PROTEST, POLITICS, AND CHANGE: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS
SOCILOGY 155, SPRING 2019

Mondays & Wednesdays, 2-3:20pm
Room: TBD

Instructor: Gowri Vijayakumar
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Office Hours: Pearlman 211
Tuesdays, 2-4pm

TA’s: Jing Huang (jingh@brandeis.edu), Anne Marie Foley (afoley@brandeis.edu)

Social movements have shaped every facet of social life—from the eight-hour day, to the terms we use to describe gender identity, to the geopolitical map of the world. This course begins with the premise that the best way to learn how social movements work—both for academic and practical purposes—is to study concrete examples in specific historical and social contexts. We begin by developing a core set of questions in the sociology of social movements: When and why do movements occur? How does the political and institutional context of movements shape their success? What strategies do movements use—how are they organized, and what are the benefits and pitfalls of different strategies and organizational forms? And what cultural processes shape how activists come to think of themselves as activists, remain committed to activism, and frame their ideas in the process of struggle? After reading key sociological texts on these questions, we move into studying the history and social dynamics of specific social movements in depth, using a mix of primary sources and social science scholarship. Throughout these case studies, we remain attentive to the connections, synergies, and overlaps between movements, and the intersection and co-constitution of dynamics such as class, race, gender, and sexuality. We place a particular emphasis on tensions and alliances through and across these dynamics. While we focus our attention on the United States, we also draw on some case studies in other countries, as well as paying close attention to how activists have built and navigated transnational connections, not just in the era of neoliberal globalization, but also in anticolonial struggles.

In addition to building a broad appreciation of an array of social movements, over the course of the semester you will work on a series of short projects in relation to a specific social movement theme of your choosing. You are encouraged to follow the progress of “your” movement throughout the course. At the end of the semester, you will combine your shorter projects into a longer paper that relates your topic to the core questions of the class.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Distinguish major concepts in the sociology of social movements and be able to explain their relevance (and limitations) with concrete examples
- Discuss, write about, and ask questions about social movements
- Build a basic working knowledge of the history and social dynamics of some major social movements in the United States
- Appreciate transnational connections and parallels to social movement struggles in the United States
- Use tools for qualitative research—interviewing and participant observation—to analyze social movements sociologically
Course Requirements

1. **Attendance and Participation (10%)**
   
   Class attendance is mandatory! You are allowed 2 absences during the semester. For each additional absence, I will deduct 10% from your attendance and participation grade unless you make up the missed work within 2 weeks of the absence. It is your responsibility to communicate with us about absences and missed work. If you arrive very late to class, you may be marked absent. Attendance and participation receive a letter grade.

   Participating means engaging actively with ideas from readings, lectures, and your peers. You might participate in a number of ways—sharing your own ideas and critiques in lecture, working collaboratively in small groups, asking thoughtful questions, bringing in relevant articles, or attending office hours. Speaking comfortably about social movements is an important part of your learning in this class, so if you feel uncomfortable speaking in a classroom environment, I encourage you to see me about it.

2. **Project Topic Summary (5%)**
   
   On **Wednesday, January 30th**, you will submit a 1-page, double-spaced summary of the movement you will study during the semester. It could be broad (“transgender activism”) or specific (“transgender bathroom debates at Brandeis University.”) Keep in mind that you will be thinking and writing about this theme all semester, so choose something that interests you and about which you will be able to access adequate information. In your essay, explain your topic, what interests you about it, and 5-7 proposed academic sources. You will be graded pass/fail.

3. **Quiz (15%)**
   
   On **Wednesday, February 13th**, you will take a 20-minute in-class quiz on basic concepts and theories from the first four weeks of the semester. You will receive a letter grade.

4. **Biographical Analysis (15%)**
   
   On **Wednesday, March 6th**, you will submit a 3-page, double-spaced biographical analysis based on an interview with an activist that you conduct. You may define “activist” as broadly or narrowly as you wish, and you may interview friends, roommates, family members, or activists you may contact specifically for the project. The essay should touch on themes such as: how drew your interviewee to activism and what kept them there? What challenges did they face as an activist? You will receive a letter grade.

