

SOCG222 · SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT RESEARCH
Winter 2012 · Mondays · 2-5 PM · SSB 414
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Graduate office hours by appointment

“Sociology is not a science; even if it were, there are particular reasons why the study of *revolution* would not admit of scientific treatment.... It seems that the best way to prove that something does not admit of a particular treatment is honestly and forthrightly to make the attempt, and to persevere until it no longer works.”
-- Gustav Landauer, *Revolution* (1907)

Why and how do social movements emerge? When and how should we expect them to transform society? These questions have been central preoccupations of sociology since the beginning. Indeed, answering questions like these was arguably the very *raison d'etre* of sociology. Lorenz von Stein, who coined the term “social movement” in 1850, used it to refer both to the struggle of French workers for social equality, and to the dawning awareness that “society” was a thing distinct from the state.

Although sociologists have been asking questions about social movements for more than a century, we have not yet pinned down the answers. Perhaps a social movement is, as Gustav Landauer said of revolution, a particularly elusive phenomenon. Consider one common definition: a social movement is a sustained, collective, and extra-institutional challenge to authority. How are we to study something that meets this definition? Because a movement is sustained and collective, any individual fieldworker will usually find it difficult to observe more than a small part of the action directly. Because a movement takes place at least partly outside of institutions, it also escapes the most powerful *collective* data-gathering and -recording instruments of our society--such as the Congress, the voting booth, or the stock market. Because a movement challenges authority, it will typically make powerful enemies who circulate their own stories and theories of the movement in order to make it seem illegitimate; participants will respond with stories and theories of their own to make their movement seem worthy; and sociologists who study movements will struggle to distinguish their role from that of the spy or the spokesperson. No wonder movements are hard to study!

Despite these challenges, as you will see, patient empirical research has indeed improved our understanding of social movements. My goal is to get you up to speed on the current literature, but our approach to the field will be historical, so that we can understand how contemporary social movement theory in fact responds to specific lacunae that researchers identified in previous theories. We will begin with a conceptual discussion--what's a social movement?--noting what the different answers to this question tell us about the history of research in the field. We will then proceed to an overview of why movements emerge, addressing several prominent theories in order (from collective behavior, through resource mobilization and political process, to various cultural theories). Finally, we will discuss classical and contemporary theories of why movements decay and disappear, and some related questions about what impact, if any, they have on the rest of society.

EXPECTATIONS

I expect you to keep up with the class reading and show up ready to discuss it. The reading is heavier in some weeks than others. Some graduate students have told me that I expect a lot of reading. That is because I am treating you like professionals; sociologists are expected to read a lot.

Every week, by midnight before the day of our class meeting, you should e-mail a *critical question* on the assigned reading. A critical question should point us to a *particular* passage in an assigned text; *briefly* explain why that passage is important to the text; and pose a question about it for discussion. In other words, this is not a big written memo, and you should not think of this as a burdensome writing requirement. The purposes of this assignment are (1) to nudge you to get some of the reading done before Monday evening, and (2) to give me information about what people are interested in discussing, so that I can plan our agenda and we can use our time to maximum advantage.

You can skip critical questions twice. More than twice, and I will start to be concerned about your participation.

If you think that the study of social movements is a field in which you might do dissertation research, you should read around beyond the syllabus, in order to familiarize yourself with the field as it is currently practiced. In addition to the specific recommended readings listed here, I recommend browsing recent issues of *AJS* and *ASR*, along with specialized journals in the field, the most important of which is probably *Mobilization*, to get a feel for what the live debates are and what a good article looks like. Much of the best work in the field is also published in books, of which the most important series are probably the *Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics* and the University of Minnesota Press series *Social Movements, Protest, and Contention*. The annual volume *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* is also worth looking at. Finally, I recommend reading histories of social movements you are particularly interested in. Historical examples will help you grasp the theoretical material and--when the material starts to seem too abstruse or scholastic--will help you remain focused on why this material is worth thinking about carefully.

A FINAL PAPER

If you enroll, I *require* you to write a final research paper of no more than 30 pages, addressing a research question that I have approved beforehand. I am aware that ten weeks is a very short time to complete a research paper that requires original data collection. For this reason I encourage papers that analyze secondary data. I particularly encourage replication of a published study as an excellent way to learn the craft of sociology, and an excellent way to make a contribution to the field of social movement research in particular. If you are short of ideas come talk to me early.

