**Contentious Politics, Political Activism, and Social Movements – Spring 2019**

**EURO-GA 2162 003**

Class Meeting Time: Thursdays 12-2

Instructor: Hadas Aron [hadas.aron@nyu.edu](mailto:hadas.aron@nyu.edu)

Office Hours: Wednesdays 10-12 and by appointment

**Course Description:**

Political activism has a central position in political life. In recent years there is growing interest in contentious politics, activism, and social movements in both popular culture and scholarly research due to their pivotal role as generators of political change. From the 1989 collapse of the Soviet Union through the Color Revolutions in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the Arab Spring to current waves of popular unrest, political activism and the social movements activists form have been a driving force of political life. They have been recognized by some as a force of good, demanding liberalization and maintaining democratic stability, and by others as a disruptive force, toppling down regimes and instigating insurgency.

The course will introduce key concepts in the study of contentious politics, political activism, and social movements. Topics to be covered include broad theoretical frameworks in the field, theories of individual motivation for participation in political activism, the relationship between the state and social movements, the organization of movements, and the repertoire of strategies of political activism. The course will examine central case studies from Europe. Using the theoretical frameworks, we will attempt to understand how collective action problems are overcome, why movements are successful at particular points in time, how the interactions between states and movements influences choice of activism, why are certain strategies chosen, and how different factors contribute/hinder achieving the goals of political activists.

In addition to scholarly literature we will use contemporary media outlets, cultural resources and video, when available, to acquire a better understanding of the different cases.

No prerequisites are necessary for the course.

**Learning Objectives:**

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

1. Identify key theories and concepts in the study of social movements: civil society, social capital, individual motivations, political opportunity structures, resource mobilization, repertoire of strategies, organization structure etc.
2. Familiarity with pivotal cases in the study of social movements, including the actors, their strategies, motivations and relationship with the state.
3. Apply the theoretical framework of the study of social movements to new cases, not analyzed in class.
4. Develop and present their own arguments about the motivations, and selection of strategies of social movements.

**Requirements/ Grades:**

The course will combine short lectures on each topic followed by a discussion on the readings. Attendance in class is mandatory. The students are responsible to complete the required readings and be prepared to discuss them in class.

* Attendance in class, participation, readings, posting. In addition to attendance and participation, each week student will post a link to a relevant news article on the course website. The article should relate topolitical protest, social movement, activism etc. **(15%)**
* Three Response Papers **(20%).** 2 page papers that makes an argument in response to the reading questions in the syllabus. Paper should address the question using the reading materials for that week. A paper will be submitted *before* class discussion on the readings (for example a paper on 1968 will be submitted by 12PM on Thursday March 14). You may submit a paper on weeks of your choosing as long as the first paper is submitted by February 28, the second by April 4; and the third by May 2.

To reiterate: the first response paper is due in class by February 28; The second response paper is due in class by April 4; The third response paper is due in class by May 2.

* 15 minute presentation of a case study: Each student will prepare a review of a social movement including its background and goals, its recruitment methods and operation strategies, and its relationship with the state/international forces. **(20%)**
* Final Paper: A 10 page research paper based on the presentation. The paper will give the students an opportunity to use the knowledge acquired in the course for the analysis of a case study of their choice. The students will choose a social movement that was not addressed in depth in the course and examine it through the frameworks we have discussed in class. They will explore the actors, their motivations and choice of strategies. The students will submit an abstract of the presentation and final paper on the seventh week of the course **(45%)**
* Paper and presentation abstract (ungraded). Students will submit an abstract for the presentation and the paper by March 14. The 2 page abstract will include the case they intend to explore, a central argument they mean to pursue and a preliminary bibliography. Students will then schedule meeting with the instructor to discuss the paper.