5. **Transnational Connections Essay (15%)**
   
   On **Wednesday, April 3rd**, you will submit a 3-page, double-spaced essay on a transnational connection to your chosen movement. This could be a parallel to your movement in another country—for example, if you’re focusing on Black Lives Matter, you may focus on movements of racial minorities in Brazil. Or you might focus on a specific transnational alliance, such an alliance of garment workers in the United States and Mexico. You will receive a letter grade.

6. **Movement Event Analysis (15%)**
   
   On **Wednesday, April 17th**, you will submit a 3-page, double-spaced essay analyzing an event related to a social movement. The event could be a protest, a rally, a training session, an organizing meeting, a march, or even a digital forum—any of the many movement sites we will discuss this semester. Your analysis will focus on the event’s goals, ideological basis, framing, targets, strategies, and participants, and any further questions. You will receive a letter grade.
7. Films (5%)
Films evoke the texture and emotional content of social movements in ways books and articles are not always able to do. Throughout the semester, in addition to portions of films we will watch in class, we will hold screenings of the following documentary and feature films relevant to the course: She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry (2014), Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution (2015), Pride (2014), Generation Revolution (2016), and Gulabi Gang (2012). Your grade for this assignment is based on attending at least one of the movie screenings and participating in a discussion about it. You are welcome to attend more than one. You will be graded pass/fail.

8. Final Research Project (20%)
The final project is a 10-page, double-spaced research essay on the movement or category of movements you have focused on throughout the semester. The essay asks you to draw on the core questions from the first part of the course to develop an original analysis of a social movement. If you have done your work well, this essay should be easy to produce: you will pull together your biographical analysis, movement event analysis, and transnational connections essay, and build on it by relating it to relative academic sources and media reports. This is not a project that can be completed at the last minute. In addition to following any news you can get your hands on about your chosen topic throughout the semester, I encourage you to discuss it with me early in the semester. I will be happy to suggest topics if you are unsure of where to begin. The final paper is due on Friday, May 3rd. It will receive a letter grade. No extensions will be granted except in cases of documented disability accommodation or health emergency. In our final class, you will discuss your paper with your classmates. This is not a formal presentation, but rather just a chance for you to learn from your classmates’ expertise.

Course Policies

Office Hours. If you are unable to attend my regular office hours, feel free to email me to set up an appointment and I’ll do my best to accommodate you. Please come and see me at least once. Our TAs will also hold office hours, and you are encouraged to attend those as well.

Email. I will respond to emails within 48 hours. If I can’t answer your question in a sentence, office hours are best.

Grading. If you’d like me to reconsider a grade, you must submit a detailed written explanation and meet with me in person within two weeks of receiving your grade. A request for a grade change can result in a higher or lower grade.

Gadgets. Use of cell phones is not allowed in class. Use of a cell phone in class may lead to you being marked absent. Laptop use is at the discretion of the instructor.

Writing. For support with writing, one place to start is the Writing Center (http://www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/writingcenter/index.html). Feel free to talk with me if you have specific concerns or goals related to your writing.

Academic Integrity. Don’t plagiarize. If you feel overwhelmed by the material or by an assignment, come and see me instead. The University’s policy on academic integrity can be found in the Rights and Responsibilities Handbook at http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/sdc/rr/. Plagiarism can carry severe consequences, including failing the course and/or suspension.

Classroom Environment. We will discuss difficult topics in this class, and it will take all of our trust, sensitivity, and maturity to create a safe environment for conversation. Please remember that your classmates have a range of experiences and be thoughtful when you speak and listen. If you
have any concerns about your ability to participate, because of personal experience, trauma, or something else, please do not hesitate to talk with me about it—the earlier in the semester, the better.

**Accommodations.** If you have been issued a letter of academic accommodation from Disabilities Services and Support, please see me in the first two weeks of the semester to work out the necessary arrangements. If you need an accommodation and have not yet obtained one, please set up an appointment with Beth Rodgers-Kay (brodgers@brandeis.edu), in the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Office (x63470, access@brandeis.edu).

**Expectations.** Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that you will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class.

