PROTEST, POLITICS, AND CHANGE: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS
SOCIOLOGY 155B, SPRING 2020

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, 10-10:50am
Golding 110

Instructor: Gowri Vijayakumar
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Office Hours: Pearlman 211
Thursdays, 11am-1pm

Sign up at https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/ijzqf

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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: 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, 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. While we focus our attention on the United States, we situate our study within the groundswell of social movement activism around the world, well as paying close attention to how activists have built and navigated transnational alliances.

In addition to building a broad appreciation of an array of social movements, over the course of the semester you will work on two short projects about a specific social movement 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 project that relates your topic to the core questions of the class.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

• Apply sociological concepts to concrete examples of social movements
• Use tools for qualitative research—interviewing and participant observation—to analyze social movements sociologically
• Appreciate how class, race, gender, sexuality, ability, and the legacies of slavery and colonialism shape movements
• Communicate clear arguments (orally and in writing) about social movements
• Expand your conceptual toolkit for working toward social change


**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. **Attendance (5%)**

   We meet on Mondays and Wednesdays for lectures. On Thursdays, we meet in smaller groups for discussion sections led by me or one of the TAs.

   Both lecture and section attendance is mandatory. Attendance is measured using a numerical grade. Your first 3 absences are automatically excused (so no need to email us with details about why you are missing class!) For each additional absence, we will deduct 10% from your attendance grade. If you attend all classes, your attendance grade is 100. If you miss 5 classes, your attendance grade is 80. If you miss 13 classes, your attendance grade is 0.

   We will take attendance at each class using a sign-in sheet. It is your responsibility to sign in. If you arrive very late to class, you may be marked absent.

2. **Participation (10%)**

   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 in your discussion section, 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.

   You will have the opportunity to do short presentations to earn extra credit on participation. Your participation receives a letter grade. You will complete a participation self-assessment in the middle of the semester.

3. **Project Topic Summary (5%)**

   On Thursday, February 6th, 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 2 proposed academic sources. You should also include a proposal for a potential interview and event you plan to attend that will build your understanding of your particular topic. You will be graded pass/fail.

4. **Section Assignments (15%)**

   In preparation for discussion section meetings during weeks when no assignment is due, you will complete a short (250-300-word) assignment on Latte due at 9am the day of section. The assignment may ask you to reflect on readings from the week, or apply them to a short outside reading. Each assignment is graded pass/fail. You must submit a total of 8 section assignments over the course of the semester, so you may skip one week without it affecting your grade. Completing an extra assignment can count against an absence, or for extra credit.

5. **Activist Interview Analysis (20%)**

   On Thursday, March 5th, you will submit a 3-5 page, double-spaced 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? Your paper will receive a letter grade.
6. Movement Event Analysis (20%)  
   On Tuesday, April 7th, you will submit a 3-5 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 observations. You will receive a letter grade.

7. Final Research Project (25%)  
   The final project is an 8-10 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 and movement event analysis build on them by relating them to course readings and relevant academic sources.

   You have the additional option of submitting podcast, video, or other media as your final project. If you do so, you will be asked to include with your final project a 3-5 page reflection piece relating your project to course readings and relevant academic sources.

   The final project is due on Wednesday, May 6th. It will receive a letter grade. No extensions will be granted except in cases of documented 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. I use an online sign-up sheet for office hours you can find at [https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/ijzqf](https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/ijzqf). If you are unable to attend my regular office hours, or you feel you need more than a 20-minute slot, feel free to email me to set up an appointment and I’ll do my best to accommodate you. Our TAs will also hold office hours, and you are encouraged to attend those as well.

Communication. Any changes to readings or assignments, or logistical rearrangements due to weather or illness, will be communicated through Latte announcements ([http://latte.brandeis.edu/](http://latte.brandeis.edu/)). You are responsible for keeping track of Latte. For all other questions not already addressed on the syllabus, you are welcome to reach out to me by email. I will respond to emails within 48 hours. If I can’t answer your question in a sentence, office hours are best. Please note that I tend not to respond to emails on weekends.

Late Work. You are allowed one 24-hour extension on an assignment in this course, no questions asked. The extension cannot be applied retroactively. You must let me or a TA know by email that you intend to take the extension before the assignment is due. All other late work will be subject to a grade penalty, unless I hear from your academic advisor ([https://www.brandeis.edu/advising/](https://www.brandeis.edu/advising/)) about extenuating circumstances (such as extended illness or personal emergency.)

Absences. As explained above, your first 3 absences are automatically excused. For additional absences due to extenuating circumstances, if you want the absence to be excused, we expect to hear from you by email explaining the situation. For the absence to be excused, please submit to me or your TA a 2-page, double-spaced essay reflecting on the readings for the day you missed. If you do not make up the work, the absence will count against your grade as explained above.
Grade Change Requests. If you’d like me to reconsider a grade, you must submit a detailed written explanation, fill out the grading rubric, 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. You are welcome to use your laptop in class to take notes. However, laptop use in class is at the instructors’ discretion. If your use of your laptop for non-course-related activities becomes a distraction to other students or your instructors, all students will be asked to discontinue laptop use unless they have specific accommodations for doing so.

