

Syllabus: Sociology 391
Social Movements
Fall 2009

Tuesdays 4:30 to 6:50 pm
McGuinn 415

Professor: Betsy Leondar-Wright (betsy@classmatters.org; 781-648-0630)

Office hours: Tuesday 4-4:25 and 7-7:30 and by appointment, in Room 410B

Required books available for purchase and on reserve:

- Moyer, Bill, with Joanne McAllister and Steven Soifer. 2001. *Doing Democracy: The MAP Model for Organizing Social Movements*. New Society Publishers.
- Gamson, William A. 1990. 2nd edition. *The Strategy of Social Protest*. Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Stout, Linda. 1996. *Bridging the Class Divide*. Beacon Press.

If the cost of buying the books poses a hardship for you, please notify the professor. All other readings will be posted electronically or placed on reserve.

Overview:

Social movements have played a major role in U.S. history, helping to bring about the end of slavery, votes for women, the 40-hour week, and clean water laws, among many other social changes we now take for granted. But the role of movements is widely misunderstood, denigrated by some and unrealistically glorified by others. In fact, movements face predictable strategic dilemmas and are more effective or ineffective in reaching their goals depending on the choices movement leaders and activists make at key junctures. This course will give an overview of social movement theory and will apply concepts to case studies.

While the course spotlights progressive movements in the U.S., the strategy lessons can be applied to right-wing movements and international movements as well. In readings, assignments and films, students will learn from social movement practitioners as well as from academic researchers and writers.

Studying social movements illuminates many other aspects of our society: for example, how pluralist democracy works and fails to work; the role of emotions and values in public life; issue framing and how public opinion shapes and is shaped by the media; organizational development of voluntary groups; power dynamics among people diverse in race, class, gender and other identities; and the particular social problems that social movements have addressed.

The course is based on a theory of learning that emphasizes the many different aspects of human intelligence, including auditory, oral, visual, kinesthetic, analytical, interactive, and applied learning. Students will learn by reading, listening to lectures and discussions, viewing films, seeing diagrams, participating in and watching exercises, answering questions, solving problems, discussing and debating ideas, and teaching each other. The assignments and in-class activities are deliberately diverse to allow you to demonstrate your strongest mode and to strengthen your ability to learn via other modes.

SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS

Tuesday September 8 - Orientation to the course; What is a social movement?

Tuesday September 15 - What predicts a movement's rise? The Civil Rights Movement

Reading: Moyer Chapters 1 to 4

Film: *Eyes on the Prize* excerpt

Tuesday September 22 - What predicts demobilization? The Civil Rights Movement

Reading: Moyer chapter 6; Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest* pp. 14-54

Film: *Eyes on the Prize* excerpt

Student presentation(s) on 60's movements

Tuesday September 29 – What predicts movement success or failure?

Reading: Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest* pp. 55-129, 145-178

Student presentation(s) on labor and worker solidarity movement(s)

Tuesday October 6 – Non-cooperation as power; the anti-apartheid movement

Reading: Ackerman & Duvall, *Force More Powerful*, pp. 1-9, 335-368;

Zunes, Stephen, "The Role of Nonviolence in the Downfall of Apartheid,"

chapter 11 of Zunes, Kurtz & Asher, *Nonviolent Social Movements*

Film: *Force More Powerful* segment on South Africa

Student presentation(s) on movements using mass non-violent direct action

Tuesday October 13 - Collective action frames: Identity, Agency and Injustice components

Reading: Gamson, "Constructing Social Protest"; Moyer, Chapter 5

Student presentation(s) on lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender movement(s)

Tuesday October 20 – Strategic choices II – Creating a sense of agency & empowerment

Readings: Stout, chapters 1 to 4;

Piven & Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*, Introduction, pp xix-xxiv, 1-39

Student presentation(s) on low-income-led anti-poverty movement(s)

Tuesday October 27 – Midterm exam; open discussion at the halfway point in course

(No readings or presentations)

Tuesday November 3 - Strategic choices III – Framing the injustice; picking a campaign

Readings: Ryan, *Primetime Activism* chapters 3 and 4;

Bobo, *Organizing for Social Change: Midwest Academy Manual*, pp. 22-28

Student presentation(s) on pairs of left- & right-wing movements & counter-movements

Tuesday November 10 - Parody and getting the public's attention in the Web 2.0 media era

Readings: Boyd, "Irony, meme warfare"; Grote, "Kneel Before Bush!" in Shepard & Hayduk

Smith, Costello & Brecher, "Social Movements 2.0," (*The Nation*, January 15,

2009; access online at

http://www.thenation.com/doc/20090202/smith_costello_brecher)

Student presentation(s) on movements using more new media & communications

Choice of movements for final paper due

Tuesday November 17 - Strategic choices IV: How much distinct movement culture should a movement have? The anti-nuclear movement

Reading: Moyer, chapter 7; Lofland, "Charting Degrees of Movement Culture"

Student presentation(s) on movements with a countercultural component

Tuesday November 24 –Tastes in tactics, power and privilege; Whose culture becomes the movement culture?

