

# THE QUEST FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

SC751 (Spring, 2006): William A. Gamson (Ofc: McGuinn 520) <gamson@bc.edu>

## SYLLABUS

This seminar draws on the literature in political sociology and social movements to address sustained efforts to bring about social and political change. It is geared toward the problems and issues faced by groups involved in such efforts: (a) diagnosing the opportunities and constraints provided by the system in which they are operating; (b) analyzing the problems of mobilizing potential supporters and maintaining their continued loyalty and commitment; (c) devising effective strategies for influencing targets of change; and (d) dealing with counter-efforts at social control.

The course is intended as a core course for those interested in social economy and social justice and for those students who are considering political sociology or social movements as one of their special areas. We begin by looking at the theoretical roots of the study of contentious politics and then examine overviews of the state of the field today. In Part 2, we will consider the internal problems of the field of actors attempting to bring about social change. In Part 3, we will consider the opportunities and constraints under which these agents act in their attempts to bring about change and the efficacy of the strategies they pursue. In Part 4, we consider the cultural turn in social movements and the role of the mass media in symbolic politics and framing contests.

To make the material more concrete, we will utilize both a common case and individual cases to be chosen by the class participants. The civil rights movement will provide the common case.

## READING

The common readings will consist of the three books below (all paperbacks, available at the BC bookstore and on reserve in the library) plus articles and excerpts (available for downloading on WebCT). In addition, you will be expected to do reading relevant to your individual case. The books:

Gamson, William A. (1992) *Talking Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.  
Ryan, Charlotte. (1991) *Prime Time Activism*. Boston: South End Press.  
McAdam, Doug, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. (2001) *Dynamics of Contention*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

**Reading on the Civil Rights Movement:** To inform yourself about the civil rights movement, I suggest that you watch the documentary, *Eyes on the Prize* (available on videotape at the BC Library). Perhaps the two most important books in terms of theoretical analysis and influence are:

McAdam, Doug (1982) *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Morris, Aldon D. (1984) *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. New York: The Free Press.

Among the other excellent books and articles that fill out the picture, I would especially recommend:

King, Mary (1987) *Freedom Song*. New York: Morrow.

McAdam, Doug (1988) *Freedom Summer*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Payne, Charles M. (1995) *I've Got the Light of Freedom*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

## **REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS**

You will be expected to develop a case study in historical depth. The case should be a social movement as a whole with a focus on some central organization within it. Ideally, it should be a case with which you are already personally familiar through participation and reading. We will expect you to be a resource for the class on this case and to draw on it for examples when issues arise in class discussions for which it is relevant. You will be asked to submit a caseform by the third session and your case will be the basis for the three short working papers (5-6 pages each) described below. You may also be asked to present your case to the seminar.

The three short papers will focus respectively on Parts 2, 3, and 4 as described below:

### **Part I: Introduction and Overview**

Class Sessions:

January 19: Introduction

January 26: Historical Traditions and Theoretical Roots

#### **Required Reading :**

William Kornhauser (1959) *The Politics of Mass Society* (The Free Press), posted.

Robert A. Dahl (1967) *Pluralist Democracy in the United States* (Rand-McNally), posted.

Karl Marx. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (International Publishers, 1963), posted.

John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald (1977) "Resource Mobilization in Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82:1212-41, posted.

Gamson, William A. (1975, 1990) *Strategy of Social Protest*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, Ch. 1-3 and 9 (pp. 1-38 and 130-44), posted.

Feb. 2 and 9: State of the Field Today: Overview

**Required Reading :**

Gamson, William A. (1975, 1990) *Strategy of Social Protest*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, Ch. 10: 145-180, posted.

McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, Ch. 1-6 (Part I and II) and Ch. 10 (Conclusions), pp. 3-190 and 305-347.

**Part 2: Issues of Agency**

Feb. 16: Rational Actors and Emotions.

**Required Reading :**

Mancur Olson (1965) *The Logic of Collective Action*. (Harvard University Press), p. 1-22 and 132-67, posted.

