

Sociology 118/218: Social Movements and Collective Action

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This course is an introduction to the social scientific study of social movements. By social movements, I mean those organized collective efforts to promote or resist change in society that rely, at least in part, on non-institutionalized forms of political action (e.g. demonstrations, protest, riots). The study of social movements has grown dramatically for at least the past 25 years in large part due to the turbulence of the 1960s/70s. However, the events of the last couple of years, both in the U.S.—Wisconsin protests, Occupy, Tea Party—and around the globe—Egypt, Syria, Russia—underscore the need to look beyond the 1960s/70s protests to better understand social conflict and change. As a class we will examine the Civil Rights Movement and in small groups students will choose an additional movement (Environmental, Women's Rights, Arab Spring, Gay Rights, Occupy among others) to examine in-depth. As we define social movements, explain how they happen, and identify general concepts – behaviors and conditions – that impact their development, students will be evaluated on their ability to apply these concepts to the movement they have chosen as an area of focus.

Rationale and Objective: Substantively, however, the topic of social movements/contentious politics has a great deal of sociological resonance, quite apart from the historical particulars of the era. This is true at the micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis. At the macro, or societal, level, social movements and revolutions are one of the principal forces for social change in modern society. At the meso, or organizational, level, social movements often arise within established organizations (e.g. churches, colleges, unions, community organizations) and spawn formal social movement organizations (e.g. NAACP, NOW, Minnesotans United for All Families) as the movement matures. Finally, at the micro, or individual, level, the study of social movements promises to shed light on one of the most interesting and most foundational of sociological problems: that of emergent action. Normally our actions are governed by normative routines. As anyone who has ever tried to depart from these routines will attest, they exert a great deal of power over us. The interesting question, then, is under what conditions will individuals deviate from these routines and engage in emergent collective action? What kind of individuals, in what kinds of settings are most apt to do so? And what happens to people who participate compared to those who do not? Given the power of such action to transform the world and those who take part in it, these are important questions worth thinking about.

Assessment and Evaluation: Since the course is designed around the goals of being able to identify and understand the aspects of social movements that have and may continue to evolve into the future, the assignments are intended to help you think about these processes. There will be two short reading response papers and a final paper.

Reading Response Papers (1-2 double-spaced pages, 10 pts each):

During the first class period you will sign up to respond to the readings for two specific class periods. These papers ask you to provide a short analysis of the argument in that day's readings and to question or elaborate on something you found interesting in the reading.

This assignment achieves many objectives:

- 1) I hope you generate a habit of engagement with class and reading. This is how ideas and issues begin to sink in and it will help you with other assignments immensely.
- 2) I want class discussions to include all students. This assignment will help you prepare to participate. While you are free to only write the paper when it is assigned, if you have a notebook where you briefly prepare each point your participation should be quite easy.
- 3) I can give you feedback on the clarity of your writing and on your understanding of the concepts prior to the final presentation and term paper
- 4) It gives me feedback on how well you and other students are understanding the material

Midterm presentations (20 points) will take place **in class on October 20**. On the first day of class you will choose one movement to investigate in detail. Together with a group (no more than 4 people per group) you will research the movement and develop an 8-minute presentation to the class explaining what happened. Some broad categories are below, but each of these also has specific topics you could cover.

- **Women's rights**
- **Environment**
- **Labor**
- **Occupy**
- **Gay rights**
- **Arab Spring**
- **Anti-war**
- **Christian Right**
- **Your choice – if you can convince other people to join you and can demonstrate adequate resources to tell the story**

Oral presentation of term paper (15 points) will take place during our last class. This presentation will be a brief summary of your term paper. Each student will have 3-5 minutes to discuss his/her argument, evidence, and conclusions.

Term paper (30 points) Due on Last Day of Class: Using the sociological concepts learned in class you will analyze the *Hunger Games* trilogy. Some ideas to consider are movement emergence, use of emotions, framing, differential recruitment, and/or social networks. Make an argument related to at least one of the theories we have discussed and use evidence from the *Hunger Games* books. You must use at least 3 sources (including the *Hunger Games* books) and include proper citations (any citation style is acceptable as long as you are consistent).

The paper and presentation should be clear and concise much like a TedTalk or Op-Ed piece (around 5-8 double spaced pages). Your audience is reasonably intelligent and interested in the topic but without a background. They want to know – how can the field of sociology help me understand this movement? [Possible things to consider: What conditions allowed the movement

to emerge/grow? Is this expected or is there something special about the movement that defies expectations?]) Use evidence or ideas from the course to support your points.

