SOC 415-001, Social Movements
Spring 2018

TR 12:30-1:45, Hibbard 212

Contact Info

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Description

Yes, social change is possible. In a world shot through with structured social inequalities, relations of domination and oppression, and an ever-expanding set of social institutions that—whatever their intent—seem to function in ways that reproduce the status quo, it’s easy to believe that nothing will change. We sociologists contribute to this malaise: by constantly explaining how we individuals are at the mercy of social forces beyond our control, the dominant narrative of sociology is that social inequalities reproduce themselves over time. It’s depressing and sometimes downright disempowering.

But the narrative is only half true. Yes, those structural forces are real, but the future is never fully determined. We sociologists don’t believe in destiny. The big, omnipresent structures of society affect us always; but we also always have freedom and agency to follow our own path. Social movements show that sometimes, even against all odds, the little guys win. To study social movements is to study how even the most powerless, most oppressed groups in society can combine their power through collective action and change society in ways both big and small.

This class, therefore, is fundamentally a happy, optimistic class. Permit yourself to imagine the sort of world you want to leave for your children, your grandchildren, and your great grandchildren. Yes, that world is possible. It might not be likely. It might take unfathomable amounts of work to create it. But it is possible. In this class, we will learn how social change is created from the grassroots—from the bottom up, rather than from the top down.

There is both a science and an art—a theory and a praxis—of social movements. Social movements have been studied through social scientific methods for decades, and we have learned quite a lot about the circumstances under which social change happens. Part of this class is about imparting that social scientific knowledge to you—so you can consider for yourselves the best explanations and evidence we have about when, why, and how social movements succeed. Those of you who are especially interested in studying social movements from an academic, theoretical point of view will get a chance to conduct an in-depth research project on a single social movement—to learn the ins and outs of that movement and the impacts that it had on the world.
There is an art to social movements, too. There is tremendous skill involved in making social change. It takes practice and dedication to become a good organizer, a charismatic speaker, an inspirational artist, or a crafty rhetorician—the kinds of people that can make the difference between a social movement that empowers people and one that alienates them. For those of you who are ready to be (or already are) part of a movement for social change, this class can help you refine your understanding and your skills of how to advocate effectively for your cause. And this class will give you a chance to apply what you are learning as part of a semester-long “praxis project.”

Thus, whether you are taking this class for academic reasons or for practical reasons (or both), you will have a chance to make this class work for you. It will be a demanding class. As a 400-level seminar, it requires a lot from you in terms of reading, writing, and class participation (but no exams!). So success in the class will come from your inner-motivation. The secret to doing well in this class is to always keep in your mind what you hope to gain from this work: let your internal drive for greater understanding or for a better world guide you. Whatever it is, make this class about that—and you will always find more reasons to keep moving forward.

**Learning Outcomes**

This course satisfies no program requirements of any kind. You are here because you want to be: you want to learn how to change the world; or you are interested in the subject and thirst for knowledge; or you know that the world needs a little more hope, love, equality, and justice. I’ll do my best to provide the best course materials and learning experience for students with these goals in mind; what specifically you get out of it is up to you.

**Required Texts**

There is one required textbook, available for rental at the University Book Store:


There will also be a number of required readings posted on D2L. These are required readings, and of course, you may print them, read them electronically, or whatever you prefer. Please don’t hesitate to talk to me about reading or note-taking strategies for these readings. The full bibliographic citations of these readings, in the order in which we will encounter them, are below:


• King Jr., Martin Luther. 1963. “Letter from Birmingham Jail.”

• Stall, Susan and Randy Stoecker. 1998. “Community Organizing or Organizing Community? Gender and the Crafts of Empowerment.” Gender and Society, 12, 6 (December), pp. 729-756.


Assignments and Grading

The assignments and grading in this class will be a mixture of a semester-long independent research or praxis project (50%) and continuous, ongoing engagement with the class and with assigned readings (50%).

Semester-Long Research/Praxis Project (50%) For your semester-long project, you will choose one of two options: a conventional library-based research project or an applied activism project. The details of each are as follows:

• Research: In-Depth Movement Case Study—This will be a library-based research project focused upon a single movement of your choice. Depending upon your choice, your research will either be a broad description of the movement, considering all of the different aspects of movements that we will discuss in class, or a narrow, focused analysis of one dimension of the movement. Either way, the ultimate outcome will be a 15-page research paper. Here are the specific components of the project, along with the percentage of your final grade that they are worth:
  o Project Proposal (5%)
  o Annotated Bibliography (5%)
  o Outline (5%)
  o Rough draft (10%)
  o Final Paper (25%)

• Praxis: In-Depth Applied Activism—This will be an applied project, in which you devote time every week to actually doing some form of social movement activism and to keeping a weekly journal that reflects upon your activities and how they relate to what you are learning in class. The ultimate outcome will be a 15-page reflection paper that
synthesizes what you are learning from the course readings/discussions with what you are learning from your experiences doing activism.

