

MDA 300: Activism and Advocacy

Spring 2020 (2 Units)

USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

Adjunct Professor Wendy Abrams

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OVERVIEW

This class explores activism with a focus on tangible steps to create real change. Students will learn how to match their skills and passions within existing channels and to develop new organizations and movements. We will host guest speakers who have led political campaigns and organizations, created movements, participated in civil disobedience, engaged celebrities, utilized art, and led corporate social responsibility efforts.

Wendy Abrams is an environmental and social activist. In 2006, she established Cool Globes, a non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness of climate change. A graduate of Brown and Northwestern universities, she is a trustee and board member of many other public interest organizations. Assisting in discussions will be Professor Steven Lamy, the Director of the Dornsife Task Force for Global and Political Studies.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- The objective of this class is to empower the students to embrace activism and to advocate for the causes you believe in.
- Students will have the opportunity to hear from extraordinary leaders in their fields- soak up their experiences, ask questions, network.
- Students will be encouraged to be creative and think outside of the box.

GRADES

Class Participation 15%

Weekly Assignments 50%

Final Project 35%

Academic Expectations

Class participation is an important aspect of this course. Students are expected to attend all talks and classes on time, to do the reading, and turn in writing assignments when they are due. You are advised to learn and observe the University's policy on academic integrity as articulated in the current edition of SCampus, which is online at <https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/>

Policy on Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability should register with Disability Services and Programs (in GFS 120, telephone 740-0776) and get a letter of verification for approved accommodations. Please show the letter to me at the beginning of the semester.

Reading and Films

Reading assignments will be drawn from excerpts of the following books. Links will also be provided to articles or chapters. Students should expect weekly assignments of no more than 1-2 chapters of reading or a short film.

Read:

Alan Khazei, 2010, *Big Citizenship* (selected chapters)

Martin Luther King, 1963, *Letter from Birmingham Jail*

Doc Society, 2014, [*Impact Field Guide*](#)

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and John Cronin, *The Riverkeepers*, 1997 (selected chapters)

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. *Why We're in Vieques*, Outside Magazine, 2001

Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed*

Bill McKibben, *Do the Math*, Rolling Stone Magazine

(<https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-188550/>)

Michael Segalov, 2018, *Resist! How to Be an Activist in the Age of Defiance*

View:

Chicagoland, Episode 7, 2014, CNN, Sundance Productions

He Named Me Malala, 2015, dir. by Davis Guggenheim

Knock Down The House, 2019, Rachel Lears

Selma, 2014, Ava Duvernay

The Last Mountain, 2011, Bill Haney

CLASS SCHEDULE

(Note: Schedule is a draft and dates and/or speakers may be subject to change.)

Jan 13: Class 1, Overview/Introduction

Introduction and class overview

How and why I became an activist

Assignments overview and handouts

- o How to Identify your Passion
- o Assessing your strengths and weaknesses
- o How to get started

Jan 20: No Class, MLK Holiday

Jan. 27: Class 2-Turning an Idea into Action

Guest speaker: Alan Khazei

Alan Khazei, an American social entrepreneur, has worked with hundreds of non-profit organizations. He is the founder of Democracy Entrepreneurs, as well as the Chief Executive Officer of Be the Change, Inc., a Boston-based group dedicated to building national coalitions of non-profit organizations and citizens to enact legislation on issues such as poverty and education. Khazei served as chief executive officer of CityYear, an AmeriCorps national service program engaging 17- to 24-year-olds in a year of service.

Alan has spent his career helping people be of service to their country across a variety of issues and within numerous organizations. Learn more about Alan's journey, gap years, the numerous opportunities available for young people to serve. In addition, Alan has worked with hundreds of non-profit organizations during his career. Hear his insights on key characteristics that make for the most impactful non-profit organizations and campaigns.

Feb. 3: Class 3-How to Use Media to Affect Change

Guest speakers: Matthew Segal, CEO Attn: Media;
Catherine Kimmel and Sarah Adolphson, Co-founders, The Artemis Agency

When **Matthew Segal** was a student at Kenyon College in 2004, he testified before the US House Judiciary Committee, which was investigating election irregularities. As a junior in college, Segal founded Student Association for Voter Empowerment (SAVE) with the stated aim of "working to bring young Americans into the political process by breaking down barriers to electoral participation and encouraging youth-led policy solutions." He founded SAVE at age 21, which expanded to 40 college campuses in more than 15 states, and worked on election protection initiatives as well as expanding voter access through initiatives such as the Student VOTER Act.

