POSC 358: Comparative Social Movements

Carleton College, Fall 2012

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Fall Term Office Hours:
Mondays, 9:30-12:30pm
Tuesdays, 3:00-4:30pm
Thursdays, 3:00-4:30pm
And Skype by appointment

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”
Martin Luther King, Jr.

“We can remake the world daily.”
Paul Wellstone

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 the international levels. Our focus will be thematic, not case-based. That is, while we will consider a range of historical and contemporary empirical cases, the class will focus primarily on key questions that are relevant across many movements, including:

• What are social movements, and how do they differ from other forms of political participation and organization?
• Why do people join social movements?
• How do movements choose their tactics and strategies? Why are some movements violent and others nonviolent?
• 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 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 investigating a current, local movement—the mobilization around the Minnesota Marriage Amendment, which will be on the ballot this November—in order to examine different facets of this movement from multiple vantage points. We will also have occasional guest speakers in class representing a range of movement groups. 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 may be purchased at the Carleton bookstore. All other readings will be made available on Moodle. All readings should be completed before coming to class on the day for which it is assigned.


**Assignments and Grading**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-home midterm exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Documentary project</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
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**Participation.**

This course will be run as a seminar, which means there will be limited lecturing and a great deal of discussion. For this format to be effective, students must play a more active role during the class by (1) reading the assigned material carefully and critically, and (2) engaging in thoughtful conversations about this material. In fact, the role of the faculty member in such a seminar should be more of a facilitator rather than someone who holds court and explains things in great detail. Learning in a seminar is about engaging in a collaborative, shared process of discovery—from the professor but also from your peers. Consequently, the burden is much more on you to contribute to and extract value from these interactions. Active listening is also a core component of participation, but this is not a class where active listening alone will earn you a respectable participation grade. If you are reading this syllabus carefully and come across this sentence before our second class, send me an email with “I found it!” in the subject line and you will get extra credit on the take-home exam. Please consult the “Participating in a Seminar” document on Moodle for more information about what is expected of you. Unexcused absences, habitual lateness to class, inattentiveness, and disruptive or discourteous behavior during class can lower your participation grade, in some cases, precipitously.

**Take-home midterm exam.**

There will be a take-home midterm consisting of several question prompts that will be handed out in class on October 9th. You will select one of these prompts and write a response of 4-6 double-spaced pages that draws substantially on the readings, lecture, and class discussions to answer the question. No outside research is required for your response. The exam will be due in class on October 16th.

**Documentary project.**

Throughout the term, you will work in small groups to select a specific topic from our class discussions and investigate how it translates to a real-world example: the protest and mobilization currently taking place around the proposed marriage amendment in Minnesota. This is a term-long project and it will culminate in groups producing short (~10-15 minute) documentaries on their chosen topics. Given the size of this project, there will be smaller steps and requirements throughout the term, some of which will be graded, in order to help shepherd you through the process. We will also have time in class to learn about the equipment, editing software, and other technical matters that you will need to know in order to complete this project successfully. Additionally, an alumna of this class—and a filmmaker who is currently working on a
documentary on environmental protests in Texas—has agreed to be a resource for you as you work throughout the term.

*Literature review and annotated bibliography* (10%). After each group chooses a topic (and there will be no duplicate topics allowed), group members will share the task of carrying out background scholarly literature on their topic. This literature will culminate in a single 4-6 page (double-spaced) literature review (per group) and 1-2 page annotated bibliography (per individual) to be handed in at the end of week 4.

*Script and storyboard* (10%). As the groups develop their projects, they will meet with me to talk about the focus and “argument” of their documentary projects – something that will continue to be refined as new ideas, interviews, events, and scenes develop. By the end of week 7, the groups should be prepared to hand in a near-final script/storyboard that outlines the overall arc or narrative of their respective documentaries. There is no page limit for this component but should be as detailed as is possible given your progress to date.

*Blog posts* (10%). Throughout the term, each group will be responsible for maintaining a group blog that will be available to all the other members of the class (but not to anyone else). It will be password protected and behind the Carleton firewall. This blog is a place for groups to record and reflect on their experiences of making a documentary and to consider the ways in which the academic concepts from our readings do (or do not) translate to the real world. While you will have considerable freedom in picking what you want to blog about, I will post some prompts each week that should help you focus on an appropriate topic.

Each group will be responsible for making sure there is at least two blog posts per week throughout the duration of the project (i.e., a minimum of 14 blog posts throughout the term). Each individual is responsible for posting at least four blog posts per term, and cannot post more than one post in a given week. Blog posts should be at least 300 words (about 1 double-spaced page), and no longer than 750 words. They may include pictures, hotlinks, video, and any other material that you believe would enhance the post. Please note: this grade component will be based on your individual work, not the group’s collective work. N.B., Commenting (thoughtfully and substantively) on the posts of other groups can count towards your participation grade.

*Final documentary* (10%). We will end the term by screening the group documentaries for the entire class and potentially organize a larger screening for the campus and community to which you would be able to invite your friends and family.