I will also accept final papers that take the form of a proposal with a crisply delineated research question, an explanation of why the answer to that question is a contribution to the literature, and a clear and feasible plan for data collection and analysis that would answer the question.

You may apply to me for permission to write a theoretical literature review paper in lieu of the research paper if you are *currently* preparing for a field examination in social movements.

RECOMMENDED READING

There are several good, reasonably up-to-date undergraduate-level primers on the field if you want a fast overview. Here are my favorites.

David A. Snow and Sarah A. Soule. 2010. *A Primer on Social Movements*. W. W. Norton.

Suzanne Staggenborg. 2011. *Social Movements*. Oxford University Press.
David S. Meyer. 2007. *The Politics of Protest: Social Movements in America*. Oxford University Press.
Charles Tilly and Lesley Wood. 2009. *Social Movements, 1768-2008*. Paradigm Publishers.

I have also listed recommended readings under particular topic headings in our schedule. These readings include sources that I think are of interest because they are either especially new, especially good, especially interesting for thinking through the issues at hand, or especially important, though not necessarily all four. They are listed in no particular order. I have put an asterisk (*) by certain of these recommended readings that are classic studies that I think any specialist in the field will want to be familiar with, even though they are not required for this course.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND REQUIRED READING

The following is the outline of our course. Where a required reading has been ordered for purchase at the bookstore I have indicated it with a dollar sign (\$).

PART I. CONCEPTUAL PRELIMINARIES

Week 1. CAN THERE BE A SCIENCE OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS?

What kind of a thing is a "social movement"? Is it a coherent and distinctive theoretical object with its own causal properties, such that it makes sense to talk of "social movement theory"? Or is so-called social movement theory best understood simply as an applied domain within the theory of, say, collective action, culture, or politics?

\$ Charles Tilly. 2009. *Contentious Performances*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 5.
Roger Gould. 2005. "Historical Sociology and Collective Action." Pp. 286-299 in Julia Adams, Elisabeth S. Clemens, and Ann Shola Orloff, eds. *Remaking Modernity: Politics, History, and Sociology*. Duke University Press.
Robb Willer. 2009. "[A Status Theory of Collective Action](#)." Pp. 133-63 in Shane R. Thye and Edward J. Lawler, eds. *Advances in Group Processes, Vol. 26*.

Recommended reading:

Neil Smelser. 1965. *Theory of Collective Behavior*. The Free Press.
* Mancur Olson. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action*. Harvard University Press.
Scott Frickel and Neil Gross. 2005. "A General Theory of Scientific/Intellectual Movements." *American Sociological Review* 70(2): 204-232.
Snow, David A. 2004. "Social Movements As Challenges to Authority: Resistance to an Emerging Conceptual Hegemony." Pp. 3-25 in *Authority in Contention*, edited by Daniel J. Myers and Daniel M. Cress. New York: Elsevier.
Doug McAdam, Sidney G. Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. 2001. *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge University Press.
Meghan M. Duffy, Amy J. Binder and John D. Skrentny. 2010. "Elite Status and Social Change: Using Field Analysis to Explain Policy Formation and Implementation." *Social Problems* 57 (1): 49-73.
Jeffrey Haydu and David Kadanoff. 2010. "Casing Political Consumerism." *Mobilization* 15(2): 159-177.

PART II. WHERE DO MOVEMENTS COME FROM?

Week 2. PEOPLE WITH NOTHING TO LOSE BUT THEIR CHAINS?

Social movement participants often justify their actions as a protest against an injustice or suffering of some kind; and yet this usually seems an unsatisfying explanation for their actions, because the most oppressed are rarely the most rebellious. We will consider the role of suffering, injustice, deprivation, devaluation, structural strains, quotidian disruptions, grievances (suddenly or gradually imposed), threats, and other adverse conditions in motivating protest.

