SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

Fall 2013

Political Science 226
Haverford College

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(and by appointment)

Course Description

A social movement consists of individuals acting collectively with some degree of organization and continuity, and at least partially outside the normal political processes and institutions, to bring about societal change. Mass protest has been a vibrant part of American political history from the start, but it has attracted more and more scholarly attention in recent decades as ordinary citizens have “taken to the streets” to advance causes about which they feel passionately. Often, their efforts have made a difference. In the realm of civil rights, women’s rights, environmental protection, abortion, taxation, gay and lesbian rights, religion, and peace, activists have played a vital role in reshaping American society, culture, and politics.

Some of the central questions we will consider in this course include: Why do social movements emerge from time to time? Why do some succeed while others fail? Why do some individuals actively participate? Why do certain social movements remain outside the political system while others gradually blend in? What organizational forms do social movements take? What strategies and tactics have been effective in producing change? And what impact have social movements had on politics and society in the United States?

In sum, this course seeks to expose students to the major concepts and issues in the study of social movements. Drawing upon a rich body of social movement theory over the past four decades, students will then engage in their own research project by examining one or more social movements while attempting to address a theoretical issue of particular interest and importance.

Requirements

Class participation 20%
First analytical paper 20%
Second analytical paper 30%
Research paper (12-15 pages) 30%

Texts

Todd Gitlin, *Occupy Nation: The Roots, the Spirit, and the Promise of Occupy Wall Street* (itbooks 2012)

All other assigned readings will be available through Moodle.
Topics and Readings

Week 1

I. Introduction to Course

A. Social Movements and Theory

B. Social Movements and American Politics


Todd Gitlin, Preface and Ch. 1, *Occupy Nation*

Week 2

II. Facilitating Conditions

A. Societal Strain and Discontent

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Bourgeois and Proletarians” in *Social Movements*, eds. Steven M. Buechler and F. Kurt Cylke


Doug McAdam, Ch. 1, *Political Process and the Politics of Black Insurgency*

B. Resources and Organizations

John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory” (Ch.19, G&J)


Jo Freeman, “The Women’s Movement” (Ch.3, G&J)

Doug McAdam, Ch. 2, *Political Process and the Politics of Black Insurgency*

Week 3

C. Political Opportunities

Doug McAdam, Ch. 3, *Political Process and the Politics of Black Insurgency*

J. Craig Jenkins and Charles Perrow, “Farmworkers’ Movements in Changing Political Contexts” (Ch.29, G&J)

Roberta Ann Johnson, “Mobilizing the Disabled” in *Social Movements of the Sixties and Seventies*, ed. Jo Freeman

Week 4

D. Political Opportunities (cont’d)

Doug McAdam, Chs. 4-9, Political Process and the Politics of Black Insurgency
Film in class: “Freedom Riders”

First Analytical Paper Due

Week 5

III. Recruitment

A. Rational Self-Interest

Mancur Olson, “The Free Rider Problem” (Ch.6, G&J)

B. Social Networks

Doug McAdam, “Recruits to Civil Rights Activism” (Ch.7, G&J)

C. Grievances (Reconsidered)

Steven M. Buechler, “The Strange Career of Strain and Breakdown Theories of Collective Action” in Social Movements, eds. David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi
Film in class: “Eyes on the Prize: School Busing in Boston”

Week 6

D. Framing

1. Making Connections


2. Emotions


3. Limitations of Framing

Jane J. Mansbridge, “Ideological Purity in the Women’s Movement” (Ch.15, G&J)
Charlotte Ryan and William A. Gamson, “Are Frames Enough? (Ch.16, G&J)

**Research Paper Proposal Due**

Week 7

**FALL BREAK**

Week 8

IV. Oppositional Consciousness

A. Cultural Hegemony/Counterhegemony

Kristin Luker, “World Views of Pro- and Anti-Abortion Activists” (Ch.14, G&J)
Todd Gitlin, Chs. 2-4, *Occupy Nation*

B. Free Spaces


C. Collective Identity

Week 9

V. Sustaining Commitment

Eric L. Hirsch, “Generating Commitment Among Students” (Ch. 10, G&J)
Bert Klandermans, “Disengaging from Movements” (Ch.12, G&J)
Film in class: “Occupation: The Harvard Living Wage Sit-In”

Week 10

VI. Strategies and Tactics

A. The Question of Militance

Saul D. Alinsky, “Protest Tactics” (Ch.23, G&J)
Todd Gitlin, Chs. 9-11, Occupy Nation

B. The Question of Forum

Vivian Gornick, “Consciousness” in Radical Feminism: A Documentary Reader, ed. Barbara A. Crow
Jeffrey M. Berry, “The Rise of Citizen Groups” in Civic Engagement in American Democracy, eds. Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina

Week 11

VII. Internal Structures of Social Movements

A. Leadership and Organization

Todd Gitlin, Chs. 5-8, *Occupy Nation*

B. Factionalism

Carol Mueller, “The Organizational Basis of Conflict in Contemporary Feminism” in *Feminist Organizations*, eds. Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin

Week 12

VIII. External Influences

A. The State


B. The Media

Todd Gitlin, “The Media in the Unmaking of the New Left” (Ch.30, G&J)

Week 13

C. Countermovements


D. Globalization

Stephen Lerner, “Global Corporations, Global Unions” (Ch.33, G&J)
Jackie Smith, “The Transnational Network for Democratic Globalization” (Ch.22, G&J)

Research Paper Due
Week 14

IX. The Decline of Movements


Todd Gitlin, Ch. 12, *Occupy Nation*


Film in class: “Rebels with a Cause”

Week 15

X. The Impacts of Movements

David S. Meyer, “How Social Movements Matter” (Ch.39, G&J)


Marco G. Giugni, “Personal and Biographical Consequences in *Social Movements*, eds. David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi

Nancy Whittier, “The Consequences of Social Movements for Each Other” in *Social Movements*, eds. David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi

*Second Analytical Paper Due at End of Exam Period*