

SYLLABUS  
Collective Action and Social Movements (SYP3350-01)  
Fall 2008

Instructor:  
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Class meetings:  
MW 9:30-10:45

Office hours:  
11:00-Noon Wednesday  
or by appointment

Providing an overview of sociological approaches to the study of social movements, this course will attempt to relate information related to two basic areas:

1. How our thinking about social movements has changed and continues to evolve.
2. How to recognize a movement when we see one.

Studying social movements is a little like stock market analysis in that looking back is a lot easier than looking forward. The major US movements of the twentieth century—the women's movement, civil rights, the 1960's antiwar movement—have been studied, dissected, and turned inside out. The keys to success and failure of historical movements have been identified—after the fact. Lessons have been learned and applied elsewhere, which is where things get complicated. Universal laws of social movements are nonexistent. Diverse and sometimes hostile groups of researchers each claim to offer fundamental truths. Others (your instructor is among them) see different approaches as each having value and providing distinct insights worth exploring. Analyses have come a long way; from thinking that social movements are a form of collective hysteria, to thinking of them as matters of simply cold calculation, to thinking of them as engaging emotions as well as political calculation. We will discuss these and other perspectives in class, applying them to a variety of movements.

Most social scientists agree that social movements are key to social change, and are therefore worth studying. With an open mind, we can study them too. We will obtain tools currently in use by social movement theorists and learn how to apply them as we see how they have been applied to contemporary and historical movements. And perhaps, we will also wonder at how much remains in flux at the boundaries of social movement research.

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Identify contemporary theoretical approaches to the study of social movements
- Apply concepts from social movement research
- Identify and describe key characteristics of several contemporary and historical movements
- Compare and assess relative utilities of approaches to the study of social movements

## Texts

**Required:** Goodwin Jeff and James Jasper (Editors) 2006. *The Social Movements Reader: Cases and Concepts* (Hereafter called **GJ**) ISBN: 0631221964

**Optional:** Crossley, Nick. 2002. *Making Sense of Social Movements* (Hereafter called **Crossley**) ISBN: 0195173538

## Course expectations:

### Discussion:

This course is to be organized as a discussion seminar. Lectures will be brief and designed to facilitate discussion and orient you to the readings. I will rely on you to come to each class having done the reading assigned for that day.

### Discussion schedule

| Week | Monday   | Wednesday  |
|------|--|--|
| 1    | 8/25 Introduction to the subject; course overview and expectations | 8/27 Introduction continued  |
| 2    | 9/1-- Holiday  | 3 Discuss GJ Part 1 (intro)  |
| 3    | 9/8 GJ Part 2  | 9/10 Part 2  |
| 4    | 9/15 Part 2  | 9/17 Part 2  |
| 5    | 9/22 GJ Part 3   | 9/24 Part 3  |
| 6    | 9/29 Part 3  | 10/1 Part 3  |
| 7    | 10/6 GJ Part 4<br><b>Short paper due –round one</b>                | 10/8 Part 4  |
| 8    | 10/13 Part 4   | 10/15 Part 4   |
| 9    | 10/20 GJ Part 5  | 10/22 Part 5   |
| 10   | 10/27 Part 5   | 10/29 Part 5   |
| 11   | 11/3 GJ Part 6   | 11/5 Part 6  |
| 12   | 11/10 Part 6   | 11/12 Part 6   |
| 13   | 11/17 GJ Part 8  | 11/19 Part 8   |
| 14   | 11/24 Part 9   | 11/26 Part 9   |
| 15   | 12/1 Part 9  | 12/3 Review session for Final Exam<br><b>Short paper due—round two</b> |

### In class writing

There will be 12 unannounced in class writing exercises. Call them quizzes if you like. Each will contain two questions; one question will relate to the currently assigned reading and one will require knowledge of a recent in-class discussion. The two lowest scores will be dropped. Unexcused missed in-class writing assignments cannot be made up.

These will not be difficult questions if you're keeping up with the readings and coming to class. If you skip readings and skip classes, it will be impossible to pass the course. You may have already figured this out but this in-class writing is the de facto attendance policy.