- Jack A. Goldstone and Charles Tilly. 2001. "Threat (and Opportunity): Popular Action and State Response in the Dynamics of Contentious Action." Pp. 179-194 in Ronald R. Aminzade et al., *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Steven M. Buechler. 2004. "The Strange Career of Strain and Breakdown Theories of Collective Action." Pp. 47-66 in David A. Snow, Sarah Anne Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*. Blackwell.
- § Javier Auyero and Debora Alejandra Swistun. 2009. *Flammable: Environmental Suffering in an Argentine Shantytown*. Oxford University Press.

Recommended:

- Thomas V. Maher. 2010. "Threat, Resistance, and Collective Action: The Cases of Sobibór, Treblinka, and Auschwitz." *American Sociological Review* 75 (2): 252-72.
- Barrington Moore. 1978. *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt*. M. E. Sharpe.
- * David A. Snow, Daniel M. Cress, Liam Downey, Andrew W. Jones. 1998. "Disrupting the 'Quotidian': Reconceptualizing the Relationship Between Breakdown and the Emergence of Collective Action." *Mobilization* 3 (1): 1-22.
- * Edward Walsh. 1981. "Resource Mobilization and Citizen Protest in Communities around Three Mile Island." *Social Problems* 29 (1): 1-21.
- Karl-Dieter Opp. 2001. "Adverse Living Conditions, Grievances, and Political Protest after Communism: the Example of East Germany." *Social Forces* 79(1): 29-65.
- Bert Klandermans. 1989. "Does Happiness Soothe Political Protest? The Complex Relation between Discontent and Political Unrest." Pp. 61-78 in Ruut Veenhoven, ed., *How Harmful is Happiness? Consequences of Enjoying Life or Not*. Rotterdam: Universitaire Pers.

Week 3. MOBILIZING RESOURCES, INCLUDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social movements use resources, including economic capital, cultural capital, human capital of various kinds, and social capital. Is the availability of a certain minimum quantity or quality of resources a precondition for protest? How do particular resources become available to movements, and with what consequences?

- John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald. 1977. "[Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory](#)." *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (6): 1212-1241.
- John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald. 2001. "[The Enduring Vitality of the Resource Mobilization Theory of Social Movements](#)." pp. 533-565 in Jonathan H. Turner, ed., *Handbook of Sociological Theory*. Kluwer Academic.
- Gerald Marwell, Pamela E. Oliver, and Ralph Prahl. 1988. "[Social Networks and Collective Action: A](#)

[Theory of the Critical Mass, III.](#)” *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (3): 502-534, as corrected.
J. Craig Jenkins and Charles Perrow. 1977. “[Insurgency of the Powerless: Farm Worker Movements \(1946-1972\).](#)” *American Sociological Review* 42(2): 249-268.

Recommended:

Mario Diani and Doug McAdam, eds. 2003. *Social Movements and Networks*. Oxford University Press.
Aldon Morris. 1984. *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*. The Free Press.

Week 4. WINDOWS, AND STRUCTURES, OF OPPORTUNITY

People may be more likely to start or join a movement if they think it is likely to win. This simple intuition motivates the theory that the structure of opportunities has an independent influence on the emergence and growth of a social movement. But specifying and testing this theory turns out to be devilishly tricky, for reasons we will discuss.

§ Jeff Goodwin and James Jasper, eds. 2011. *Contention in Context: Political Opportunities and the Emergence of Protest*. Stanford University Press. Selections TBA.

Recommended:

* Doug McAdam. 1999 (1982). *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*. University of Chicago Press.

Meyer, David S. 2004. “Protest and Political Opportunities.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 30: 125-145

Myra Marx Ferree. 2003. “Resonance and Radicalism: Feminist Framing in the Abortion Debates of the United States and Germany.” *American Journal of Sociology* 109(2): 304-44.

McCammom, Holly J., Karen E. Campbell, Ellen M. Granberg, and Christine Mowery. 2001. "How Movements Win: Gendered Opportunity Structures and U.S. Women's Suffrage Movements, 1866 to 1919." *American Sociological Review* 66(1): 49–70.

Hanspeter Kriesi, Ruud Koopmans, Jan Willem Dyvendak, and Marco G. Giugni. 1995. *New Social Movements in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*. University of Minnesota Press.