In 2014, Segal co-founded ATTN: an issue-driven media company that delivers engaging content to a mobile-first audience with more than 2 billion monthly impressions.

Mr. Segal will share how he started his impact work as a student and provide strategies around how you can get started now, where you are, with what you have. In addition, he will share more about his work at ATTN: and how short form digital content and transmedia storytelling is driving awareness and engagement around the most pressing issues of our time.

Catherine Kimmel and Sarah Adolphson, co-CEOs of the Artemis Agency.

Catherine is a skillful connector who harnesses her network of global leaders to transform the philanthropic landscape. She produces campaigns and events for some of the world's most renowned and respected actors, directors, performing artists, politicians and nonprofit organizations.

Catherine serves as the west coast lead consultant for Bono's ONE and (RED) campaigns, and Al Gore's Climate reality project where she recently helped produce "24 Hours of Reality/Live Earth". Catherine's commitment to raising public awareness and elevating the profile of various non-profits has enabled her to direct a number of national and global advocacy projects for organizations including The City of Joy – a transformational leadership community for women survivors of violence, located in the Eastern

Democratic Republic of Congo – and a variety of national political policy initiatives.

She graduated from Southern Methodist University with a BFA and began her career in television at ABC.

Sarah Adolphson is an expert in entertainment strategy & engagement with extensive philanthropic experience working with many of the world's leading global celebrities. Her work includes advising clients on public/private partnerships, to organizational strategy, to brand building and measurement, to creating a corporate social responsibility program.

Drawing on a broad array of multi-faceted local, national and international relationships, Sarah has collaborated with foundations, corporations, NGOs and The White House across numerous issue areas, including improving the quality of America's public education system, the passage of the Affordable Care Act and increasing economic support and employment opportunities for veterans.

Prior to founding Artemis, Sarah led all philanthropic efforts for WME|IMG, which facilitated volunteer activities for nearly 5,000 employees in more than 130 communities around the world.

Sarah began her career by serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in the former Soviet Republic of Georgia where she developed a passion and commitment to community engagement and philanthropic service. She is a graduate of USC's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, and earned her Master's Degree in Public Administration from USC's Sol Price School of Public Policy.

Sarah and Catherine will share their experiences working with celebrities on their philanthropic endeavors, and reveal insights into how to leverage celebrity for the benefit of a social cause.

Feb. 10: Class 4 Advocating through Art

Guest speakers: TBD

Some of the most powerful influences have come from non-traditional forms of communication: art, music, theater, film. Explore examples of artists who have influenced the masses using their artistic format.

Feb. 17: No Class, President's Day Holiday

Feb. 24: Class 5: In Defense of Women- How to Utilize Public/Private Partnerships

Guest speakers Jennifer Klein and Noa Meyer

Jennifer Klein is a consultant to non-profits and foundations on domestic and global women's issues. She served in the Obama and Clinton Administrations. During the Obama Administration, from 2009 to 2013, she was Deputy and Senior Advisor in the Office of Global Women's Issues at the State Department. During the Clinton Administration, she had a dual appointment in the White House as both Domestic Policy Advisor to the First Lady and Special Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy. She served as Senior Advisor on Women's Issues for the 2016 Clinton presidential campaign and transition team. Klein is currently heading the "Times Up" office in Washington D.C. Ms. Klein will share tangible tactics that she and the Time's Up campaign are using to change policy and build an intersectional movement to finally reach gender equity across all professions while establishing safe communities for women and girls free from harassment and sexual violence.

Noa Meyer is a Managing Director and Head of Philanthropy and Social Impact at BDT & Company. Prior to joining BDT, Noa was a Managing Director at Goldman Sachs where she launched and served as global head of *10,000 Women*, a strategic initiative around women's economic empowerment. Before Goldman Sachs, Noa worked with a number of foundations and non-profits focused on global development, including the Open Society and the Markle Foundation. She also held several positions in government, both in the White House and at USAID, and worked on two presidential campaigns and one prime ministerial campaign internationally.

The discussion will focus on how to develop public/private partnerships and the progress these women have seen throughout their careers around equality and equity for women and girls around the world.

