

Sociology 3141 - 002

Social Movements in the U.S.

Spring 2015

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Office hours: T&R 5-6pm

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Welcome to what I hope will be a pertinent and intriguing investigation into the important role of social movements in U.S. society. Social movements are, without a doubt, one of the most exciting topics for sociological inquiry. They are conspicuous and contentious social happenings. By their very nature, social movements challenge fundamental aspects of society. Indeed, it is difficult to find a significant U.S. social issue in which social movements are not involved on one or both sides. Environmental protection, civil rights, animal rights, abortion rights, labor rights, gun rights, family values, economic inequality, globalization are but a few an array of social issues around which social movements have emerged and organized. Social movements continue to serve as vital, non-institutional, mechanisms for change - and collective reactions to change - and have been /continue to be key actors in the U.S. political process.

The purpose of this course is to provide students with a sociological understanding of past and present social movements in the United States; their organizational structures, ideologies, support-base, strategy and tactics, resources, discourse framing, multi-organizational fields of action, political opportunity structure, social control agents / authorities, etc.. We will also become familiar with a wide range of sociological theories that attempt to explain the origins, dynamics, and activities of social movements. Finally, we will highlight the central role of social movements in the changing sociopolitical landscape in the United States.

Specifically, we will address such questions as: Under what kind of historical conditions do social movements arise? What is the life cycle of social movements? Who joins social movements? Why do some social movements succeed and others fail? How is movement success measured or defined? How have movement issues and tactics changed over the past century? What are the strengths and weaknesses of centralized and decentralized organizational forms?

In C.W. Mills' classical formulation, the sociological imagination involves seeing the connections between broad social structures, emerging historical moments, and individual biographies. This way of seeing the social world has particular relevance in the case of collective action. Social movements provide some of the most vivid examples of individuals recognizing shared social concerns and uniting with one another at a certain historical moment to change the workings of society in some manner. A broader understanding of these ubiquitous social phenomena highlights the relationship between (perceived) social inequality, social movements, and the shape of contemporary society.

The four books I have chosen for this course were written and designed to facilitate your understanding of the many dimensions of social movements. Please make a commitment to read the assigned material before class. The authors have worked hard to make a number of complex ideas as understandable as possible. You must do a little work as well. You will be expected to have read and assimilated the required readings for each class meeting. The reading assignments should be done before the topic is discussed in class. These four, required texts are available at the UMC Bookstore and the Bookstore on The Hill.

Understanding Social Movements by Steven Buechler

Origins of the Civil Rights Movement by Aldon Morris

Grassroots Resistance by Robert Goldberg

Globalization and Social Movements by Valentine Moghadam

Grading:

Your grade for this course will be based on the following criteria: class engagement (10%); three exams (20% each / 60% total); four (4) quizzes (5% each / 20% total) and a SMO research project & presentation (10%). **SEE DETAILS BELOW.** In determining final grades I do use the "+, -" system."

* *Class Engagement* (10% of the final grade): Your regular attendance and active participation in class discussions and activities is an essential component of this class. I expect you to read the appropriate material for each class meeting and come ready to talk, share, apply, refine, and/or challenge the topic at hand. I favor frequent and informed participation. I strongly encourage you to make every effort to become a "regular member" of this class. Please bring your book(s) to each class meeting.

*Three (3) *Exams* (20% each / 60% of the final grade). Exam Dates: 2/19; 3/19; 4/23. (No "final exam")

*Four (4) *Quizzes* (5% each / 20% of the final grade). Quiz Dates: 1/22; 1/29; 3/3; 4/14.

**Social Movement Organization (SMO) Research Project* (10% of the final grade). Project topic and criteria will be discussed in-class. This project will be due in-class on 4/28, and presented in-class on 4/28 and 4/30.

Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities who qualify for academic accommodations must provide me notification from Disability Services and discuss specific needs with me, preferably during the first two weeks of class. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (303-492-8671, Willard Hall, room 322.)

Classroom Behavior Policy: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set re limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities.

Student Honor Code: All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council(honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and nonacademic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion).

Policy on Discrimination and Harassment: The University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships applies to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550

Religious Observances: Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, please inform me as to any classes you expect to miss due to religious observance.