Protest, Politics and Change: Social Movements

Brandeis University
Sociology 155B
M W 5-6:20pm Shiffman Humanities Center 122

Instructor:
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Office hours in Pearlman 209 M, W after class

The study of social movements is a vibrant and rapidly growing field in Sociology. This course will introduce key models in which to understand a range of contentious actions. We will draw from literature grounded in the Civil Rights Movements and expand outwards to think about recent cases such as Occupy Wall Street and movements around health, the environment, gender and global justice. This course will not focus directly on different kinds of movements but will overall explore the components of political contention such as resources, political opportunities, activist recruitment, frames, and tactics. Our goal will be to grasp these conceptual building blocks that can then be applied directly and critically to particular cases of interest. To this end, your final project will include a case of your choosing and varied sources (including theoretical models, empirical studies, film, music, memoir and others) to explore the contentious dynamics.

Readings:

There is one required book for the course, David A. Snow and Sarah A. Soule’s A Primer on Social Movements, which is available at the campus bookstore. The rest of the course readings will be articles posted on LATTE. Students are expected to have completed the readings before class and come prepared to engage in the discussion. You will get the most out of the readings if you read them more than once and take detailed notes.

The readings listed in the syllabus may be supplemented with newspaper articles on current events related to the course and students’ interests.

Assignments:
Detailed descriptions of each assignment will be handed out at later dates.

-Activist Biographical Analysis (20%)
This assignment requires that you interview an activist to gather a personal account of social movement participation and use class concepts to explore their activist trajectory.

-Movement artifact analysis (20%)
For this paper, you will select an artifact/object and explain its usage relative to internal and external meanings for the movement. This could take any form (music, art, clothing, posters etc) as long as it is physically observable.

-Class quiz (10%)
The quiz will consist of multiple choice, fill-in the blanks and short answer. It will cover basic definitions, main theories, and cases from the readings.
-Final Project (35%)
The final project for this class will be an in-depth examination of a social movement or set of protest campaigns of your choosing. More details on the requirements will be handed out at a later date and you will be required to hand in a one page or less proposal of your project before undertaking it.

-Participation (15%)
Much of the success of a course like this comes from the active participation of students. You will be expected to do the readings before class and come ready to discuss and pose questions. Attendance will be factored into this portion of the grade as well as participation in discussion section.

*Students will be held to the highest standards of academic integrity and plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you have any questions about plagiarism please look at the plagiarism section in the University Handbook, the LTS informational website: http://lts.brandeis.edu/teachlearn/support/academic-integrity/index.html or speak directly with me.

*If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

Please note: this syllabus is subject to change

Week 1/ Jan 14, 16  Introduction to the field of Social Movements
Readings: Drake Bennett, “The Upside of Down With’ Boston Globe
Molly Crabapple: “My Arrest at Occupy Wall Street” CNN.com

Week 2/ Jan 21 (no class), 23  What is a Social Movement?
Readings: Doug McAdam, “The Classical Model of Social Movements Examined” from Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency

Week 3/ Jan 28, 30  What is a Social Movement cont.
Readings: Taylor Branch, “The Montgomery Bus Boycott” from Parting the Waters
Snow and Soule: Chapter 1

Week 4/ Feb 4, 6  Who Protests and Why?
Readings: David Meyers, “Becoming an Activist” in The Politics of Protest: Social Movements in America
Doug McAdam, “In Search of the Volunteers” and “The Biographical Roots of Activism” in Freedom Summer
Snow and Soule: Chapter 4
Week 5/ Feb 11, 13 **Mobilization of Contention: Resources and Political Opportunities**
Readings: Doug McAdam, “The Political Process Model” from *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*
Snow and Soule: Chapter 3.

*Biéographical Analysis assignment due Feb. 13th*

Week 6/ (Feb 18-22: No classes this week)

Week 7/ Feb 25, 27 **Cultural Dimensions: Framing**
Readings: Robert Benford “You Could Be the Hundredth Monkey: Collective Action Frames and Vocabularies of Motive within the Nuclear Disarmament Movement” from *The Sociological Quarterly*
Kristin Luker, “World Views of Pro- and Anti-Abortion Activists” from *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*
Snow and Soule: p50-61.
Supplementary reading: David Snow et al. “Frame Alignment Processes, Micro mobilization, and Movement Participation” from *American Sociological Review*

Week 8/ March 4, 6 **Cultural Dimensions: stories, identities and emotions**
Readings: Deborah Gould “Rock the Boat, Don’t Rock the Boat, Baby: Ambivalence and the Emergence of Militant AIDS Activism”
Nancy Whittier, “Sustaining Commitment Among Radical Feminists” from *Feminist Generations*

Week 9/ March 11, 13 **Tactics and Repertoires**
Readings: Saul Alinsky, “Protest Tactics” from *Rules for Radicals*
Selections from Jennifer Earl and Katrina Kimport’s *Digitally Enabled Social Change: Activism in the Internet Age*

Week 10/ March 18, 20 **Repression and Mobilization**
Lesley J. Wood “Breaking the Wave: Repression, Identity and Seattle Tactics” in *Mobilization*

*In-class quiz*

Week 11/ March 25- April 2 (No Classes)
Week 12/ April 3 (Brandeis Monday) **Repression and Mobilization cont.**
Reading: Jeffrey Stotik et al, “Social Control and Movement Outcome: The Case of AIM” in *Sociological Focus*

David Cunningham, “Introduction,” “The Organization of the FBI,” and “Wing Tips in their Midst” from *There’s Something Happening Here*

Week 13/ April 8, 10 **Space and Contentious Politics**
Readings: selections from Pete Simi and Robert Futrell’s, “Hidden Spaces of Aryan Hate” from *American Swastika*

Jerry Avorn et al, selections from *Up Against the Ivy Wall*

*Artifact Analysis paper due April 8th*

Week 14/ April 15, 17 **Media and Movement Interaction**
Readings: selections from Todd Gitlin’s *The Whole World is Watching* and *Occupy Nation*

Supplementary reading: Jackie Smith et al., “From Protest to Agenda Building: Description Bias in Media Coverage of Protest Events in Washington, D.C.” *Social Forces*

Week 15/ April 22, 24 **Art and Activism**

* Final Project Proposal due April 22nd.

Week 16/ April 29, May 1 **Protest Cycles**
Reading: Sidney Tarrow, “Acting Contentiously” in *Power in Movement*

William Gamson, “Defining Movement Success” and David Meyer “How Social Movements Matter” in *The Social Movements Reader*

Snow and Soule: Chapter 6

*Final Project due: tba, but Senior grades are due May 6th*