- Project Proposal (5%)
- Weekly Journal (20%)
- Final Paper (25%)

Specific expectations for each of these components will be handed out in class at an appropriate date.

**Weekly Reading Responses (20%)** Ten times during the semester, you will write a one-page long response to one of the assigned readings and upload it to the appropriate dropbox on D2L. Each response should contain a one-paragraph description of some concept, theory, finding, or conclusion that you found interesting in that reading, followed by a one-paragraph reaction to it. The reaction could be a criticism, a question, an observation, a concern, or anything else that represents your own personal reaction to it. **Each response is due on the day indicated by 10:00 a.m.** I will use these reading responses to set the agenda for class discussion that day. Additionally, it will be treated as an indicator of the quality and depth of your engagement with the course material. Each response will receive 2 points if it is timely and substantive; 1 point if it is either timely or substantive; 0 points if it is neither timely nor substantive.

**Class Discussion Leader (10%)** For one reading during the semester, you will sign up to be the class discussion leader for that reading. As the discussion leader, you will prepare a document that contains the following three things:

1. A short summary of the specific movement, case, or problem described in the reading
2. An explanation of key concepts or theories that are generalizable/applicable to other movements beyond the one discussed in the reading
3. Three questions that you have about the reading that you would like to discuss in class

Then, you will present those three things to the class in oral form at the beginning of the class in order to start the discussion. Half of your grade will be on the quality of the written document, and half of your grade will be on your oral presentation and leadership in class discussion.

**Attendance (10%)** I will take attendance in every class. You get 1 free absence; beyond that, you will be penalized proportionately to the number of classes you miss. [Please let me know if you will miss class or have difficulty with assignments for religious or athletic reasons, and we will work something out.] You are all adults, so I am not going to monitor lateness and your comings and goings; however, if you are consistently late or disruptive in class, it will harm your participation grade—because you are degrading the learning environment.

As a general rule, make ups for missed in-class activities, quizzes, exams, etc. will be provided only when due to an authorized absence. It is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor of such situations and to provide appropriate documentation. Students will need to consult with the instructor regarding the nature of the make ups and due dates. Work that is late for non-authorized reasons will not receive full credit and if it is too late, it will not receive any credit. Although students will not be penalized when absences are authorized, it is important to
understand that in some cases the make up work may be significantly different from the original assignments, exams, etc.

**Participation (10%)** Because this class is a seminar, it is extremely valuable that all students participate and take an active, leadership role in class discussions. Participation is a cumulative grade, adjusted upward and downward continuously throughout the course of the semester. Positive contributions to the class are rewarded, while negative contributions to the class are penalized. Smart questions, dumb questions, and smart comments (but not dumb comments) make your participation grade go up. Disruptions (verbally or bodily) and other actions that have negative effects on the classroom environment (see below) make your grade go down.

**Final Grade Scale**

Your final letter grades will be calculated as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>≥ 93</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
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<td>&lt; 60</td>
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If you are “borderline” between two grades, I will follow the rules of rounding. For example, if you have a final grade of 89.5, I will round up to A-; but if you have 89.4, I will round down to B+. Nevertheless, I reserve the right to adjust the grade upward (I will never adjust it downward) if my subjective judgment of your performance throughout the class merits it. An example of a case in which I might do this is if you demonstrate significant and continuous academic improvement throughout the semester.

**Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity in the Classroom**

**Classroom Environment** You know why college is awesome? Because there is no other institution in society in which the free and responsible discussion of controversial topics is not merely permitted, but integral to the purpose and mission of the institution. The classroom is a sacred space for those who value the free and responsible exchange of ideas. Especially in a sociology class, controversial topics, theories, beliefs, and values can and should be expressed. I actually go out of my way to do so. Remember that both you and everyone else in this class has a unique experience of the world—we will inevitably have different understandings of reality and different opinions about it. So that we can hopefully preserve this sacred space, please make every effort to do the following:

- Please speak respectfully to others, as you would want others to speak to you.
- Please speak responsibly to the class. There is no such thing as pure freedom of speech—there never has been and never will be. Freedom must always be balanced with responsibility. Before speaking, please consider whether or not your comment or question will be educational and respectful of others.
- Please respect others’ feelings and never deny the validity of their feelings.
- If you are worried that something you said might have offended someone, apologize.
• When others speak, listen. Don’t just hear the person; try to understand them.
• If you encounter a difference of opinion, try to see the world from their eyes before judging their opinion.
• If you wish to disagree with something someone said, please disagree with the idea, not the person. Instead of using accusatory “you” language (“YOU said….”), try using agentic “I” language (“I heard you say…and I disagree…”).
• If something that I, the professor, say or do in class bothers you, please tell me. Privately or publicly, verbally or written—I want to know.

In short, learning happens best when we have the kind of classroom in which people exercise both freedom and responsibility in both speaking and listening. The goal is not to avoid conflict or avoid discomfort; it is to confront it in a safe, respectful way. As part of a college education, it is important that you confront uncomfortable truths about ourselves and our society. In doing so, the ultimate objective is to make ourselves and our society better, stronger, and wiser.

Civility and Inclusivity In this class, I strive to be both civil and inclusive of all students, and I ask you to join me in adhering to norms of behavior that respect the dignity and freedom of others. In college, we encounter a tremendous amount of diversity, and it is my firm belief that we should value that diversity—whether it be race, ethnicity, gender-identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, ability, age, religion, political beliefs, lifestyle, or anything else. Sometimes when we encounter difference for the first time, we react negatively: it seems strange, incomprehensible, and irrational. But please do not treat one another that way; after all, you seem strange, incomprehensible, and irrational to others, too! Instead, please do your best to be welcome and courteous to each other so that we can all learn from one another.

Miscellaneous

Absences and Make-Ups As a general rule, make ups for missed in-class activities, exams, etc. will be provided only when due to an authorized absence. It is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor of such situations and to provide appropriate documentation. Students will need to consult with the instructor regarding the nature of the make-ups and due dates. Work that is late for non-authorized reasons will not receive full credit and if it is too late, it will not receive any credit. Although students will not be penalized when absences are authorized, it is important to understand that in some cases the make-up work may be significantly different from the original assignments, exams, etc.

Students Needing Accommodations Any student who has a disability and is in need of classroom accommodations, please contact both myself and the Services for Students with Disabilities Office in Centennial Hall 2106 at the beginning of the semester. I will make every effort to accommodate the practices of different religious faiths, physical, emotional, or learning disabilities, cultural differences, or athletic requirements. But if accommodations are necessary, I need you to tell me. Please let me know about anything that might make your full participation in this class difficult, and we will figure out how we can enable you to be an equal participant.
Writing Resources Contrary to what you might think, writing well is, for most people (including me), one of the most difficult things to learn how to do—not just in terms of grammar and mechanics, but also in terms of style, organization, clarity, effectiveness, and originality. If you want to improve your writing (even if you don’t get bad grades on essays), you should visit the Center for Writing Excellence in the Student Success Center (Centennial 2104). Check out their website to learn about hours and their multiple locations, the wonderful people who are there to help you, and the services and resources that they offer: [http://www.uwec.edu/Writing/](http://www.uwec.edu/Writing/).

Academic Misconduct (i.e. Plagiarism and Cheating!) I consider any academic misconduct in this course to be a serious offense, and I will pursue the strongest possible academic penalties for such behavior. I follow the Blugold Student Code of Conduct in cases of academic misconduct, which it defines as “an act in which a student:

a. Seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
b. Uses unauthorized material or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
c. Furnishes false academic documents or records;
d. Intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
e. Engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student’s academic performance; or
f. Assists other students in any of these acts.” (Section II, 14.03.1)

Please note: academic misconduct isn’t something that only “bad” people do. Even good, honest people plagiarize and cheat. Well-respected scholars have had their careers ruined because they forgot to put a citation into their research notes, thus inadvertently taking credit for another person’s ideas. Even straight-A students do not always recognize acts of plagiarism and commit academic misconduct with the best of intentions.

D2L I plan on using D2L for most communications and resources related to the class. All printed materials that I hand out will be posted there; I will use the website for posting announcements and grades; and several readings and web resources will be posted there.