Week 5. IDEOLOGIES, FRAMES, NARRATIVES, IDENTITIES, AND SOMEONE TO BLAME

Suppose you are a potential protester. What you interpret as a protest-worthy injustice, and what you interpret as a promising political opportunity for protest, will depend on your understanding of the world and your place in it. We will consider what to call such understandings-of-the-world, where they come from, how they change, and whether they are sufficiently exogenous and sufficiently variable that it makes sense to treat their content as a non-trivial factor in explaining social movements.

Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow. 2000. “[Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment.](#)” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 611-39.

Francesca Polletta. 1998. “[It Was Like a Fever: Narrative and Identity in Social Protest.](#)” *Social Problems* 45(2): 137-159.

Deborah Javeline. 2003. “[The Role of Blame in Collective Action: Evidence from Russia.](#)” *American Political Science Review* 97(1): 107-121.

Pamela E. Oliver and Hank Johnston. 2000. “[What a Good Idea! Ideologies and Frames in Social Movement Research.](#)” *Mobilization* 5(1): 37-54.

Recommended:

- * David A. Snow, E. Burke Rochford, Jr., Steven K. Worden and Robert D. Benford. 1986. "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation." *American Sociological Review* 51 (4): 464-481.
- Aldon Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller, eds. 1992. *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*. Yale University Press.

Week 6. TRADITION, REPERTOIRE, AND INNOVATION

The definition of a movement as involving "extra-institutional" protest might appear to suggest action freed from social constraints; and it might therefore seem surprising to observe that participants in social movements typically choose their tactics from a tightly constrained set or repertoire. We will consider the evidence for the existence of tactical repertoires, and the questions of where their contents come from and how they change. To the extent that we define a social movement in terms of tactics, these questions about repertoires are potentially also questions about how movements emerge.

- § Charles Tilly. 2008. *Contentious Performances*. Cambridge University Press, ch. 1-3.
- Marshall Ganz. 2000. "[Resources and Resourcefulness: Strategic Capacity in the Unionization of California Agriculture, 1959-1966](#)." *American Journal of Sociology* 105(4): 1003-1062.
- Verta Taylor, Katrina Kimport, Nella Van Dyke, and Ellen Ann Andersen. 2009. "[Culture and Mobilization: Tactical Repertoires, Same-Sex Weddings, and the Impact on Gay Activism](#)." *American Sociological Review* 74 (6): 865-890.

Recommended:

- Mark Traugott. 2010. *The Insurgent Barricade*. University of California Press.
- Elisabeth Clemens. 1997. *The People's Lobby: Organizational Innovation and the Rise of Interest Group Politics in the United States, 1890-1925*. University of Chicago Press.
- Charles M. Payne. 1995. *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*. University of California Press.
- David S. Meyer and Nancy Whittier. 1994. "Social Movement Spillover." *Social Problems* 41(2): 277-298.

PART III. WHY DON'T MOVEMENTS LAST FOREVER?

Week 7. REPRESSION

Elites sometimes try to quell movements with force or the threat of force. Sometimes such repression appears to discourage protest, but at other times it appears to have the opposite of its intended effect. We will read recent work on the conditions under which repression can be expected, and the conditions under which it can be expected to work.

- Jennifer Earl. 2003. "[Tanks, Tear Gas, and Taxes: Toward a Theory of Movement Repression](#)." *Sociological Theory* 21 (1): 44-68.
- Jennifer Earl and Sarah A. Soule. 2010. "The Impacts of Repression: The Effect of Police Presence and Action on Subsequent Protest Rates." *Research in Social Movements, Conflict, and Change* 30: 75-113.

- Pamela Oliver. 2008. "[Repression and Crime Control: Why Social Movement Scholars Should Pay Attention to Mass Incarceration as a Form of Repression.](#)" *Mobilization* 13(1): 1-24.
- David Hess and Brian Martin. 2006. "[Repression, Backfire, and the Theory of Transformative Events.](#)" *Mobilization* 11 (2): 249-67.

Recommended:

- Mobilization* vol. 11, no. 2 (special issue on "Repression and the Social Control of Protest," ed. by Jennifer Earl)
- Paul D. Almeida. 2003. "Opportunity Organizations and Threat-Induced Contention: Protest Waves in Authoritarian Settings." *American Journal of Sociology* 109 (2): 345-400.
- Jeff Goodwin. 2001. *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dan Slater. 2010. *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge University Press.

