

SOCI 386 CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Winter 2012



When: Mondays, 14:35-17:25
Where: Maass Chemistry Building 217

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will focus on contemporary social movements, including the American civil rights movement, the women's movement, the environmental movement, the global justice movement, and the ongoing occupy movement. It will introduce a series of basic concepts in social movement analysis—such as social movement organization, collective identity, political opportunity structure, and collective action frame—and use them to explain the emergence, maintenance, and decline of the movements mentioned above. Although the course will be primarily based on the American and Canadian experience, we will occasionally discuss examples from Western Europe and developing countries. Finally, in addition to the mobilization cycle, this course will pay particular attention to the issue of democracy in social movements.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1) Weekly Readings:

All students are expected to complete weekly readings prior to the period for which they have been assigned so as to have a better grasp of the subject matter and participate in class and conferences.

The following *required* books are available at the university bookstore and on the reserve at the McGill library:

- a) Francesca Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
- b) Suzanne Staggenborg, *Social Movements* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2012; 2nd ed.).

In addition to these two books, there are *required* articles and documents in PDF format that can be downloaded from the course website.

2) Class Participation:

All students are expected to attend class regularly and participate in class discussions. Participation requires that students have completed all assigned readings. If you did not understand some concepts or theories, feel free to bring up questions during lectures and/or conferences.

Weekly conferences will address topics introduced in lectures but not discussed in-depth. Attendance at conferences will be *mandatory* and worth 10% of the final course grade. You will get 1.25% per conference attended, up to a maximum of 10%. So if you attend 8 conferences during the term, you will get 10%.

Conferences will begin on **Friday January 27**.

3) Exams:

There will be a mid-term exam and a final exam.

The mid-term exam will cover all the material discussed in class up to the week preceding the exam; it will count for 25% of the final course grade. It will be a closed-books examination in class and it will take place on **Monday February 27**.

The final exam will cover the second half of the course and count for 25% of the final course grade. It will not require additional research and readings beyond what was discussed in class. Although it will not include questions about the material discussed before the mid-term, it will assume that

students have a general knowledge of this material and draw on it to answer the questions. The final exam will take place **during the examination period**.

4) **Term Paper:**

Each student will have to write a term paper, 10 double-spaced pages long (not including references), that will count for 40% of the final course grade. Papers will be graded on the basis of the writing style and grammar/spelling as well as on the basis of the structure and content of the argument. Please use the Chicago “Author-Date” reference style. Guidelines are available online at http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/ch15/ch15_toc.html.

All papers are due in the mailbox of the Sociology Department (Leacock 712) by 4pm on Monday April 16. Late papers will be penalized (-2% per day).

You will have two options:

OPTION 1: RESEARCH PAPER

Research papers should apply the concepts and theories learned in class to analyze a specific *social movement organization* (e.g., SDS, NOW, Greenpeace, ATTAC, Act Up, etc.), *protest event* (e.g., the 1999 anti-WTO Seattle protests), or *social movement* (e.g., the women’s movement, the global justice movement, the antiracist movement, the gay and lesbian movement, the anti-apartheid movement, the aboriginal movement, the anti-sweatshop movement, the anti-war movement, the occupy movement, etc.). You can study any social movement organization, event, or movement in any country in any historical period. You can also compare two organizations, events, or movements in a single country or in two countries. If your paper analyses one of the movements discussed in class, you are expected to go beyond course lectures and readings. However, you need not collect original data or do interviews with activists; you can rely only on secondary sources (i.e., articles and books available at the library) if you think that they provide enough information.

Research papers should address one or more of the following issues: What was the role of pre-existing ties and organizations in the emergence of the movement? How did social movement organizations recruit members and mobilize support? How did they frame their claims? How did the existing repertoire of collective action shape their actions? How were decisions made? How was the movement structured? What was the role of the political opportunity structure and/or the media in fostering or preventing mobilization? How did movement opponents and the state react to the growth of the movement? What explains the decline of the movement? What was the impact of the movement? What outcomes did it bring about?

You must submit a **written proposal** (one page) specifying the topic and presenting a few focused research questions as well as a preliminary bibliography on **Monday February 13**.

OPTION 2: “LEARNING BY DOING” PAPER

“Learning by Doing” papers involve collective action and a reflexive analysis of your own practices rather than research. There are two ways of doing this paper.

OPTION 2.a: Collective “Learning by Doing” Paper

You can form a team of 5-8 students that will act as a social movement organization. Each team will have to choose an issue related to the social and political life of McGill University. Potential issues include: discrimination/racism, gender relations, tuition, wages and benefits (of students but also of certain staff members like secretaries or janitors or of a given category like women; just think about the MUNACA strike last fall), access to services (like child care or counseling), production of university garments (with the McGill logo), democracy (university decision-making process, accountability, etc.), environment (energy consumption, waste management, etc.), McGill’s institutional investments (e.g., Is McGill’s pension fund ethical? Does it support firms that violate labor and environmental standards?). Addressing these issues will obviously require a basic research inside the University. This research can be carried out collectively, by your team or designated team members. Existing campus organizations may provide important information and/or helpful leads. You should thus contact the relevant organizations at the beginning of the project.