Mar. 2: Class 6: - Corporate Activism & Social Responsibility

Guest speakers Corley Kenna, Leslie Dach, Francesca Olivier, Caroline Abrams

Corley Kenna is the Director, Global Communications and Public Relations at Patagonia, where she focuses heavily on a campaign promoting sustainability and climate change. She previously worked as the Director of Corporate Communications for Ralph Lauren, and served as Managing Director at the public affairs company, Burson-Marsteller, and worked as a research assistant at the U.S. State Department .

Leslie Dach served as the Executive Vice-President of Governmental Relations and Corporate Affairs at Walmart. Before joining Walmart, Dach was vice chairman of Edelman, a global public relations firm, and led the company's research, advertising and corporate social responsibility consulting divisions and its global public affairs, crisis, technology and health care practices.

Francesca Olivier is Senior Director of Innovation and Social Responsibility for Medline Industries, Inc. In 2019, she was listed as one of the 100 Most Influential leaders in Corporate Social Responsibility.

Caroline Abrams works at the NBA headquarters in New York City, focusing on philanthropy and social responsibility. She earned her degree in Kinesiology at the University of Michigan.

What responsibility do corporations have to their shareholders, and what responsibility do they have to society? Too often corporations are seen as the obstacle to social change, but many corporations are stepping out to take the lead and advance social progress. Hear how companies can utilize both the products/services they provide, as well as their marketing might, to change behavior for the greater good.

Mar. 9, Class 7: Navigating Capitol Hill

Guest speakers Hon. Steve Israel and Hon. Mark Kirk

Former Congressman Steve Israel left Capitol Hill – unindicted and undefeated – to pursue a career as a writer. In addition to writing two critically acclaimed satires of Washington, he heads the non-partisan Cornell University Institute of Politics and Global Affairs in New York City. Israel was a Member of Congress for sixteen years. He left in 2017, having served as House Democrats chief political strategist between 2011-2015 as Chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. Israel is a regular political commentator on MSNBC. His insights appear regularly in the New York Times, The Atlantic Magazine, as well as The Washington Post and Wall Street Journal.

In Congress, Israel was one of only nine members of the House Democratic leadership. As chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee for four years, Israel was the chief architect of House campaign strategies. He was responsible for overall development of competitive House campaigns across America. He was lauded for recruiting and electing the most diverse and entrepreneurial freshman congressional class in history. He developed a vast network of local, state and federal officials throughout the nation and is considered a leading expert in congressional dynamics.

Honorable Mark Kirk represented the State of Illinois in the U.S. Congress. After serving 10 years as a Republican centrist in the U.S. House of Representatives, Kirk was elected to the U.S. Senate, where he brought his coalition building approach to rally consensus on issues ranging from human rights to sanctions against Iran. Having traveled to more than 40 countries, Kirk made foreign policy, national security, and international trade cornerstones of his public service.

Kirk held positions at the World Bank and the U.S. Department of State and as a counsel to the House International Relations Committee. Senator Kirk also served for 23 years as an Intelligence Officer in the U.S. Navy Reserve.

Senator Kirk currently serves as a UN Foundation Arthur H. Vandenberg Distinguished Fellow and on the boards of the International Republican Institute, the National Defense University Foundation, and the African Middle Eastern Leadership (AMEL) Project.

Kirk and Israel, colleagues in the same freshman class, will share their insight into Capitol Hill and political activism. They will share advice on what it takes to get your representative to act on the issues you care about and how grassroots advocacy can be used most effectively.

Mar. 16, No Class, Spring Break

Mar 23. Class 8: When to use the law, and when to break it!

Guest speaker: Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. has spent his life as an activist and advocate for environmental and social justice. He serves as President of the Board of Waterkeeper Alliance, an organization he helped found. With more than 300 chapters internationally, Waterkeeper Alliance is the world's largest organization dedicated to advocacy for clean water. Bobby Kennedy, Jr. was voted by Time Magazine as a "Hero of the Planet."

Kennedy served as Senior Attorney for NRDC and also served a 30 day sentence in a Puerto Rican prison for civil disobedience against the U.S. Naval bombing in violation of the Clean Water Act. Kennedy will discuss when the greatest strategy to enact change is to litigate and when grassroots advocacy is the better course of action. He will describe his experience participating and leading civil disobedience and the history of peaceful protests.