### **Short paper**

There are four options for this assignment. Each will be a minimum of 5 pages. Choose 1 option from this list:

1. Participate in a social movement organization (SMO) and report on what you did and what it does, using concepts from the course (students selecting this option are strongly encouraged to see instructor early for guidance as to what constitutes a social movement organization and what constitutes participation). Consider the following questions:
  - How does the SMO compare to others described in GJ?
  - How does it transform emotions or perform other micro-mobilization functions?
  - How does the SMO relate to the movement it's a part of?
  - What else is interesting about this and why?
2. Discuss Nick Crossley's RAT problem (chapter 4) and relate it to at least three of the assigned GJ readings. Consider the following questions:
  - What is the RAT problem as Crossley sees it?
  - To what extent is a particular GJ excerpt guilty of a RAT problem?
  - To what extent does a GJ excerpt transcend the problem?
  - What else is interesting about this and why?
3. Review part ten of GJ (movement successes) and apply key concepts to at least three other movements (using GJ excerpts). Consider the following questions:
  - What is common to successes for movements described in the part 10 extracts?
  - What potential contradictions exist among the part 10 extracts?
  - How do the "lessons learned" about movement success apply to other movements described in GJ extracts?
  - What else do we need to know about part 10?
4. Propose your own project, subject to instructor's review and approval (by 9/15). Proposals should be written, and detail exactly what is to be done (including questions that will be considered). Potentially acceptable proposals include (but are not limited to) a book review or interview with social movement actor. Approval will be based on the relevance of the subject and the substance of the plan.

Approach these papers as analytic essays, rather than full blown research articles.

Scoring criteria will in each case be based on two factors:

- Effective college-level written communication (clarity, organization, grammar and punctuation)
- Engagement with the subject (e.g. is the paper within the bounds of the assignment? Did the writer apply relevant concepts correctly?)

Failure to observe both criteria above are grounds for rejection of the paper. Beyond that, use your creativity: feel free to talk to the instructor, write multiple drafts, and visit the FSU writing center— whatever it takes.

Your paper will receive two grades, one for the completed draft and another again as a revision or extension of the original idea based on the instructor's comments. Late papers will not be accepted. Option 4 is off the table after 9/15. More details will be provided on these four options in class.

To be clear, this is one paper. The first round requires a complete finished paper. A possible 15 points may be awarded each round. Instructor's comments in the first round will suggest avenues for an expansion of the paper and/or will call for specific revisions to be performed. Successful first round papers will tend to generate suggestions for expansion, comments for unsuccessful papers will tend toward suggestions for revision. The minimum of 5 pages applies to the first round. No pre-set minimum applies to the second round, but rather will be on a case-by-case basis.

### **Final Exam**

Final exam will be multiple choice (bubble coded). It will be cumulative.

### **Grading**

Assignment weights are as follows:

|       |                                  |         |
|-------|----------------------------------|---------|
| 50    | 10 in-class writing/short answer | 5 each  |
| 30    | 2 papers (one paper twice)       | 15 each |
| 20    | Final exam                       |         |
| <hr/> |                                  |         |
| =100  |                                  |         |

|          |    |          |
|----------|----|----------|
| Scoring: | A  | =92-100  |
|          | A- | =90-91.9 |
|          | B+ | =88-89.9 |
|          | B  | =82-87.9 |
|          | B- | =80-81.9 |
|          | C+ | =78-79.9 |
|          | C  | =72-77.9 |
|          | C- | =70-71.9 |
|          | D+ | =68-69.9 |
|          | D  | =60-67.9 |
|          | F  | =0-59.9  |

### **Attendance policy**

FSU requires that attendance be taken at the start of each class.

There are three acceptable excuses for missing class (and grounds for making up in-class writing)...

1. Religious holidays (as specified in FSU policy)
2. Representing FSU at official functions
3. Verified emergencies and/or medical illness.

...each of these requires appropriate documentation, and numbers 1 and 2 require prior notification—no exceptions.

### **Class Etiquette**

Classroom courtesy is necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn without unnecessary distractions. Violations of rules of etiquette could result in being dismissed from the class session, the lowering of your final grade or, in extreme cases, being dismissed from the course. Rules of etiquette include the following: Be in your seat and ready to begin at the start of class and stay there until it ends, turn off phones, do not talk while someone else is talking, raise your hand before talking, give your attention to the class process (don't read newspapers, fall asleep, text message friends, etc.), ask someone a clarifying question before disagreeing, and allow others space to talk. [this section taken (with gratitude) verbatim from a syllabus by Dr. Doug Schrock]

### **Academic Honor Policy:**

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to ". . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm>.)

### **Americans With Disabilities Act:**

Florida State University complies with the American with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Any student who may require an accommodation under such provisions should contact me as soon as possible and no later than the end of the first week of classes or as soon as you become aware. No retroactive accommodations will be provided in this class.

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should:

1. register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and
2. bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center  
874 Traditions Way  
108 Student Services Building  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167  
(850) 644-9566 (voice)  
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)  
sdr@admin.fsu.edu  
<http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>