivates people to do their best work: Talk on "[workplace motivation](#)" by Daniel Pink, author of *Drive*, 2009. (Week Four)
5. A taxonomy of strategies for spreading practice change: "[Many Ways to Many](#)" by Joe McCannon, Rashad Massoud and Abigail Alyesh in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, October 20, 2016. (Week Four)
6. An example of evolving strategy in service of a movement: "[Three Questions that Transformed a Movement](#)" by Patrick Guerriero in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, April 14, 2017. (Week Four)

Suggested Readings / Resources

1. Industry-specific example of how external rewards can interfere with complex motivations: "[The Toxicity of Pay for Performance](#)" by Don Berwick in *Quality Management in Healthcare*, 1995.
2. A reflection on the power of recognition as a non-monetary source of motivation: "[A Fairer Way of Giving Credit Where It's Due](#)" by Joe McCannon and Sachin Jain in *Harvard Business Review*, August 7, 2014.
3. Possible approaches for leveraged impact: "What's Your Endgame" ([PDF](#)) by Alice Gugelev and Andrew Stern in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2015. (Week Four)
4. A compendium of implementation methods: "[A Refined Compilation of Implementation Strategies](#)" by Byron Powell, et al. in *Implementation Science*, October 23, 2014.
5. A case study on the anti-apartheid movement: "[The Anti-Apartheid Movement](#)" by the Bridgespan Group, October 2017.
6. An explanation of the power of tacit knowledge: "[The Knowledge-Creating Company](#)" by Ikujiro Nonaka in *Harvard Business Review*, July 2007.
7. Channels for raising awareness: [Traction](#) by Gabriel Weinberg, 2015.
8. A compendium of nonviolent action strategies: "[198 Methods of Nonviolent Action](#)" by Gene Sharp, from [The Politics of Nonviolent Action](#), 1973.
9. A classic on the insufficiency of education systems to empower minds (and change): [Pedagogy of the Oppressed](#) by Paulo Freire, 1972.
10. On cross-sector collaboration: "[Seeding the Ground for Tri-Sector Alliances Before the Crisis Hits](#)", by Nancy Rauch Douzinas in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 2020.

Discussion Questions

Each week provide a 400-word answer to one of the questions offered for the week, noting the question you're answering and posting your answer on the class discussion board. Also comment on your classmates' posts (100 words).

1. Consider a movement or an initiative that has moved you or engaged you. Can you articulate its vision and its objectives? What made its framing powerful? Feel free to share links to words, images or videos that you found compelling. (Week Three)
2. Reflect on your current work or prior projects to which you have contributed. Do you (did you) have clear aims? If yes, are (were) they treated as a top priority? Why or why not? (Week Three)
3. Consider the Ganz reading: How do the objectives of social enterprises and social movements differ? How do their strategies differ? (Week Three or Week Four)
4. As we discussed, there is a big universe of tactics available for generating awareness, building will, and supporting behavior change. As a community we want to dig into interesting tactics in more depth. So...please pick a tactic that you are interested in from the list of tactics we shared for generating awareness, building will, and changing behavior (see below), or add one of your own. Briefly research that approach and write a post that a) defines the tactic, b) highlights one or two strengths or benefits, and c) highlights one or two challenges in using that tactic. (Week Four)

List of tactics:

Building Awareness	Building Will	Supporting practice change
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Word-of-mouth ● Publications ● Trainings ● Conferences ● Websites ● Earned media ● Social media ● Thunderclaps ● Meet-ups ● Podcasts ● Editorials ● Speeches ● MOOC's ● Blogs ● Literature drops ● Canvassing ● Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social referencing ● Recognition ● Evidence ● Fun ● Identity ● Vision ● Sensemaking ● Money ● Transparency ● Policy ● Regulation ● Punishment ● Humiliation ● Crisis ● Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaboratives ● Networked improvement communities ● Campaigns ● Extension agents ● Franchising ● Gamification ● Innovation challenges ● Grassroots organizing ● "Wedge and spread" ● Network riding ● Sprints ● Communities of practice ● Other
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Assignment (due February 15th)

Use the supplied driver diagram template to articulate your aim, "rating" and "chunking" it for your intended audience, and then describe your primary drivers and the tactics (secondary drivers) you will apply to (1) raise awareness, (2) build will and (3) support behavior change in your planned initiative. Identify a minimum of three tactics (secondary drivers) per primary driver. (This [article](#) provides more background on the driver diagram approach.)