**Final paper.**
The final written assignment will consist of a 12-15 page (double-spaced) paper on a topic of your own choosing. This paper should follow one of the two formats given below. Please note: if you hope to do comps out of this class, you cannot choose option #2. Papers will be due by the end of the exam period.

*Option #1:* If you are contemplating doing a comps project based on this seminar, your paper should propose an original research question. The paper you hand in at the end of the term will be a detailed research proposal. A research proposal includes an introduction, a thorough review of relevant literature, a set of tentative hypotheses to test, and a thoughtful discussion of the methodology needed to test those hypotheses. Concrete examples of a research proposal will be provided to give you a sense of what this should look like.

*Option #2:* If you are not contemplating doing a comps project based on this seminar, your paper should propose a topic or question (based on our class discussions and readings, or your
documentary project) and investigate that topic using a case study of a movement of your choice. For example, if you become increasingly interested how groups use music or references from pop culture to reach out to potential supporters, you could write a paper about how the anti-war protestors of the Vietnam era used music or references from pop culture to reach out to potential supporters.

In both cases, you must get approval for your topics no later than week 8 (and ideally, before).

**Course Policies**

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. You are expected to come to class regularly and on time. If you are unable to attend a particular session due to illness or some other emergency, you should notify me by email, preferably in advance. A pattern of unexcused absences or tardiness will significantly lower your participation grade; I do make a regular mental note of who is and is not in class. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate and then come see me in office hours to answer any questions you have about the material. Please do not email me asking “did I miss anything important?” The answer is always: “yes, you did.”

**Late work:** Late work will automatically incur a penalty of 1/3 grade for every 24 hours past the specified deadline unless you provide documentation of extenuating circumstances (illness, family emergency, etc.) Technology failures – unless system-wide – will not excuse late work.

**Extensions:** Extensions will not be granted except in exceptional circumstances involving significant and unforeseen complications. Simply having a lot of work in a given week is not sufficient grounds for getting an extension. You know your due dates ahead of time; please plan accordingly.

**Internet/cell phones:** You are not to text, surf the internet, check email, Facebook, etc. during class. There is a zero tolerance policy in effect. If you are caught violating this expectation, your participation score will be seriously affected. If internet usage during class seems to be a widespread and/or recurring problem, no one will be allowed to use a computer to take notes during class time.

**Plagiarism and academic dishonesty:** You are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity in this class, submitting only your own, original work and not taking credit for work done by anyone else or for any other class. Anyone caught plagiarizing, cheating, or otherwise violating the rules of academic honesty at Carleton 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. In addition, offenders may receive a failing grade for the course at the discretion of the professor. You are strongly encouraged to familiarize yourself with Carleton’s website on academic honesty, which is available at http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/honesty/.

**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 Reading

The assigned readings come from a variety of sources, though most scholarship on social movements will come from political science and sociology journals. 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 ideas and authors we have encountered. As you read, try to draw these connections and situate readings in this larger context. Please note: this is a reading-intensive class. Please budget your time accordingly.

September 11  Introduction to Social Movements: Definitions, History, and Evolution
•  No assigned reading. Familiarize yourself with the course syllabus and Moodle page.

PART I: Who Protests?

September 13  Participation, Grievances and the Collective Action Problem
•  Tarrow, PIM, ch. 1

September 18  Activist Biographies, Identities, and Emotions
•  Jasper, AMP, ch. 8, 9

September 20  Mobilizing Processes and Structures

September 25  The New Activists?

⇒ Class Visitor: Tucker MacNeill, Carleton IdeaLab

PART II: How Do People Protest?

September 27  Framing
•  Tarrow, PIM, ch. 7
•  Jasper, AMP, ch. 7

⇒ Class Visitor: Libbie Weimer, Carleton ’09 & documentary filmmaker
October 2    Tactical Choices and Diffusion
• Tarrow, *PIM*, ch. 5
• Jasper, *AMP*, ch. 10, 13

→ Class Visitor: Minnesotans United for All Families (tentative)

October 4    Tactical Innovation
• Tarrow, *PIM*, ch. 2

** Note: we will try to schedule a field trip on Saturday, October 6 or Sunday, October 7 to St. Paul **

October 9    Violence and Non-Violence [midterm handed out]

→ Class Visitor: OccupyHomes MN (tentative)

October 11   Movie: Milk (note: class will start at 12:45pm today)
• No reading

October 16   In-class discussion of Milk + Idea Lab [midterm due] – meet at the Idea Lab
• No reading

October 18   The New Protest Tools

** PART III: What Do People Protest? **

October 23   Movements and Democratic States
• Tarrow, *PIM*, ch. 4, 8
October 25   Movements and Non-Democratic States
  • Hank Johnston, States and Social Movements, ch. 4
  • Joel Beinin and Frédéric Vairel, eds., Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa, ch. 1-3

October 30   Movements and Non-State Actors

November 1  Globalization and Transnationalism
  • Tarrow, PIM, ch. 12

PART IV: How Do Movements Matter?

November 6  Transforming Policy

November 8  Transforming Society and Self
  • Jasper, AMP, ch. 15, 17

November 8  Film Screening [Location TBD]