POSC 358: Comparative Social Movements

Carleton College, Fall 2010

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Fall Term Office Hours:
Mondays, 12:00-2:00pm
Thursdays, 3:00-5:00pm
Wednesdays (by Skype): 8:00-9:00pm
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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 and organization?
- Why do people join social movements?
- When are movements most 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 explore some of the cutting-edge methodological tools used by social movement scholars. We will also try to bridge the world of theory and practice in a very limited way by engaging in some “field experiences” and interacting with people engaged in social movement activism in their own lives. By the end of the course, students should 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

The following books are required for the course and can be purchased at the Carleton bookstore or checked out from closed reserve at the library. All other readings will be available on Moodle (M).

Assignments and Grading

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

- Participation: 20%
- Take-home midterm exam: 15%
- Online journal & presentation: 25% & 5%, respectively
- Final project: 35%

Participation. This course will be run like a seminar, which means 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.

In addition, each student will take a turn being an “author’s advocate” and “author’s interrogator” during the term. Advocates will be responsible for presenting and defending the author’s arguments in class discussions. Interrogators will take the lead in outlining possible critiques of the argument. More detail about these roles and their expectations will be handed out in class.

Please note that attentiveness alone will not be enough to earn a good participation grade! If you find it difficult to speak in class, please come see me sooner rather than later so that we can discuss strategies to make this component easier for you. Unexcused absences, habitual lateness to class, inattentiveness, and disruptive or discourteous behavior during discussion can lower your participation grade, in some cases, precipitously.

Mid-term exam. There will be a take-home mid-term examination handed out in class on October 14, consisting of several question prompts. You will select any two prompts and write a response of 8-10 (double-spaced) pages that draw on the readings, lectures, and class discussions to answer the question.

Mid-term exam due: October 21

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 event. This is a term-long project that will require you to work together to think about a range of issues, including how to recruit members to your movement, devise a communications strategy to get the word out about your event, do a site analysis to identify when and where to hold your event, 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, albeit in a limited way.

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 one joint blog about their chosen movement and event. Each individual is expected to post a minimum of five entries throughout the term, with each post being a minimum of 500 words (the equivalent of about 2 double-spaced page). You may choose when to post, though (a) each group should make sure there is at least one update per week, and (b) you may not
post more than two individual updates in any given week. Your grade for the online journal, worth 15% of your final grade, will be individual, NOT based on the overall group.

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. This in-class presentation will be worth 5% of your grade. Further instructions about these components will be handed out during the second week of the class.

**Final paper.** The final written assignment consists of a 15-20 page double-spaced research paper on a topic of your own choosing. The goal is to make this paper a suitable starting point for an eventual comps project. In order to help you pace this project, there are several interim deadlines for this component:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Component</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 12</td>
<td>Approval of 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)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 26</td>
<td>Introduction and argument section (worth 5% of your grade)</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 5</td>
<td>Completed draft</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 11</td>
<td>Peer review comments (worth 5% of your grade)</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 22</td>
<td>Final draft (worth 25% of your grade)</td>
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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 unexplained absences, or chronic tardiness will affect your participation grade. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to come see me in office hours and/or get notes from a classmate. Emailing me to ask “did I miss anything?” is NOT an acceptable substitute.

Late work. Late work will be penalized by 1/3 grade per day unless you provide documentation of extenuating circumstances (illness, family emergency, etc.) Make a note: computers do crash, printers sometimes jam, and files do occasionally disappear into thin air. Plan ahead, make back-ups of your work, and do not count on technological difficulties to excuse late work.

Extensions. Extensions will not be granted unless there are compelling reasons involving unforeseen complications or obstacles to completing your work on time. Simply having a busy week full of exams and papers is not, in itself, grounds for getting an extension. Please make note of assignment due dates and plan your workload accordingly!

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Both are offenses that the College and I take very seriously. 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 landing yourself in this kind of trouble, please take pains to cite your sources accurately and thoroughly. You are also strongly encouraged to keep any outlines or rough drafts of your work to document the evolution of your paper. If you have any doubts or questions about citing and using sources, please feel free to consult with me.

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 can best help you get the most out of this class.
Schedule of readings

The assigned readings come from a variety of sources, though most scholarship on social movements is published in political science and sociology journals. Some of these pieces will be more theoretical, while others are very concrete and empirical. Some will be easy to read, and others will be abstract and dense. Regardless, it is your responsibility to take each one seriously and read it with care to understand the author’s main arguments and how they might relate to other topics, themes, questions, and readings we have encountered. Remember: the social movements literature can be treated as one extensive conversation among scholars, and most readings are responding to, refuting, or adding on to existing understandings of movement activism. As you read, try to draw these connections and situate readings in this larger context.

September 14  Introduction to social movements: definitions, history, and evolution

- No assigned reading, but you are gently encouraged to take a look at Tarrow, PIM, ch. 2-4 for some useful historical background on social movements and their development

Recruitment to activism: why, where, when, and how?

September 16  Participation and the collective action problem


September 21  Overcoming collective action problems I: resources and grievances


September 23  Overcoming collective action problems II: biography, society, and networks (special methods focus: network analysis)

September 28 Overcoming collective action problems III: emotions and culture

• Jasper, AMP, ch. 2, 4, 7, 8

Social movement organization and strategy

September 30 Framing

• Tarrow, PIM, ch. 7

October 5 Tactics

• Tarrow, PIM, ch. 6
• Jasper, AMP, ch. 10, 13

October 7 Contexts and geographies
(special methods focus: GIS/spatial analysis)


[NOTE: WE WILL TRY TO SCHEDULE A WEEKEND FIELD TRIP TO ST. PAUL ABOUT HERE. DETAILS TO FOLLOW]

October 12 Governance and organizations
(special methods focus: participant observation & ethnographic work)


October 14 Violence and non-violence
(special methods focus: Agent-based modeling)

October 19  Movie: MILK

October 21  In-class discussion of MILK

Locating movements in a broader environment

October 26  Political opportunity structures

• Tarrow, *PIM*, ch. 5

October 28  Movements and the state


November 2  Movements and countermovements


November 4  Protest cycles and movement lifecycles

(special methods focus: event history analysis)

• Tarrow, *PIM*, ch. 9

November 9  Transnational social movements

• Tarrow, *PIM*, ch. 11
November 11  Movement outcomes
(special methods focus: Boolean/QCA analysis)

- Tarrow, *PIM*, ch. 10

November 16  In-class presentations and wrap-up discussion