Technology in the Classroom Different professors have different policies on the use of electronic devices in the classroom. The dilemma is simple: laptops and tablets can be fantastic learning resources, but they can be equally fantastic distractions to you, me, and every other student in the classroom. I do not want to ban technology outright, but past experience has taught me that I cannot count on students to police themselves. Therefore, I have devised the following policies:

- **No Cell Phones.** Cell phones must be turned off or silent and put away. You may not use your cell phone under any circumstances unless authorized by me ahead of time.
- **Laptops and Tablets.** Students are permitted to use laptops and tablets in class only for educational purposes. You may use these devices for note-taking, reading, small group work, and looking up information relevant to the class; you may not use them for email, social media, or work unrelated to this class. Please be aware that abuse of this policy will result in deductions in your participation grade.

Important Dates The last day to drop a class with no record is Friday, February 9. The last day to withdraw from a class or from the university is Friday, April 13.
## Calendar

**Topic 1: Defining Social Movements and Social Change—What the heck is this class about?**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day/Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments/Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T (1/30) Introduction: Power, Politics, and Types of Social Change</td>
<td>None</td>
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**Topic 2: Activists and Recruits—Who participates in movements and why?**

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<th>Day/Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>T (2/13) Recruitment and Micro-mobilization</td>
<td>D2L, “Potentials, Networks, Motivations, and Barriers” SMR 9, “Women’s Mobilization into the Salvadoran Guerrilla Army”</td>
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<tr>
<td>R (2/15) Ideology and Belief</td>
<td>SMR 8, “Who are the Radical Islamists?” D2L, “World Views of Pro- and Anti-Abortion Activists”</td>
<td>Reading Response due</td>
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### Topic 3: Organizations and Networks—How are movements organized?

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<th>Day/Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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D2L, “Resources and Resourcefulness” |                                                 |
| T (2/27) Social Networks                          | SMR 5, “The Egyptian Revolution”  
D2L, “Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest” | Reading Response due |
| R (3/1) Transnational Advocacy Networks            | SMR 17, “Transnational Environmental Activism”  
SMR 18, “The Transnational Network for Democratic Globalization” | Annotated Bibliography or Weekly Journal (part 1) due |
| T (3/6) Elites and Allies                         | SMR 26, “Farmworkers’ Movements in Changing Political Contexts”  
SMR 29, “The Quest for International Allies” |                                                 |

### Topic 4: The Status Quo—Who and what are movements up against?

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<th>Day/Topic</th>
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SMR 38, “Understanding Revolutions: The Arab Uprisings” |                                                 |
D2L, “Bad Mood Rising” | Reading Response due |
D2L, “Media and the Arts” | Reading Response due |

**SPRING BREAK! (March 19-23)**
### Topic 5: Tactics and Strategy—How do movements try to achieve their goals?

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<th>Day/Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>T (4/3) Violence</td>
<td>SMR 21, “Armed Struggle in the South African Anti-Apartheid Movement” SMR 22, “Suicide Bombing”</td>
<td>Outline or Weekly Journal (part 2) due</td>
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<tr>
<td>R (4/5) Community Organizing</td>
<td>D2L, “Community Organizing or Organizing Community?” D2L, “Social Capital and Political Culture”</td>
<td>Reading Response due</td>
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<tr>
<td>R (4/12) Online Activism</td>
<td>D2L, “Ferguson and the Death of Michael Brown on Twitter” D2L, “The Structure of Online Activism”</td>
<td>Reading Response due</td>
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### Topic 6: Framing and the Media—How do communication dynamics affect movements?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T (4/24) Mass Media Coverage</td>
<td>SMR 27, “Movements in the Media” D2L, “Apparently They Don’t Like Succinct and Articulate”</td>
<td>Reading Response due</td>
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**Topic 7: Repression and Protest Dynamics—How do movements unfold over time?**

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<th>Day/Topic</th>
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<th>Assignments/Notes</th>
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D2L, “Tactical Innovation and the Pace of Insurgency” | **Rough Draft or Weekly Journal (part 3) due** |
D2L, “Structural Social Change and the Mobilizing Effect of Threat” |                                           |
| R (5/3) External Repression and Internal Tensions | SMR 32, “The Dilemmas of Identity Politics”  
SMR 33, “The Repression/Protest Paradox in Central America” |                                           |

**Topic 8: Outcomes—When do movements win or lose?**

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<th>Day/Topic</th>
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<th>Assignments/Notes</th>
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D2L, “The Outcomes of Homeless Mobilization” | **Reading Response due**                |
D2L, “Social Movement Continuity” |                                           |

**Final Paper due during Listed Final Exam Period: Date/Time TBA**