Each team will have to carry out at least two actions during the term. Each action will use tactics discussed in class. Potential tactics include demonstrations, information tables, picketing, sit-ins, etc. Each team will be responsible for trying to mobilize support through leaflets, posters, newspaper ads, personal and social networks, etc. Violent actions and destruction of university/private property will not be tolerated and will lead to a failing grade for the course in addition to potential sanctions determined by McGill’s regulations.

Insofar as collective action has a cost (not only time and energy but also money), you will be responsible for contributing to your team’s budget and managing team expenses as if it were a real social movement organization. Students will not be graded on the basis of the actions carried out. Thus, their relative success or failure will not be taken into account. Although the actions will be carried out collectively, each student will have to hand in an individual paper. The goal of the paper—and it is on this basis that you will be graded—is to use the concepts and theories discussed in class to make sense of your experience: Why did your team choose a given tactic over another? How were decisions made? Was it a democratic process? How did your team recruit members (i.e., class mates) and try to mobilize support? Why did it fail or manage to mobilize support? What political and institutional conditions favored or prevented mobilization? How did authorities respond to its claims and tactics? Did this response make a difference? What impact did these actions have and what impact could they have had if they had been carried out over a longer period of time? Etc.

In contrast to the research paper, no research on a given organization, event, or movement will be necessary. You will have to do four things:

1. Introduce the issue that your team addressed;
2. Describe the actions that were carried out;
3. Use and cite the concepts and theories discussed in class to reflexively analyze your own choices, behavior, and practices; and
4. Assess the impact of these actions (on McGill but also on yourself and your fellow team members).

Teams will have to be formed by Monday January 30 and the issue will have to be chosen by Monday February 6. On February 6, each team will have to hand in a written one-page

proposal listing the team members, identifying the issue it wants to address, and describing the potential tactics it will use to do so (if you submit a team proposal, you need not submit an individual proposal). Issues and tactics will have to be approved by me.

OPTION 2.a: Individual “Learning by Doing” Paper

If you did not manage to form a team of 5-8 students or if you are already involved in a social movement and would rather focus on this movement, you can write an individual “Learning by Doing” paper. The movement need not operate on the McGill campus and can address any contentious issue, but it has to be active.

The goal and logic of the paper will be the same as in the collective paper, namely using the concepts and theories discussed to make sense of your own actions and practices in a reflexive way. You will have to address the following questions: How was the target of the campaign chosen? Why did the movement or the organization in which you participate choose a given tactic over another? How were decisions made? Was it a democratic process? How did movement participants recruit people and try to mobilize support? Why did it fail or manage to mobilize support? What cultural, social, political, and institutional conditions favored or prevented mobilization? How did authorities respond to its claims and tactics? Did this response make a difference? What impact did these actions have and what impact could they have had if they had been carried out over a longer period of time? Etc.

Your paper will have to do four things:

1. Introduce the issue/cause that the movement in which you participate addressed;
2. Describe your role in this movement as well as the actions that were carried out (decision-making process, target, tactics, etc.);
3. Use and cite the concepts and theories discussed in class to reflexively analyze your own preferences and behavior; and
4. Assess the impact of these actions (at the individual level—on yourself—and at the societal level).

You will not be graded on the basis of the actions carried out. Thus, their relative success or failure will not be taken into account. What will be assessed is your capacity to use the concepts and theories introduced in class to *analyze* your participation in a social movement and the dynamics of this movement.

On **Monday February 6**, you must submit a **written proposal** (one page) presenting the movement in which you are involved as well as your role in it and outlining the actions it is planning on conducting during the Winter 2012 term.

5) **Summary:**

| Assignment | Percentage | Date |
|------------------------|-------------|--|
| Paper Proposal | | February 6 (learning by doing papers) February 13 (research papers) |
| Mid-Term Exam | 25% | February 27 |
| Term Paper | 40% | April 16 |
| Final Exam | 25% | Examination Period |
| Conferences Attendance | 10% | |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100%</i> | |

* Make sure to include references to sources in the text, even when paraphrasing. Failure to do so is plagiarism.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/integrity).

* In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

* In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

COURSE OUTLINE

1) Overview of Course (January 9)

PART I: Theories and Issues

2) What Are Social Movements and What Do They Do? (January 16)

- Staggenborg, *Social Movements*, pp. 1-9.
- David Snow. 2004. "Social Movements as Challenges to Authority: Resistance to an Emerging Conceptual Hegemony." *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* Vol. 25: 3-25.