Reading: Stout, chapter 5-8; Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, chapters 9 and 10

Student presentation(s) on cross-class movement(s)

Tuesday December 1 -- Strategic choices V – Insider/outsider roles, militancy in tactics

Reading: Moyer, Chapter 10; Lofland, *Polite Protesters*, chapter 1

Student presentation(s) on movement(s) with both militant-outsider and moderate work-within-the-system wings

Outline of final paper with source list due

Tuesday December 8 - Wrapping up lessons learned about social movement strategies

Student presentation(s) on current movement(s)

Course Expectations and Grading:

1) The readings are a very important part of the course. Readings are due *on the date they are listed*. Please come to class ready to discuss them. You may be called on and asked to summarize the main points of a reading whether or not you raise your hand. The midterm exam will be based in part on the readings; any information or idea in any reading may turn up in an exam question.

2) Class participation is also important, as this course involves learning from each other. Both speaking and focused listening will be valued; either too much silence *or* too much over-participation (interrupting others or dominating discussions) could negatively affect your grade.

If you miss a class session, you are responsible for getting notes from a classmate. More than one unexcused absence will lower your grade by 3 points per absence. A doctor, school administrator, or other certified official must verify an absence in order for it to be excused on the basis of illness, death or hospitalization in the family or other emergency (defined as an unforeseen and unavoidable crisis). Notes from family members will not be accepted. If you have a special circumstance that makes a non-medical excused absence likely (e.g., if you are a single parent with no back-up in case of childcare cancellation; if you have a required trip for an internship), please let me know at the beginning of the semester; don't wait until you actually miss a class. Arriving more than 10 minutes late counts as an absence.

3) The midterm exam will be a multiple choice test using a scantron form, with approximately 40 questions to be completed in 75 minutes (half the session on October 27).

The questions will be drawn from the readings, films, and presentations by the professor and by students. Answering them correctly will not require memorizing exact dates or other factual details; instead you will need to understand theories and concepts, movement stories and lessons drawn from them, and strategies and their outcomes.

Please notify the professor and the Assistant Dean for Students with Disabilities ahead of time if you have a disability and require more time and/or an alternate format for the exam.

4) ASSIGNMENTS

A) **Presentations.** Each student will make one 10-minute in-class presentation to teach the class lessons drawn from one movement related to the week's topic, using at least one mode in addition to verbally telling information (e.g., visual aid, brief video or audio clip, dramatic storytelling, performance, or interactive activity). (A PowerPoint or hand-out with just a bullet point outline of what is presented verbally does not count as another mode, unless photos or graphic charts are also included to turn it into a visual aid. If you use PowerPoint, please bring it on a flash drive and alert the professor the week before.)

Base the presentation on web research and on roughly 75 to 200 pages of extra reading in two or more books or articles. Suggested readings are listed on the sign-up sheet; all are on reserve shelves, on electronic course reserves, or on the web. Feel free to substitute other readings; look for ones with some critical evaluation of the movement, not just its chronology.

The content of the ideal presentation will have just a *small* amount of information about the issues, goals and major players (introducing two or more organizations), just enough background to orient the listeners. Most of the presentation will focus on the movement's strategies, tactics, messages, responses from public and power-holders, any notable successes or failures, and strategic implications that could be applied to other movements. In other words, don't try to cram every fact you learn about the movement into your presentation, but think of two or three important lessons to teach the class and choose examples to make those points.

Use of course theories will be a plus, and will be increasingly expected as the semester progresses. Thus there's a trade-off in which week you sign up for: in earlier weeks, you'll have more time pressure but lower expectations for grading; later you'll have more time to prepare, but higher expectations for using course concepts to get a good grade.

Sign-up for slots will start with a passed-around sign-up sheet during the first two class sessions and then continue on Blackboard. Each student should commit to a slot no later than the end of September.

B) **Framing questions online discussions.** Write brief observations and reflections under each Blackboard discussion topic (listed below and on the course Blackboard site) as you notice relevant ideas and examples in the readings, films, presentations, exercises and discussions in the course.

1. **EARLY STAGES:** Why do social movements start up when they do? What can aspiring activists do to help spark a new movement?
2. **MOBILIZATION:** What makes people reluctant to participate in social movements? What works to mobilize supporters and energize activists?
3. **MESSAGING:** In framing and disseminating an issue, what works to sway public opinion?
4. **WHY DECLINE:** What causes movements to decline and disappear? What can activists do to prevent decline?
5. **WHY SUCCESS OR FAILURE:** What factors contributes to movements' success or failure in winning institutional and/or cultural change? Which factors are within activists' control, making them strategic choices, and which factors can't activists control?

