Course Description

This course will examine the role that social movements play in political life from a comparative perspective. We will consider the major theories that have been developed to explain social movement behavior at both the domestic and international levels. We will also consider a range of empirical cases, both historical and contemporary, that will inform our search for answers to several key questions, including:

- What are social movements, and how do they differ from other forms of political participation?
- Why do people join social movements?
- When are movements likely to form?
- How do movements choose their tactics and strategies?
- Under what conditions are movements most likely to become socially and politically influential?

Throughout, we will investigate the major debates that characterize this field of study as well as some of the methodological tools commonly used by social movement scholars. We will also try to bridge the world of theory and practice in a limited way by observing and even participating in real-life movements. By the end of the course, students will have an overview of the core theoretical and empirical debates in the field as well as a base of knowledge that will prepare them for further independent research in this area.

Course Materials

There are three required texts for the course. All should be available at the Carleton bookstore, and should be easy to find on-line as well. All other readings will be available on Moodle.


Course Requirements

Your grade in this course will be based on four elements, which will be weighted as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reaction papers</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online journal and presentation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**Participation.** This course will be run like a seminar, which means that there will be limited lecturing and a great deal of discussion. To work successfully, a seminar requires all students to (1) come to class having done all the readings carefully and critically, and (2) be ready to engage in thoughtful conversations about this material. Please note that attentiveness alone will not be enough to earn you a good participation grade. If you have difficulty speaking in class, please come see me sooner rather than later so that we can discuss possible strategies so you are not surprised by your grade at the end of the term! Unexcused absences, habitual lateness to class, inattentiveness, and disruptive or discourteous behavior during discussion can lower your participation grade, in some cases, precipitously.

As part of the participation grade, students will take turns serving as discussion leaders. Discussion leaders will be responsible for helping guide discussions and raising thoughtful questions that can help us address key controversies, confusions, or interesting insights from the readings. Discussion leaders should prepare a list of 3-5 questions, which should be emailed to me no later than 10pm the day before class.

**Reaction papers.** Reaction papers (2-3 double-spaced pages) are a chance for you to critique the arguments put forward in some of the assigned readings. They are not article or chapter summaries, though the very first paragraph should briefly review the main ideas that the authors advance. The remainder of the response paper should involve your critical reactions and reflections on the piece, its strengths and its weaknesses. You might want to consider the following kinds of questions as you write these response papers: what is the quality of the evidence presented? Are the assumptions or logical arguments defensible? How do the arguments fit in with other theories or arguments we have encountered in class? Are there conflicting points of view or claims, and if so, which have more merit? Is there a way to reconcile such conflicts? Has the argument changed the way you think about the issue? Please note: there is no possible way you can entertain all of these questions in such a short paper! Use the above prompts to guide your thinking about the piece, even if you don’t address all of them in your writing.

Readings that are eligible for response are indicated with an asterisk. You may choose any two readings that are of interest to you; however, you are not permitted to choose readings that are from the day you serve as discussion leader. Papers are due in class on the day when that reading is assigned. Late papers will not be accepted; if you are unable to turn in a response paper on a given day, you will have to choose another reading later in the course.

**Online journal.** Over the course of the term, you will work in small groups to try your hand at organizing your very own social movement. This is a term-long project that will require you to work together to think about a whole range of issues, including how to recruit supporters, devise an
effective communications strategy, evaluate possible tactics, etc. The exercise is intended to help bridge theory and practice by giving you the chance to engage in the real work of grassroots activism.

The online journal exercise is a chance for you each to update me and the rest of the class about your efforts, to think about the connections between what we are reading and talking about in class with your work as an organizer, and to reflect on your own experiences. Each group will maintain a collective blog about their chosen movement and event; throughout the term, group members will post about their activities. Each individual is expected to post a minimum of five times throughout the term, and each post should be a minimum of 400 words. You may individually choose when to post, though (a) each group should make sure there is at least one update each week, and (b) you may not post more than two blog posts in any single week. Your grade for the online journal will be individual, based only on your own entries. Additionally, at the conclusion of your foray into activism, each group will briefly present on their movement and event to the rest of the class. The journal entries will be worth 25% of your overall grade; the in-class presentation will be worth 5%. Further instructions about these components, and the expectations for your organizing activities, will be handed out in class during the second week.

