The Class: In this course we examine the theoretical and empirical dimensions associated with the emergence and evolution of social and political movements in the United States. We also look at some cases outside of the United States in order to better understand the presence and absence of movements in the US. We will be particularly concerned with (1) the political circumstances that give rise to such movements, (2) the organizational forms and dynamics that movements develop, (3) the social and political factors that shape their successes (and failures) and (4) the role of technology in facilitating a movement’s emergence and progress. Specific movements that we will study include the civil rights movement, the abolitionist movement, and the animal rights movements. There is room in the last weeks of the semester to make adjustments to the syllabus if there is a movement that the class is particularly interested in. Suggestions are welcome with regard to the movement(s) we look at.

Grading: Grades in this class will be based on three exams, attendance, and incidental assignments. There are three exams of increasing importance, with the first worth 25% of your grade, the second 30% and the third 35%. Attendance and incidental assignments are worth 10%. Exams will be based entirely on course readings and lectures. The final exam for this class is scheduled for Dec 19, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Office Information: Office Hours: Wednesday 2-3:30 and by appointment. Office: Seigle Hall, Room 250. Office Phone: 935-3462. E-mail: adarnell@wustl.edu

Readings: Books required for the course can be found in the bookstore or you may order them through your preferred book provider.


- Jasper, James and Dorothy Nelkin. The Animal Rights Crusade: The Growth of a Moral Crusade. New York: The Free Press. ISBN: 0029161959 (this book out of print so you can try to order a used copy (the bookstore was unable to) and I will be posting the required readings on AReS).

Articles in the syllabus are either on AReS or a notation as to where it can be found is provided.

All exams and written work turned in for grades must be the work of the student of record and no other. Any deviation will be considered an act of plagiarism or other form of cheating. If you are unclear on the concept ask me for further clarification.
Approximate Schedule
All materials should be read for the day of class on which they are referenced.

Week 1: August 30 – Sept 1

Tuesday: Introduction. No readings.

Assignment for Thursday: What is a political or social movement? How are they different from one another? How is a movement different from a cause or some other type of collective action, such as sustained rioting? We will discuss answers to these questions by considering answers to the following empirically based questions. Which of these do you believe can or should be thought of as a movement: The support and spirit behind President Obama’s election in 2008? The riots in Great Britain this summer? Radical Environmentalism, sometime called Environmental Resistance Movements? The Gay Rights Movement?

Thursday: Discuss what you learned through your exhaustive internet search on the above questions.

Week 2: September 6-8: Conceptualizing (defining) a Movement


Theories of Social and Political Movements

Thursday: Carmines & Stimson, Chapter 1 of Issue Evolution (on Ares). Tarrow, Part II

Week 3: September 13-15: Theories of Social and Political Movements, con’t

Tuesday: Tarrow Part III


Week 4: September 20-22 Theories of Social and Political Movements, con’t.

Tuesday: Discussion of McAdam and Tarrow; review and prepare for Exam 1.

Thursday: Exam #1

Week 5: September 27 & 29 The Civil Rights Movement

Tuesday: McAdam, Ch 5-6

Thursday: McAdam, Ch 7-9

Week 6: October 4 & 6: Civil Rights Movement, con’t


Week 7: October 11 & 13 Critiques of Political Process Theory


Week 8: Oct 18 & 20: Abolitionism as a Social Movement (Reading by George Fredrickson, The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate of Afro-American Character & Destiny, 1817-1914)


Week 9: October 25 & 27 Abolitionism as a Social Movement, con’t


Week 10: November 1 & 3 Exam & Animal Rights

Tuesday: Exam #2


Week 11: November 8 & 10 Animal Rights Movement concluded


Week 12: November 15 & 17: Technology, Communication and Political Movements


Week 13: November 22 & 25: Thanksgiving Week

Tuesday: Library &/or Internet assignment on prominence of Social Networking in protests in Egypt, Great Britain and San Francisco. Due next Tuesday.

Thursday: T.G. Break

Week 14: November 29 & December 1 Conclude the Role of Technology & Environmental Movements

Tuesday: Last Week’s Assignment is due and the basis of class discussion.


Week 15: December 6-8: Environmental movements and other topic to be determined (such as The New Right as a Political Movement, The Anti-Nuclear Movement, The Women’s Movement, perhaps returning to a previous topic or something else based on a majority preference.)

Tuesday: To be assigned.

Thursday: To be assigned.

Week 16: December 13-15

Tuesday: To be assigned.

Thursday: EXAMS BEGIN (no class).

Monday December 19, 1:00-3:00 Final Exam.