Bruce Fireman and William A. Gamson (1979) "Utilitarian Logic in the Resource Mobilization Perspective" from John McCarthy and Mayer Zald (eds), *The Dynamics of Social Movements*. (Winthrop), pp. 8-44, posted.

Ron Aminzade and Doug McAdam (2001) "Emotions and Contentious Politics," from *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, posted.

Goodman, Jeff, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta (2001) *Passionate Politics*, Introduction and Conclusion, pp. 1-24 and 303-316, posted.

James M. Jasper (1997) "Rituals and Emotions at Diablo Canyon: Sustaining Activist Identities" Ch. 8 from *The Art of Moral Protest*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, posted.

George E. Marcus, W. Russell Neuman, and Michael MacKuen (2000), pp. 126-140 from *Affective Intelligence and Political Judgment*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, posted.

Feb. 23: Loyalty, Commitment, Solidarity and Collective Identity.

**Required Reading :**

William A. Gamson (1992) "The Social Psychology of Collective Action" from Aldon Morris and Carol Mueller, *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, pp. 29-50, posted.

William A. Gamson (1991) "Commitment and Agency in Social Movements" *Sociological Forum* 6:27-50, posted.

Alberto Melucci (1995) "The Process of Collective Identity" from Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans, ed. *Social Movements and Culture*, University of Minnesota Press, posted.

Rick Fantasia (1988) *Cultures of Solidarity*. (University of California), pp. 3-24 and 226-245, posted. .

Sharon Kurtz (2002) *Workplace Justice*. (University of Minnesota Press) "What's in a Name: The Making of Movement Identity," posted.

Francesca Polletta, (1998) "Contending Stories: Narrative in Social Movements" *Qualitative Sociology* 21:419-46, posted. [Possible update here ?]

Josh Gamson (1995) "Must Identity Movements Self-Destruct? A Queer Dilemma," *Social Problems* 42:101-18, posted.

March 2: Organization.

**Required Reading :**

Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward (1977) *Poor People's Movements*. (Pantheon), pp. ix-xxiv and 1-37, posted.

William A. Gamson and Emilie Schmeidler (1984) "Organizing the Poor" *Theory and Society* 13:567-85, posted.

Wini Breines (1982) *Community and Organization in the New Left*. (J.F. Bergin), pp. 46-66, posted.

Polletta, Francesca (2002) *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting* (Chicago), pp. 1-25 and 202-230, posted.

**(Paper #1 due on March 16)**

**Part 3: Issues of Opportunities, Constraints, and Strategies**

March 16: Contentious Strategies.

**Required Reading :**

William A. Gamson (1990) *Strategy of Social Protest*, Ch. 6 ("The Success of the Unruly"), pp. 72-88, posted.

William A. Gamson and David S. Meyer, "Framing Political Opportunity" from Doug McAdam, John McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (eds), *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 275-90, posted.

March 23: Elections as Opportunities and Constraints.

**Required Reading :**

Talcott Parsons (1959) "Voting and the Equilibrium of the American Political System" from E. Burdick and A. Brodbeck (eds), *American Voting Behavior* (The Free Press), 204-36, posted.

March 30: The Dynamics of Movements.

**Required Reading :**

E. E. Schattschneider (1960) *The Semi-Sovereign People*, Ch. 1-4 and 8, pp. 1-77 and 129-42, posted.

**(Paper #2 due on Nov. 18)**

#### **Part 4: Issues of Framing and Cultural Politics**

April 6: Framing Contests and Collective Action Frames

**Required Reading:**

William A. Gamson (1992) *Talking Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

William A. Gamson (1998) "Social Movements and Cultural Change" in Marco G. Giugni, Doug McAdam, and Charles Tilly, *From Contention to Democracy*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 57-77, posted.

[No class on April 13: Holiday]

April 20: Strategic Use of Media for Social Change.

**Required Reading:**

Charlotte Ryan (1991) *Prime Time Activism*. Boston: South End Press.

#### **Part 5: Case Presentations**

April 27 and May 4: Case presentations from class.

**(Paper #3 due on May 4)**

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