Participation (15 pts):

I hold students to a high standard with respect to contributing to the classroom experience. Therefore you should come to class prepared and ready to discuss the readings and questions for each class. Additionally, each student will be responsible for generating discussion questions and helping lead discussion twice over the course of the term.

In class, be fully engaged: listen and respond to me and (more importantly) the other students. Life is about dialogue, so forming and expressing your opinion in discussion is one of the most important skills you can develop.

The fact that class participation is graded can lead to anxiety. Rest assured that your participation is not graded on whether you provide the right answers, but rather on whether you contribute to a constructive conversation. Please treat each other with civility and respect during our discussions—there are no dumb questions and it's ok to give the wrong answers.

General Expectations

Every assignment and policy in the course is crafted around four principles that I believe are centrally important to success in life. These are:

1. *Respect* - showing people that they are valued and their time is valued is one of the best ways to show respect. Therefore I expect:

- Listening carefully to others and responding to their ideas and/or concerns.
- Attendance and timeliness – attending class and showing up on time is a signal of respect. Attending class when sick and contagious signals disregard for the health of others.
- Appropriate use of technology in the classroom – turning off your cell phone, using computers only for appropriate purposes, at appropriate times.
- When expectations are violated, kindly giving and receiving immediate feedback.

2. *Integrity* – everyone has a set of core values that make them feel good about who they are, the choices they make, and the way they treat others. Integrity involves staying true to those values even when it is difficult. I don't expect you to be perfect. This class may not be your top priority. The most important thing is acting in an honest and genuine manner in accordance with your values and with thoughtful consideration of the consequences of your choices.

3. *Teamwork* - Working together is required for team presentations and allowed and encouraged for the term paper. You can learn (and teach) a great deal by interacting with your peers. The more skillful you become at this, the better. It is a typical and required part of most jobs.

4. *Excellence* - Do your best in the time you have.

Course Readings

Some of the readings for the course will be taken from the following required books:

McAdam, Doug. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930-1970* 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*.

Collins, Suzanne. *Catching Fire*.

Collins, Suzanne. *Mockingjay*.

One copy of each of these books is on reserve in Green Library. Because of the compressed reading schedule for *Political Process*, it will only be available for four hours at a time (so that everyone has an opportunity to access it). The books from the *Hunger Games* trilogy will be available for two days at a time. Please plan accordingly.

The remaining readings in the course will come from articles/chapters distributed electronically or in class.

Course Structure

The following represents a **highly** tentative class by class schedule of course topics and readings. The actual progression of topics/readings will depend on the speed with which we cover course material. (Note: the readings are listed by the date by which they are to be read.)

Topic(s)/Readings

Week 1

Class 1 – 9/22

Introduction/Syllabus

* Go over the syllabus/reading response sign-ups/choose a movement

Class 2 – 9/24

*What is a social movement?

Readings: Snow et al. “Disrupting the ‘Quotidian’”

McAdam, Doug, Robert J. Sampson, Simón Weffer-Elizondo, and Heather MacIndoe. 2005. “‘There Will Be Fighting in the Streets’: The Distorting Lens of Social Movement Theory.” *Mobilization* 10:1–18.

Olson, M. *The Logic of Collective Action*. “Introduction.”

Week 2

Class 3 – 9/29

Collective Action and its Problems

*Collective action problems

Marwell, G. and Oliver, P. *The Critical Mass in Collective Action*. “The Critical Mass and the Problem of Collective Action.”

Centola. “Homophily, Networks, and Critical Mass: Solving the Start-up Problem in Large Group Collective Action.”

Simpson, Willer, and Ridgeway. “Status Hierarchies and the Organization of Collective Action.”

Class 4 – 10/1

*Deciding to participate

McAdam. *Political Process*. Introduction and Chs. 1-2

Buechler. “The Strange Career of Strain and Breakdown Theories of Collective Action”

FOR CLASS: Be able to identify the argument in each piece. Come to

class with one reason why movements emerge.

Week 3

Class 5 – 10/6

Movement Emergence

*Resource Mobilization and Political Process

McCarthy and Zald. "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory

Readings: McAdam Ch 3-5

Class 6 – 10/8

NO CLASS!

Week 4

Class 7 – 10/13

Movement Outcomes

*Why the "black insurgency?"