3) Why Do Movements Emerge, Grow, and Decline? (January 16-23)

- Staggenborg, *Social Movements*, pp. 13-46, 52-55, 182-187.
- Sidney Tarrow. 1993. "Cycles of Collective Action: Between Moments of Madness and the Repertoire of Contention." *Social Science History* Vol. 17 (2): 281-307.

4) Social Movements and the Media (January 23)

- Staggenborg, *Social Movements*, pp. 48-52.
- William A. Gamson and Gadi Wolfsfeld. 1993. "Movements and Media as Interacting Systems." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 528: 114-125.

* **Wednesday January 25 at 8am: Registration for conferences opens**

* **Friday January 27: First Conference**

5) Social Movements and Democracy (January 30)

- Francesca Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting*, pp. 1-54 (Chap. 1-2).
- Jo Freeman. 1970. "The Tyranny of Structurelessness."

* **Monday January 30: Students choosing the Collective "Learning by Doing" Paper should have formed or joined a team.**

6) What Difference Do Movements Make? (January 30)

- Staggenborg, *Social Movements*, pp. 46-48.
- Marco G. Giugni. 1998. "Was It Worth the Effort? The Outcomes and Consequences of Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol. 24: 371-393.

*** Students choosing the "Learning by Doing" paper should have formed or joined a team.**

PART II: Cases

7) The American Civil Rights Movement (February 6-13)

- Staggenborg, *Social Movements*, pp.57-70. (February 6)
- Aldon Morris. 1981. "Black Southern Student Sit-in Movement: An Analysis of Internal Organization." *American Sociological Review* Vol. 46 (6): 744-767. (February 6)
- Doug McAdam. 1983. "Tactical Innovation and the Pace of Insurgency." *American Sociological Review* Vol. 48 (6): 735-754. (February 6)
- Doug McAdam. 1986. "Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer." *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 92 (1): 64-90. (February 6)

*** Learning by Doing Proposals are due in class on Monday February 6.**

- Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," April 16, 1963. (February 13)
- Martin Luther King Jr., "I Have a Dream," August 28, 1963. (February 13)
- Francesca Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting*, pp. 55-119 (Chap. 3-4). (February 13)

*** Research Paper Proposals are due in class on Monday February 13.**

*** Study Break (February 20-24)**

*** Mid-Term Exam: Monday February 27.**

8) The Women's Movement (March 5-12)

- Staggenborg, *Social Movements*, pp. 94-115. (March 5)
- Francesca Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting*, pp. 149-175 (Chap. 6). (March 5)

- Suzanne Staggenborg and Verta Taylor. 2005. "Whatever Happened to the Women's Movement." *Mobilization* Vol. 10 (1): 37-52. (March 12)
- Suzanne Staggenborg and Josée Lecomte. 2009. "Social Movement Campaigns: Mobilization and Outcomes in the Montreal Women's Movement Community." *Mobilization* Vol. 14 (2): 163-180. (March 12)

9) The Environmental Movement (March 19)

- Staggenborg, *Social Movements*, pp. 137-161.
- Russell Dalton. 2005. "The Greening of the Globe? Cross-national Levels of Environmental Group Membership." *Environmental Politics* Vol. 14 (4): 441-459.
- Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison. 1989. "Environmental knowledge as an organizational weapon: the case of Greenpeace." *Social Science Information* Vol. 28 (1): 99-119.

10) The Global Justice Movement (March 26-April 2)

- Staggenborg, *Social Movements*, pp. 162-181. (March 26)
- Marcos Ancelovici. 2002. "Organizing against Globalization: The Case of ATTAC in France." *Politics & Society* Vol. 30 (3): 427-463. (March 26)
- Jackie Smith. 2001. "Globalizing Resistance: The Battle of Seattle and the Future of Social movements." *Mobilization* Vol. 6 (1): 1-20. (April 2)
- Francesca Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Summer*, pp. 176-201 (Chap. 7). (March 26)
- Fredrik Uggla. 2006. "Between Globalism and Pragmatism: ATTAC in France, Germany, and Sweden." *Mobilization* Vol. 11 (1): 51-66. (April 2)

* **Friday April 6 and Monday April 9: No Conferences/No Class (Easter).**

11) The Occupy Movement (April 16)

- Occupy Wall Street (OWS), "2011: A Year in Revolt."
- NYC General Assembly, OWS, "Declaration of the Occupation of New York City."
- David S. Meyer, "Occupy and the Politics of Blame." <http://politicsoutdoors.com/>
- Sidney Tarrow, "Why Occupy Wall Street is Not the Tea Party of the Left," *Foreign Affairs*, 10 October 2011.

* **All papers are due in the mailbox of the Sociology Department (Leacock 712) by 4pm on Monday April 16.**