**Final paper.** The final written assignment consists of a 15-20 page (double-spaced) research paper on a topic of your own choosing. For those of you who intend to write a comps project based on this class, this paper will serve as the foundation for this larger research project. In order to help you pace out the work, I have set a series of interim deadlines:

- **Tuesday, January 27** Approval of paper topic (you MUST meet with me before this date to discuss your paper topic. You should not proceed with your research without verbal or written approval.)
- **Thursday, February 5** Literature review and initial bibliography (worth 5% of your grade)
- **Thursday, February 19** Optional: paper outline
- **Thursday, February 26** Complete or nearly complete paper draft
- **Tuesday, March 3** Peer review comments (worth 5% of your grade)
- **Tuesday, March 10** Final draft (worth 25% of your grade)

**Course Policies**

**Attendance**
You are expected to come to class regularly and on time. If you are unable to attend due to illness or some other personal matter, you should notify me by email in advance. A pattern of unexcused absences or tardiness will lower your participation grade. If you need to miss class, it is your responsibility to see me in office hours or to get notes from a classmate. Emailing me and asking “did I miss anything?” is not an acceptable substitute.

**Policy on Late Work**
Late work will incur a penalty of 1/3 grade per day unless documentation of extenuating circumstances (ill health, family emergency) is provided. Make a note: technology is heartless. Computers crash, printers jam, and files occasionally disappear from disks. It is your responsibility to
plan ahead, to make back-ups of your work, and to leave yourself sufficient time to compensate for mishaps. Technological difficulties will not excuse late work!

**Policy on Extensions**
Extensions will not be granted except in exceptional circumstances involving unforeseen complications or obstacles. Simply having three papers due in a week is not grounds for an extension. You already have information on all the assignments that have fixed due dates. This should be sufficient time for you to plan ahead and manage your workload accordingly.

**Policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty**
Both are serious offenses. Anyone caught cheating will automatically receive a zero for the assignment and will have the case referred to the Dean’s Office for further investigation and possible disciplinary action. To avoid any semblance of impropriety, please take pains to cite your sources correctly. You are also strongly encouraged to keep any outlines or rough drafts of your papers to document the evolution of your work. For more information on Carleton’s policy on academic honesty, please consult [http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/dos/handbook/academic_regs/?policy_id=21359](http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/dos/handbook/academic_regs/?policy_id=21359)

**Policy on special needs**
If you require special accommodation due to a documented physical or learning disability, please come see me during the first week of class to discuss how I might best assist you in meeting the objectives and requirements of this course.
Schedule of Readings

The assigned readings come from a variety of sources, though most scholarship is published in either political science or sociology journals. Some of these pieces are more theoretical while others are more empirical; some are going to be a bit dense while others will be fairly approachable. Regardless, it is your responsibility to take each one seriously and read it with care to understand the author’s main arguments. Changes to the syllabus, if needed, will be announced in class and posted on Moodle.

(M) = available on Moodle
** = eligible for a response paper

1. Introduction to social movements

January 6—Definitions, history, evolution, and typologies
- No required readings. Instead, familiarize yourself with the syllabus, course requirements, and Moodle. Flip through the required texts and take a look at their tables of content
- OPTIONAL (but recommended): for some background on the historical development of movements, read Tarrow, PIM, ch. 2-4

January 8—Participation and the collective action problem
- Mancur Olson, *The Collective Action Problem*, Introduction and ch. 1. (M)** Note: don’t get bogged down by the equations. Read for his general argument.

2. Recruitment to activism—why, where, when, and how?

January 13—Organizational factors and networks

January 15—Social and structural factors

January 20—Cultural and personal factors
- Jasper, AMP, ch. 5, 7-9**
3. Social Movement Organization and Strategy

January 22—Organizational Dynamics and Governance
- Tarrow, PIM, ch. 8
- Shaw, AH, ch. 3

January 27—Framing
- Tarrow, PIM, ch. 7

January 29—Movements and the Media
- Shaw, AH, ch. 5

February 3—Contexts and Geographies

February 5—FIELD TRIP! (Tentative; details to follow)

February 10—Tactics
- Tarrow, PIM, ch. 6
- Jasper, AMP, ch. 10, 11**
- Shaw, AH, ch. 1, 7**

February 12—Violence and non-violence
- James C. Scott, Weapons of the Weak, selections. (M)**

4. Locating Movement in a Broader Environment

February 17—Political Opportunity Structures
- Tarrow, PIM, ch. 5**
February 19—Movements and the State
- Shaw, AH, ch. 2**
- Jasper, AMP, ch. 13

February 24—Movements and Countermovements

February 26—Protest Cycles
- Tarrow, PIM, ch. 9

March 3—Movement Outcomes
- Tarrow, PIM, ch. 10

March 5—in-class presentations

March 10—Wrap-up and concluding thoughts