Mar. 30, Class 9- On the Front Lines of Activism

Guest speakers:

Panel 1 Vanessa Wruble, Katie Eder

Panel 2: Mohamed Abubakar and Megan Hallahan, African Middle Eastern Leadership Project

Vanessa Wruble is the co-founder and lead organizer of the Women's March on Washington, where she served to right the imbalance of power, fight on behalf of all marginalized people, and ensure the end of structural patriarchy. After the success of the march, she went on to co-found and lead March On, the coalition

of Women's Marches across the country. March On's campaign [March On The Polls](#) is credited with substantially shifting the power balance in the country. Recently Vanessa has been on the front page of the [New York Times](#) and featured on [NPR's Here and Now](#), on NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt, CNN, Time Magazine, The Washington Post, [Vogue](#), and many other publications.

Previously Vanessa has dedicated her life to producing socially relevant media, political organizing, and redefining the global narrative of modern African culture. Okayafrika, the company she started with Questlove of The Roots, is now the largest media company focusing on a forward-thinking, nuanced view of Africa today. She previously worked as the first international correspondent at Al Gore's Current TV, as a Communication Specialist for the United Nations, and as a journalist for several print magazines. Wruble first arrived in Africa to work in humanitarian aid for an NGO in Sierra Leone, but quickly turned from development to deep immersion in the many, and unique, cultures overflowing on the continent. During her extensive time living and working in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Gabon, Sao Tome & Príncipe, Equatorial Guinea, and Somalia, Wruble found herself working with and representing some of Africa's biggest music stars. That led her to the great honor of working with the family of Fela Kuti to re-release his music, assist in the production of Fela! on Broadway, and reignite the legacy of Fela as an anti-colonialist, political revolutionary in the collective global consciousness.

Katie Eder is 19 years old and is the co-founder and Executive Director of the [Future Coalition](#). Built by youth activists, for youth activists, the Future Coalition is a national network that fosters community and collaboration among youth leaders and youth-led organizations. Their projects [Walkout To Vote](#) and the US Youth Climate Strikes have been written up in most major news outlets and shouted or tweeted out by the likes of Hillary Clinton, Snoop Dog, and Rachel Maddow. Young people have the ideas and passion to make incredible change in their local communities, in the country, and in the world. The Future Coalition provides these young people with the tools, resources, and support to power their ideas and amplify their impact. Katie is also a co-founder of [50 Miles More](#), an organization working to end gun violence in the United States, and Kids Tales, a nonprofit that empowers kids to find their voice using creative writing. Katie is currently taking two gap years before starting at Stanford University in the fall of 2020.

Panel 2: Mohamed Abubakr is the President of the African Middle Eastern Leadership Project (AMEL). Mohamed Abubakr is a Sudanese human rights activist and peacemaker with a decade and a half of civil society experience. Since high school, he has founded and led organizations and initiatives focused on humanitarian, human rights, youth empowerment and peace programs across the Middle East and Africa (MEA) including in Darfur, South Sudan, Sudan, Egypt, Israel, the Palestinian Territories and beyond. Mohamed has also documented, reported and mobilized against human rights abuses across MEA, and since arriving in the United States has become a sought after voice at the State Department and in Congress concerning policy and human rights issues in the region.

Megan Hallahan is the Executive Director of the AMEL project, focusing on the mission to mobilize, empower, and unite millennial leaders and activists from the Middle East and Africa to build resilient, inclusive societies that are free from discrimination, persecution, and violent coercion, and to advocate for policies in support of these goals.

Through online training, speaking engagements, fellowships, and strategic networking, bold and creative young African and Middle Eastern activists – both those living in the U.S. and those throughout the MEA region – are spreading inspiration, dialogue and solidarity, while at the same time building their skills and experience to ascend to top leadership positions.

From its multi-faith co-creation story, to its unique programming, AMEL is a wholly fresh approach to enabling the next generation of civic leaders, while strategically impacting relations between the U.S. and the MEA region.

The panels of incredible activists will share their insights into the campaigns they have developed-changing minds, changing behavior, changing structures and changing systems.