At some random date in the second half of the course I will tally how many entries each student has made on Blackboard under each discussion topic. The expectation is that you've been

averaging two or more entries a week, so by that point you will have three or more entries under each of the 5 questions, responding to two or more course sources per question. Each entry should be approximately 25 to 100 words that summarize an idea or an example related to the question and reflect on it. Please note the source you're responding to (eg, "re Moyer," "re Eyes on the Prize," or "re Jessica's presentation on Seattle WTO protests.")

Your discussion entries will not be graded for content or length. You will be given full credit if you have made 15 or more appropriate and thoughtful entries; half credit if you have made fewer than 15 entries, and/or if they seem "phoned in" (i.e. not based on actually reading/listening and thinking about the ideas, but careless and generated by rote from titles); or no credit for little or no Blackboard discussion at all.

Don't worry about spelling or grammar, full sentences, footnotes, outside sources, eloquent writing or completeness. These brief reflections are a tool to help you notice the themes that run through the course materials, a way for students to dialogue with each other, and a record of your evolving thinking on these questions.

C) Final paper. Minimum 12 pages, maximum 20 pages, double-spaced (~3500 to ~6000 words, not counting title page or bibliography). Due Thursday December 17 by midnight. Submit by email to betsy@classmatters.org.

Intermediate deadlines:

Your choice of movement (just a quick email or slip of paper with the name of movement you will write about) **is due November 10.**

A one-page outline of your ideas and sources is due December 1.

Topic: Pick a current or historical full-fledged social movement. (It can be the same as or different than the movement you did your presentation on. If you have an idea for a movement not included in the course readings or presentation options, please run it by me before beginning your research.)

Imagine you've been asked to come as an advisor to a strategy meeting of all the major organizations part of the movement (currently or at a certain point in time). After briefly (1 to 2 pages) describing the issue/goal, the political context, and multiple organizations involved, make recommendations on how they can make progress towards their goal.

First, evaluate the movement to date. Apply the MAP theory: what stage are they at, and what roles are and aren't being played? Applying the Gamson theory, what have they been doing that makes it likely they will or won't win new advantages from power-holders? Applying Stout's theories, are they building the most effective coalitions, and do they have the most empowering organizational forms and cultures?

Second, what would you recommend they do? Design a particular, time-limited campaign for them: propose a winnable goal, a target opponent and a strategy, including non-cooperation; suggest what messaging they should put forth; and lay out the tactics they should use. In your advice for this campaign, include all the components of a collective action frame: identity, agency, and framing the injustice. Recommend which people and groups within their potential constituencies they should mobilize and how, how they should react to opponents, and what potential allies they should and shouldn't reach out to. Include a realistic assessment of outcomes.

Finally, summarize the ideas behind your recommendations and the general lessons you draw from this movement's actual efforts and from this hypothetical strategy exercise.

Final papers should draw on and cite at least three course readings and at least three non-course sources, referenced using APA or another standard academic form of citation (see <http://www.library.cornell.edu/resrch/citmanage/apa>). Aim to include sources both inside and outside the movement you are writing about. Wikipedia and promotional websites, brochures and such organizational materials do not count towards the three non-course sources, though you are welcome to consult them and cite them as well. Academic publications, external evaluations and other longer and more rigorous sources will be given more weight in grading than short, casual sources.

Failure to turn in a one-page outline with topic, sources and ideas by December 1 will reduce the grade on the final paper by one half-step (e.g., B to B-). Late papers will also lose a half-step (e.g., B to B-) for each day after the due date, except with a valid health excuse or unforeseen family emergency verified by a note from a doctor or institutional administrator. Notes from family members or friends will not be accepted.

The presentation, Blackboard entries, and final paper all require you to put forward opinions. Feel free to try out a stance new to you, or one you aren't sure you actually agree with. If you disagree with the professor or the author of a reading, you will not be graded more strictly for that; if you agree, you will not be graded more leniently. All positions you take will be evaluated by whether you have presented evidence and whether you make a reasoned argument.

GRADING

Grades will be calculated on a 100-point scale.

Class attendance and participation	15%
Framing questions Blackboard entries	15%
Midterm exam	20%
In-class presentation assignment	20%
Final paper	30%

Grading Scale:

101 or more=A+	74-77= C+
94-100= A	70-73= C
90-93= A-	66-69= C-
86-89= B+	62-65= D+
82-85= B	58-61= D
78-81= B-	54-57= D-
	53-00= F

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity standards are of utmost importance in this course. Guidelines for academic integrity in written work are posted on the BC website at:

<http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#integrity>

Outright plagiarism of a written assignment or cheating on the midterm exam will result in failing the course and notification of the dean. Lesser degrees of noncompliance with BC's policies on academic integrity will result in a lower grade on the assignment in question. It is your responsibility to know the rules of citation. If you have any questions pertaining to the academic integrity guidelines, please come and talk with the professor.

Disability accommodation

Students needing a change in the time, location and/or format of the midterm exam due to a disability, or needing any other disability accommodation, should inform the professor at the beginning of the semester. For more information, please see <http://www.bc.edu/offices/odsd/disabilityservices.html> or call the Dean for Students with Disabilities at 617-552-3470.