**Readings.** All readings will be posted on Latte.

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**COURSE SCHEDULE**

I. **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND APPLICATIONS**

Week 1. Introduction

**Wednesday 1/16 Introduction**


Burke, Tarana. 2018. “MeToo is a Movement, Not a Moment.” TEDWomen. [https://www.ted.com/talks/tarana_burke_me_too_is_a_movement_not_a_moment/discussion?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare&fbclid=IwAR14XCh2pMx59BP1pmuFT0QEocpeMybMKHc06ig-m1UzbavYCB3xt6o#t-689684](https://www.ted.com/talks/tarana_burke_me_too_is_a_movement_not_a_moment/discussion?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare&fbclid=IwAR14XCh2pMx59BP1pmuFT0QEocpeMybMKHc06ig-m1UzbavYCB3xt6o#t-689684)

Week 2: Why Movements? Marxist, Feminist, Antiracist, Intersectional Theories of Justice

**Monday 1/21 NO CLASS (MLK Day)**

**Tuesday 1/22 Marxism, Feminism, and Social Movements**


Wednesday 1/23 Antiracism and Intersectionality

Chapter I, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” pp. 3-11  

Week 3. Theories of Social Movements

Monday 1/28 Resource Mobilization Theory


Read at least ONE of the following articles:


Wednesday 1/30 Political Process Theory  
Topic Summary Due


Week 4. Culture and Mobilization

Monday 2/4 Recruitment into Movements

Read pp. 18-48  
Read pp. 50-60
Wednesday 2/6 Collective Identity and its Dilemmas


OR


Week 5. Mobilizing Culture

Monday 2/11 Framing


Wednesday 2/13 Emotion in Movements

In-Class Quiz


Chapter 4, “The Emotion Work of Movements,” pp. 213-265

In-Class Film Excerpts: How to Survive a Plague (2012)

FEBRUARY BREAK

II. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN HISTORY AND PRACTICE

Week 6: Labor (and Gender)

Monday 2/25 Gender and Labor Activism


Wednesday 2/27 Workplace Sexual Abuse and #MeToo


Week 7: Feminism (and Race)

Monday 3/4 Race in First- and Second-Wave Feminism


**Wednesday 3/6 Black Feminism**

**Biographical Analysis Due**


Film: *She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry* (2014)

**Week 8: Antiracism (and Class)**

**Monday 3/11 Civil Rights**


“Letter From Birmingham City Jail” (1963) pp. 289-302

“Where Do We Go From Here?” (1967) pp. 245-252


[http://www.crmvet.org/docs/sncc2.htm](http://www.crmvet.org/docs/sncc2.htm)

**Wednesday 3/13 Black Power**


Week 9: Intersectionality, Activism, and Art

Monday 3/18 Intersectionality and Mobilization


Wednesday 3/20 Art and Activism

Read pp. 21, 29-45

Film: Generation Revolution (2015)

Week 10: LGBTQ Activism

Monday 3/25 LGBTQ Activism

Chapter 6, “Success,” pp. 113-133
Chapter 7, “Exclusions,” pp. 134-153

Film: Pride (2014)

Wednesday 3/27 Nonprofitization

Chapter 1, pp. 21-40.

Week 11: Transnationalism

Monday 4/1 Transnational Solidarities in the US and Beyond

Scheinman, Ted. 2018. “‘Solidarity’ is the Cry at the Global Climate Action Summit. But it Means Different Things to Different People.” Pacific Standard, September 13.
**Wednesday 4/3 Transnational Feminisms in the Global South**  
Transnational Connection Essay Due

Roy, Srila. 2018. #MeToo Is a Crucial Moment to Revisit the History of Indian Feminism.” *Economic & Political Weekly* 53(42).

Film: *Gulabi Gang* (2012)

**Week 12: Internet Activism**

**Monday 4/8 Social Media and Movements**

Chapter 3, “Leading the Leaderless,” pp. 49-82

**Wednesday 4/10 Class, Privilege, and Digital Activism**


**Week 13: New Formations**

**Monday 4/15 The Politics of Trump**

Chapter 9, “The Deep Story,” pp. 135-152  

**Wednesday 4/17 Student Activism**  
Movement Event Analysis Due


**SPRING BREAK**

**Week 14: Conclusion**

**Monday 4/29 Final Presentations**

**Wednesday 5/1 Final Presentations**

Final Paper Due Friday, May 3rd