April 6, Class 10: Public Relations

Guest Speaker: Ken Sunshine, Founder, CEO, Sunshine Sachs Public Relations

Ken Sunshine started as a community organizer and later went on to run the public relations department for supervised music events. Sunshine served as the chief of staff for NYC Mayor David Dinkins. He worked on Mario Cuomo's gubernatorial campaign and is an advisor to current New York Governor Andrew Cuomo.

In 1991, Sunshine founded his public relations firm Ken Sunshine Consultants, which evolved into Sunshine Sachs.

Sunshine Sachs specializes in corporate image programs, crisis communication, reputation management and issues management, as well consumer and lifestyle marketing, public affairs, media relations, event promotion, and communications skills training. In 2014, Sunshine Sachs was named the number one public relations agency in New York by *New York Observer*.

Sunshine Sachs clients include: Barbra Streisand, Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Lopez, Lin Manuel Miranda and Ben Affleck, to name a few.

During this class session, Mr. Sunshine will share his insights into effective communication techniques and skills training. Each student will be asked to participate in a mock press conference, to get pointers on improving performance.

April 13, (Easter Monday) Class 11: Democracy is Not a Spectator Sport

Guest speakers Robert Shrum and Michael Murphy

Robert M. Shrum is the Director of the Center for the Political Future and the Carmen H. and Louis Warschaw Chair in Practical Politics at USC Dornsife. He is a former political strategist and consultant who was described as "the most sought-after consultant in the Democratic Party," by *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Mr. Shrum served as speechwriter to New York Mayor John V. Lindsay from 1970 to 1971, speechwriter to Sen. George McGovern's 1972 Presidential campaign and speechwriter and press secretary to Sen. Edward M. Kennedy

from 1980 to 1984. He served as senior advisor to the Gore-Lieberman campaign in 2000 and to the Kerry-Edwards campaign in 2004. Other former clients include Barbara Mikulski, Joe Biden, and John Glenn in their Senate campaigns, Bob Casey in his run for Governor of Pennsylvania, and Tom Bradley's run for Mayor of Los Angeles. His political memoir, *No Excuses: Concessions of a Serial Campaigner*, was published in June 2007 by Simon and Schuster.

Mike Murphy is the Co-Director of the Center for the Political Future. Murphy is one of the Republican Party's most successful political consultants. He's worked on six Republican presidential campaigns and is widely known for his work in the 2000 GOP primaries as a senior strategist for Senator John McCain. He has advised leaders in Canada, Central America, and the former Soviet Union. He is a widely known political pundit, appearing frequently on NBC, CNN, and NPR. How do you structure a political campaign? How do political campaigns serve as a mouthpiece for issues? Should the issue find the candidate or the candidate find the issue? How should activists get involved with campaigns to be most effective? What are the steps to running a successful political campaign?

April 20: Class 12: Liz Dozier: Philanthropy and Beyond

Guest speaker: Elizabeth Dozier

Liz Dozier is the Managing Director of Chicago Beyond, a philanthropic venture fund designed to improve life outcomes for young people in Chicago and beyond. Launched in 2016, Chicago Beyond has invested more than \$20M in nonprofit organizations and serves as a strategic partner to help scale their impact.

Her experience and passion for human rights have led Chicago Beyond to the forefront of investing in disruptive organizations and ideas that transform the lives of youth who are often least served. A former educator and high school principal, Dozier has worked tirelessly throughout her career to interrupt the culture of inequity that is often pervasive in urban education. She is most known for her innovative and creative approaches to successfully addressing the complex needs of the whole child.

Dozier is a National Board Certified Teacher, holds a bachelor's degree in Business and a Master's degree in Educational Leadership.

Most recently, Dozier's work was featured in Paul Tough's NY Times best-selling book, *How Children Succeed* and Harvard Education Press' *Belonging and Becoming: The Power of Social Emotional Learning in High Schools*. Ebony magazine named her one of its "Power 100" and CNN followed her work as a part of its docu-series, *Chicagoland*. She is most inspired by the promise and possibility that lies within every child and the daily opportunity she has to impact the trajectory of their lives.

April 27: Class 13 Final Presentations

FINAL ASSIGNMENT: Create an ACTION plan. Present your vision for the organization you want to join, create or shape. It can be a non-profit, a film production or a socially responsible corporation. How will you be an activist and what will you advocate for?

Students will work in groups of 3-4 people. The final presentation should be presented to the class in a 10 minute presentation.