Week 8. CONCESSIONS

Elites may respond to protest by conceding new rights or resources to the protesters or their constituency. A substantial literature on "movement outcomes" mostly concerns itself with conditions under which such concessions occur; we will also ask about the conditions under which such concessions make movements go away.

- § Joseph E. Luders. 2009. *The Civil Rights Movement and the Logic of Social Change*. Cambridge University Press.
- John D. Skrentny. 2006. "[Policy-Elite Perceptions and Social Movement Success: Understanding Variations in Group Inclusion in Affirmative Action.](#)" *American Journal of Sociology* 111 (6): 1762-1815

Recommended:

- Marco Giugni, Doug McAdam and Charles Tilly, eds. 1999 *How Social Movements Matter*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Edwin Amenta. 2008. *When Movements Matter: The Townsend Plan and the Rise of Social Security*. Princeton University Press.
- *William Gamson. 1990. *The Strategy of Social Protest*. Second Edition. Belmont: Wadsworth.
- * Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward. 1977. *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. Vintage.
- Rufus P. Browning, Dale Rogers Marshall, and David H. Tabb. 1986. *Protest is Not Enough: The Struggle of Blacks and Hispanics for Equality in Urban Politics*. University of California Press.

Week 9. INSTITUTIONALIZATION, CO-OPTATION AND ABEYANCE STRUCTURES

Movements challenge existing norms and authority structures, but in the process they often institutionalize their own internal norms and authority structures. According to a classic hypothesis often attributed to Michels, institutionalization contributes to the decline and eventual disappearance of a movement. Some recent scholarship asserts the contrary: institutionalization may actually preserve a movement during otherwise unfavorable times, and even contribute to its subsequent re-emergence. We will consider whether and how these positions can be reconciled with each other, and

with the empirical evidence.

Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward. 1977. *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. Vintage. Chapter 3, "The Industrial Workers' Movement."

Verta Taylor. 1989. "[Social Movement Continuity: The Women's Movement in Abeyance](#)." *American Sociological Review* 54 (5): 761-75.

Kim Voss and Rachel Sherman. 2000. "[Breaking the Iron Law of Oligarchy: Union Revitalization in the American Labor Movement](#)." *American Journal of Sociology* 106 (2): 303-49.

Recommended:

Darcy K. Leach. 2005. "The Iron Law of What Again? Conceptualizing Oligarchy across Organizational Forms." *Sociological Theory* 23(3): 312-337.

Philip Selznick. 1949. *TVA and the Grass Roots: A Study in the Sociology of Formal Organization*. University of California Press.

Francesca Polletta. 2004. *Freedom is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements*. University of Chicago Press.

* Robert Michels. 1915. *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. Trans. Eden and Cedar Paul. Hearst's International Library.

Christopher Rhomberg. 2004. *No There There: Race, Class and Political Community in Oakland*. University of California Press.

Gerald F. Davis, Doug McAdam, W. Richard Scott and Mayer N. Zald, eds. 2005. *Social Movements and Organization Theory*. Cambridge University Press.

Week 10. WHERE DID ALL THE PROTESTERS GO?

What effects do social movements have on the individuals who participate in them? The question is difficult to answer because of the difficulties of defining "participation" in something as elusive as a movement, and because of the methodological problem of selection bias. We will conclude by considering theories of movement recruitment, retention, and effects on the individual life course.

§ Catherine Corrigan-Brown. 2010. *Patterns of Protest: Trajectories of Participation in Social Movements*. Stanford University Press.

Recommended:

* Doug McAdam. 1988. *Freedom Summer*. Oxford University Press.

Jocelyn S. Viterna. 2006. "Pulled, Pushed, and Persuaded: Explaining Women's Mobilization into the Salvadoran Guerrilla Army." *American Journal of Sociology* 112(1): 1-45

Rebecca Klatch. 1999. *A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960s*. University of California Press.

Ruth Milkman and Kim Voss, eds. 2004. *Rebuilding Labor: Organizing and Organizers in the New Union Movement*. Cornell University Press.