Readings: McAdam Ch. 6-7

In class: Film *A Time for Justice*

Class 8 – 10/15

*Expected vs. unexpected outcomes

McAdam, D. and Brandt, C. 2009 "Assessing the Effects of Voluntary Youth Service: the Case of Teach for America"

Week 5

Class 9 – 10/20

Movement Outcomes

*MIDTERM PRESENTATIONS

Class 10 – 10/22

*Legacy

Readings: Andrews, K. 2004. *Freedom is a Constant Struggle*. Chs. 2, 8, 9

Week 6

Class 11 – 10/27

Motivation

*Individual dynamics in social movements

Readings: Robnett, B. 1996. "African American Women and Leadership in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement." *The American Journal of Sociology*, 101, 1661-1693.

Morris and Staggenborg. "Leadership in Social Movements."

Klandermans, Bert, and Dirk Oegma. 1987. "Potentials, Networks, Motivations and Barriers: Steps towards Participation in Social Movements." *American Sociological Review* 52:519–31.

Class 12 – 10/29

*Status and identity

Readings: Willer, R. 2009. "Groups Reward Individual Sacrifice: The Status Solution to the Collective Action Problem."

Bernstein, M. 1997. "Celebration and Suppression: The Strategic Uses of Identity by the Lesbian and Gay Movement."

Week 7

Class 13 – 11/3

Emotions

ELECTION DAY! GO VOTE!

*Hands up, don't shoot.

Readings: Jasper, James M. 2011. "Emotions and Social Movements:

Twenty Years of Theory and Research." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37:285-303.

Grinberg, Emanuella. 2015. "Why 'Hands up, Don't Shoot' Resonates Regardless of Evidence." *CNN*.

Class 14 – 11/5 *Fictional social movement representations
Readings: Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games, Catching Fire, Mockingjay*.
In class, film clips: *Hunger Games, The Newsroom, Harry Potter, etc.*
Bring a fictional representation of a social movement. What were the conditions that allowed the movement to emerge/grow? Does it align with any sociological theories of movement emergence? Who participated? Why?

Week 8 **Differential Recruitment and Networks**

Class 15 – 11/10 *Choosing activism
Readings: McAdam, Doug. 1986. "Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer." *American Journal of Sociology*:64-90.
Gamson and Sifry. "The #Occupy Movement: An Introduction"

Class 16 – 11/12 *Being recruited
Lim, Chaeyoon. 2008. "Social Networks and Political Participation: How Do Networks Matter?" *Social Forces* 87(2):961-82.
Benditt, L. "Differential Recruitment and Cohort Variation in Public Employee Union Mobilization

Week 9 **What Next?**

Class 17 – 11/17 *Going from "at risk" to collective action
Readings: Ingram et al. "Trouble in store: Probes, Protests and Store Openings by Wal-Mart, 1998-2007"
Why do you think individuals/groups protest?

Class 18 – 11/19 *The future of social movements
Readings: Castells. "Space of Flows, Space of Places: Materials for a Theory of Urbanism in the Information Age."
Van Stekelenberg. "The Occupy Movement: Product of This Time."

11/23-27 THANKSGIVING BREAK!

Week 10 **Review, Reflection and Evaluation**

Class 19 – 12/1 **NO CLASS!** (Work on your term papers/presentations.)

Class 20 – 12/3 *TERM PAPER PRESENTATIONS!
*Submit any lingering questions about course topics/term paper by noon on the day before class and I'll answer them. Bring your laptop for course

evaluations.

FINAL PAPER DUE BY THE START OF CLASS (5:30 pm)!

Additional Notes

Honor Code. All students will be expected to comply with the Stanford University Honor Code. The Honor Code is available for review at honorcode.stanford.edu.

Students with Documented Disabilities. Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). SDRC staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an *Accommodation Letter* for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the SDRC as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, 723-1067 TTY).

Plagiarism (defined by the Stanford Board of Judicial Affairs as "...the use, without giving reasonable and appropriate credit to or acknowledging the author or source, of another person's original work, whether such work is made up of code, formulas, ideas, language, research, strategies, writing or other form(s).") is not acceptable in this course. It violates both respect for the person who worked hard to develop and write/share his or her ideas, your own integrity and the Stanford Honor Code <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/communitystandards/honorcode>. Please cite all sources, including teammates in discussions outside of class. A guide for citation style can be found at <http://www.asanet.org/students/Quick%20Style%20guide.pdf>. If plagiarism is detected, it will be reported to the Judicial Officer, the student will receive no grade until the case is decided, and if found guilty the student will receive an NP (no credit) and whatever punishment the Judicial Panel decides upon.

Email Policy. I encourage students to contact me with questions, clarifications and suggestions via email. I am, unless specifically excused, always available on email, but reserve a 24-hour period for responses. For questions pertaining to paper submissions, note that I will not respond to questions after 6:00 pm of the night preceding the submission deadline.