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. The University’s policy on academic integrity can be found in the Rights and Responsibilities Handbook at http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/sdc/rr/. Falsifying work or submitting work that is not the result of your own effort can carry severe consequences, including failing the course and/or suspension. I use TurnItIn to verify originality. If you are unsure about how standards of academic integrity apply to the course or to a specific assignment, or you are feeling overwhelmed by the course, please feel free to talk with me about it.

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. I will do my best to ensure you know ahead of time the type of material we will encounter in class. But 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 are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodations letter, I want to support you. In order to provide accommodations for assignments, I need the letter more than 48 hours in advance. I want to provide your accommodations, but cannot do so retroactively. If you have questions about documenting a disability of requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support (SAS https://www.brandeis.edu/accessibility/) at 781.736.3470 or access@brandeis.edu.

Student Support. The following resources are available to help with the many academic and non-academic factors that affect your experience in this course (finances, health, food supply, housing, mental health counseling, academic advising, physical and social activities, etc.). Please explore the Support at Brandeis page (https://www.brandeis.edu/support/undergraduate-students/browse.html) to find out more about the resources that Brandeis provides.

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 (http://latte.brandeis.edu).
I. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Week 1. Introduction

Monday 1/13 Introduction


Wednesday 1/15 Understanding Social Movements

Chapter 1, “Editors’ Introduction,” pp. 3-7

Thursday 1/16 Discussion Section

**Read the syllabus and complete Assignment 1 on Latte.***

Week 2: Why Movements? Marxist, Feminism, Antiracism

Monday 1/20 No Class

Wednesday 1/22 Marxism and Feminism

Read pp. 480-483.

De Beauvoir, Simone. 2010 [1952]. The Second Sex; translated and edited by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier.
Read pp. 4-9.

Thursday 1/23 Antiracism and Black Feminism

**No section meeting; meet in Golding 110**

Read pp. 3-7, 10-11

Read pp. 139-145
Week 3. Theories of Social Movements

Monday 1/27 Resource Mobilization Theory


Wednesday 1/29 Political Process Theory

Read pp. 267-268, 272-284

Thursday 1/30 Discussion Section

**Complete Assignment 2 on Latte.**

Week 4. Culture and Mobilization

Monday 2/3 Recruitment into Movements

Read pp. 18-27, 46-48
Read pp. 50-60

Wednesday 2/5 Collective Identity and its Dilemmas


Thursday 2/6 Discussion Section

**Topic Assignment Due.**

Week 5. Mobilizing Culture

Monday 2/10 Framing

Read pp. 195-196, 199-211
**Wednesday 2/12 Emotion in Movements**

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

**Thursday 2/13 Discussion Section**

**Complete Assignment 3 on Latte.**

**FEBRUARY BREAK**

**II. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN HISTORY AND PRACTICE**

**Week 6: Labor (and Gender)**

**Monday 2/24 The Bread and Roses Strike**


**Wednesday 2/26 Domestic Worker Activism**

*Guest Speaker: Thaty Oliveira, Matahari Women Workers’ Center, International Nanny Association*

**Thursday 2/27 Discussion Section**

**Complete Assignment 4 on Latte.**

**Week 7: Feminism (and Race)**

**Monday 3/2 Race in First- and Second-Wave Feminism**

Read pp. 1095-1110, 1122-1127.

**Wednesday 3/4 Black Feminism**

Read pp. 1-14.

**Thursday 3/5 Discussion Section**

**Biographical Analysis Due**
In-Class Film Excerpts: *Gulabi Gang* (2012)

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

**Monday 3/9 Civil Rights**


*Guest Speaker: Aja Antoine, ‘17*

**Wednesday 3/11 Black Power and Black Lives Matter**


In-Class Film Excerpts: *Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution* (2015)

**Thursday 3/12 Discussion Section**

**Complete Assignment 5 on Latte.**

**Week 9: Intersectionality, Activism, and Art**

**Monday 3/16 Intersectionality and Mobilization**


*Guest Speakers: Student Immigrant Movement*

**Wednesday 3/18 Art and Activism**


**Thursday 3/19 Discussion Section**

**Complete Assignment 6 on Latte.**
Week 10: The Perils of Organization

Monday 3/23 Structure and Structurelessness


Wednesday 3/25 Nonprofitization

  Chapter 1, pp. 21-35.

Thursday 3/26 Discussion Section

**Complete Assignment 7 on Latte.**

Week 11: Transnationalism

Monday 3/30 Transnational Solidarities in the US and Beyond

  Read pp. 1-2, 10-15.

Wednesday 4/1 Climate Justice Activism


Thursday 4/2

**Complete Assignment 8 on Latte.**

Week 12: Social Media and Activism

Monday 4/6 Social Media and Movements

  Read pp. 49-71.
Tuesday 4/7 Brandeis Thursday

**No section meeting; meet in Golding 110.**
**Movement Event Analysis Due.**

SPRING BREAK

Week 13: New Formations

Monday 4/20 Is Trumpism a Movement?


Wednesday 4/22 Snowflakes and Solidarities


Thursday 4/23 Discussion Section

**Complete Assignment 9 on Latte.**

Week 14: Looking Ahead

Monday 4/27 Final Presentations

Wednesday 4/29 Final Presentations

Final Project Due Wednesday, May 6th