Module C (Week Five)

Module Title

Action

Lectures

1. Style of Operation (Week Five)
2. Keys to Dynamic Operations (Week Five)
3. Enjoying Data (Week Five)
4. Living in the Field (Week Five)

5. Playing Jazz (Week Five)
6. Letting Go (Week Five)
7. Putting it All Together (Week Five)

Required Readings

1. Key day-to-day operational behaviors for successful expansion of impact: "[Inside the Command Center](#)" by Joe McCannon and Becky Margiotta in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, January 21, 2015. (Week Five)
2. How community forms in times of crisis. "[The Way We Get Through This is Together](#)": The Rise of Mutual Aid Under Coronavirus" by Rebecca Solnit in *The Guardian*, May 14, 2020.
3. Galvanizing volunteers as part of unleashing effective field operations: "[A Guide to Managing a Volunteer Workforce](#)" by Joe McCannon and Hahrie Han in *Harvard Business Review*, March 2, 2016. (Week Five)
4. Galvanizing volunteers to sustain impact in a movement: "[Want Gun Control? Learn from the N.R.A](#)" by Hahrie Han in the *New York Times*, October 4, 2017. (Week Five)
5. Clarifying the three uses of measurement -- for improvement, for accountability, and for research: "[The Three Faces of Performance Measurement](#)" by Solberg et al. in *Journal on Quality Improvement*, 1997 (table on page 141). (Week Five)
6. Deep local collaboration and rapid learning in service of saving millions of lives: "[2013 Innovations in Public Health Lecture](#)" by Nana Twum-Danso at the University of North Carolina. (Start at 14-minute mark if time is limited). (Week Five)
7. How to unleash large-scale change by thoughtfully coordinating action: "[How Leaders Can Let Go Without Losing Control](#)" by Marc Bonchek in *Harvard Business Review*, June 2, 2016. (Week Five)

Suggested Readings / Resources

1. A deeper study of the powerful communities that form in times of challenge and crisis: [A Paradise Built in Hell](#) by Rebecca Solnit, 2009.
2. Community action and complex adaptive systems: Chapter from "[Complexity and Community Change](#)" by Patricia Auspos and Mark Cabaj, a white paper from the Aspen Institute, 2014.
3. Self-organizing models for scaling in healthcare: "[How Complexity Science Can Inform Scale-up and Spread in Healthcare](#)" by Holly Lanham, et al. in *Social Science Medicine*, September 2013.
4. How to center equity in change management work: "[Systems Change with an Equity Lens](#)" by Natalie Bamdad and Noelia Mann from the *Change Elemental* web site, July 2018.
5. A story of the journey to impact in meeting the public's social needs in service of better health: "[Integrating Social Needs Into Health Care: A Twenty-Year Case Study of Adaptation and Diffusion](#)" by Rebecca Onie, et al. in *Health Affairs*, January 2018.

6. Responding to the need to connect and give back during crisis: [Tapping the Power of Virtual Volunteers](#), by Sylvia Bartley & Emily Lauer-Bader in Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2021.

Discussion Questions

Each week provide a 400-word answer to one of the questions offered for the week, noting the question you're answering and posting your answer on the class discussion board. Also comment on your classmates' posts (100 words).

1. How has fear shown up in your own work? What impact has it had? (Week Five)
2. What power does data have in managing large-scale change? How can it complicate matters? Whom does the data benefit? (Week Five)
3. How do you "go to the field?" How do you listen to the practitioners engaged in your movement, remove obstacles to their progress and respond to their insights? How do you effectively listen to the communities in which you work? (Week Five)
4. What are the primary barriers to improvisation (i.e., rapid iteration and learning)? (Week Five)
5. When has unleashing others succeeded for you in your work? When has it failed? Why? (Week Five)
6. Consider the Solnit article: Have you witnessed mutual aid networks form during the COVID-19 pandemic? Have they held together over time?
7. Nana Twum-Danso describes large-scale change through a collaboration of government stakeholders, nonprofits and religious organizations. How does this differ from grassroots organizing? In what ways is it the same?
8. What stands out to you most from Dr. Twum-Danso's talk? Generally speaking, where does she think most large-scale change efforts fall short? Based on your experience, do you agree with her? (Week Five)

Assignment (due February 26th)

Building on the prior assignment to create your "driver diagram," use the template provided to describe how you will test the tactics you identified as secondary drivers for raising awareness, building will, and supporting behavior change. Pick at least four tactics and offer concrete examples of how you'll get started testing each, noting approaches – where relevant - to getting out and interacting with those you seek to engage in the field. Also supply a learning and evaluation strategy for tracking your progress on each tactic (offering mitigation strategies for reducing fear around measurement and testing).

Weekly Class Schedule

- Discussion board posts due each week on Monday by 10pm ET.

- Synchronous class meetings via Zoom from 7:30pm-9pm ET on Tuesday nights (January 26th, February 2nd, February 9th, February 16th and February 23rd).
- Assignments due at 10pm ET on Monday, February 1st (Module A), Monday, February 15th (Module B), and Friday, February 26th (Module C).
- Ongoing asynchronous interactions (posts, comments, Q&A) on course site.
- Extensions available upon request.

Grading

Activities and assignments will be weighted as follows:

- Class Participation – 20%
- Discussion Group Posts – 20%
- Assignment One (Module One) – 20%
- Assignment Two (Module Two) – 20%
- Assignment Three (Module Three) – 20%