

## Convening Diverse Groups to Resolve Public Issues

UNST 421-510/CRN 81801

Summer Term 2013, Urban Center 511

Laurel Singer, MS, LPC & Sarah Giles, MFA

School of Government - National Policy Consensus Center (NPCC)

### **Instructors:**

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### **Instructor Background:**

**Laurel Singer**, M.S., L.P.C., has been a mediator and facilitator since 1989, assisting teams and stakeholder groups in designing and implementing the most effective process possible to resolve conflicts, make decision, and implement projects collaboratively. Laurel currently serves as the Interim Director of Oregon Consensus, a program of the National Policy Consensus Center (NPCC) at Portland State University that seeks to promote the use of consensus based processes for resolving public issues throughout the state. In her role, she also oversees NPCC's training and internship program. A recipient of the Oregon Mediation Association's Bryan Johnston Award for excellence in the area of Public Policy in 2011, she brings extensive experience working in human services both at the direct service and at the management level. Laurel brings over close to 25 years of experience providing skill based training in communication, mediation, and conflict resolution. She is an adjunct professor in the Conflict Resolution Master Degree Program at the University of Oregon as well as having served as an adjunct professor in the Portland State University's Professional Development Program.

**Sarah Giles**, MFA, began working for PCI / NPCC in 2007, where her work includes research and writing on collaborative governance, managing a national network of university centers dedicated to collaborative governance processes, and other special projects. Sarah was previously a Research Assistant with the Department of Health Promotion and Sports Medicine at Oregon Health and Sciences University. From 2002-2006, Sarah taught writing at the University of Arizona where she also received her MFA in Creative Writing. She graduated cum laude from Vassar College in 2001 and was a Fulbright Scholar in Germany, where she taught English to elementary and secondary level students.

### **Course Description:**

Creating sustainable solutions to the most critical and pressing issues confronting our communities is only possible when diverse stakeholders are able to come together to collaborate. This course is designed to give students an opportunity to gain essential knowledge and skills to work effectively in collaboration with others, and to understand how that same collaborative process is successfully being used to solve our most pressing community problems. Local leaders can play a critical role serving as "conveners" to bring together diverse groups of stakeholders to collaboratively resolve issues impacting the community at large. In this course, students will interview leaders who have served as conveners for Oregon Solutions collaborative projects, and assess what elements are needed to effectively serve in this role to ensure a successful outcome. At the end of the term, students will present their findings in a written report and oral presentation to Oregon Solutions staff.

### **Course Objectives:**

- A. To increase student's broad understanding of the collaborative process and appreciation for how the diversity of perspectives among stakeholder groups can be an asset when developing effective, sustainable solutions to community problems using a consensus based approach. (Diversity; Social and Ethical Responsibility)
- B. To develop student's ability to work collaboratively in teams across diverse interests and backgrounds.
- C. To increase student's interviewing, research, qualitative data analysis and organizational skills. (Critical Thinking)
- D. To enhance student's facility and confidence in interpersonal communication, writing, and public speaking. (Communication)
- E. To increase student's awareness about the role of the convener in bringing together diverse stakeholders to work collaboratively in resolving public issues. Through interviewing project conveners, students will learn to identify the systematic social, political, economic and environmental interests that contribute to civic decision-making. (Social and Ethical Responsibility)

### **Required Reading:**

Policy Consensus Initiative. (2007). "A Practical Guide to Collaborative Governance" JAMS Foundation. Portland, Oregon. [Purchase online](#) - \$15. Pick up with receipt at Urban 720.

Students will read uploaded materials and conduct independent research to familiarize themselves with a select Oregon Solutions collaborative projects.

## **Course Outline:**

### **Week One: Classroom Instruction**

(Classroom sessions are highly interactive, integrating theory and practice through lectures, demonstrations, small group discussions, dyad and individual exercises, and role plays.)

*Monday, June 24, 11:45am-5:45pm* Form our team; broaden understanding of the paradigm of collaboration and consensus based decision making.

*Tuesday, June 25, 11:45am-5:45pm* Build skills for collaboration: listening, interests, framing, consensus.

*Wednesday, June 26, 11:45am-5:45pm* Skills needed to convene a collaborative process.  
(4:00-5:30pm Project updates presented by project managers.)

### **Week Two: Classroom Instruction & Convener Interviews**

*Monday, July 1, 11:45am-4:45pm* Preparing for the Convener Interviews (2:45-4:00pm Presentation/Interview with *Bev Stein*, Oregon Solutions Director.)

*Tuesday, July 2, 9:00am-1:00pm* Depart from Urban Center for Convener Interviews

*Wednesday, July 3, 9:00am-1:00pm* Depart from Urban Center for Convener Interviews

### **Week Three: Analysis of Assessment Interviews and Preparation of Final Presentation**

*Monday, July 8, 11:45am-4:45pm* Analyze Interview Results

*Tuesday, July 9, 11:45am-4:45pm* Write Report & Organize for NPCC Presentation

*Wednesday, July 10, 11:45am-4:45pm* Write Report & Organize for NPCC Presentation

### **Week Four: The Final Presentation**

*Monday, July 15, 12:00pm-3:00pm* Trial Run of Presentation, Urban Center, 7<sup>th</sup> floor, 720

*Thursday, July 18, 2:30pm-5:00pm* Presentation to Staff, Urban Center, 7<sup>th</sup> floor, Meyer Room

## **Course Requirements:**

All activities in this course are designed to help students fully achieve the defined learning outcomes for the class. To achieve these goals, students are expected to:

- 1) Attend and participate in all classes, including completing reflective prompts assigned in class and reading required materials
- 2) Participate in and conduct interviews
- 3) Analyze interview results and collaborate with teams to prepare assigned portion of the final written report and oral presentation
- 4) Make a presentation of conclusions to staff at the National Policy Consensus Center

### **Working Agreements as a Collaborative Team/Class Member:**

To be developed during first class session.

It is strongly encouraged that you read the [student conduct code](#), which details your rights and responsibilities as a student and member of the Portland State Community.

Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and the Disability Resource Center (DRC). Students with accommodations approved through the DRC are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through the DRC should contact the DRC immediately at 503-725-4150.

### **Grading:**

Grading guidelines to be developed during first class session.