## Course Policies

**1. Academic integrity:** Intellectual integrity is the university’s most fundamental commitment. Plagiarism will be penalized to the fullest extent, without warning or exception. If you have any questions about documentation requirements, ask your instructor. For further information on NYU’s plagiarism policy, see: http://cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity

**2. Attendance:** You are permitted one absence from class without consultation; a second absence requires advance notice or a valid excuse, and might nevertheless be reflected in your grade; three absences will inevitably and substantially be reflected in your grade; no student with four absences will pass the course.This policy takes effect from the first meeting, regardless of when you begin attending the course; if you don’t enroll until the second week, you have used your one permitted absence. There are no make-up assignments in place of attendance.

**3. Laptops and Cell Phones:**  The use of cell phones during class is prohibited. Please use your laptop for class related purposes only**.**

**4. Writing:** Papers should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins and numbered pages, and submitted in hard copy. All late papers are penalized at the rate of one grade per day: a B+ paper, for instance, submitted a day after it was due will receive a C+. A paper that is more than 72 hours late will receive an F.

**5. Religious holidays:** NYU works with students who miss class due to religious holidays. In order to receive this accommodation, please notify your recitation instructor during the first two weeks of the semester of upcoming absences. For details on NYU’s policy, see:

http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/university-calendar-policy-on-religious-holidays.html

**6. Students with disabilities:** To receive accommodations due to disability, students must be registered with the Moses Center; please present that registration to your recitation instructor no later than the second recitation meeting. Further information about the Moses Center can be found at www.ndyu.edu/csd.

**Books for Purchase:**

* Raines, Howell. 1983. “My Soul Is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered.”
* Swale, Jessica. 2014. *Blue Stockings*. Nick Hern Books. (A Play)
* All other readings are available on the course website under the Resources file.

**Class overview:**

**Week 1 January 31**

Introduction to the course

**Week 2 February 7**

**Concepts and Theories**

Questions for discussion/response paper

* What are social movements and what are not social movements? Do the Definitions from this week’s readings capture social movements well?
* Can social movements exist only in democracies? Why (or why not)?

Readings: (45 pages)

* Tarrow, Sidney G. 2011. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge University Press. Ch. 1 – Contentious Politics and Social Movements
* Charles Tilly, *Social Movements 1768-2012* (Paradigm Publishers, 2013), ch. 1 (Ch. 2-5 are recommended reading)
* Della Porta, Donatella, and Mario Diani. 2011. “Social Movements.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society*, ed. Michael Edwards. Oxford University Press.

**Week 3 February 14**

**Individual motivations for participating in social movement activity**

Questions for discussion/response paper

* Under what conditions will individuals join social movements? Do the theories about individual motivations for participation in social movements capture the individual experience of social movements?
* How is the theory of collective identity relevant for the discussion of the individual experience?
* Why are networks important for participation in social movements?

Readings: (79 pages)

* Olson, Mancur. 2009. “The Logic of Collective Action*.” The Social Movements Reader: Cases and Concepts*, 2009
* Kuran, Timur. 1989. “Sparks and Prairie Fires: A Theory of Unanticipated Political Revolution.” *Public Choice* 61, no. 1: 41–74.
* Polletta and Jasper 2001. Collective Identity and Social Movements. Annual Review of Sociology. 27: 283-305
* Gladwell, Malcolm. “Six Degrees of Lois Weisberg.” New Yorker, January 11, 1999

**Week 4 February 21**

**When and How Movements Emerge?**

Questions for discussion/response paper

* Under what conditions do social movements emerge? Do the theories about the causes for social movements capture the phenomena?
* Compare and contrast the theories: political opportunities, political process, resource mobilization, grievances. Which best explains the emergence of social movements?

Readings: (85 pages)

* Tarrow, Sidney G. 2011. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge University Press. Ch.
* Meyer, David S. “Protest and Political Opportunities.” *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* 30 (2004): 125–145.
* McCarthy, John D., and Mayer N. Zald. “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory.” *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6 (1977): 1212–1241.

**Week 5 February 28**

*The first response paper is due in class by today*

**Culture and Identity and Framing**

Questions for discussion/response paper

* Is good framing a cause for the emergence of a social movement? If not, what is the importance of framing?
* Why do so many social scientists struggle with the role of culture and identity? How should we study culture and identity?

Readings: (42 pages)

* Swidler, Ann. “Cultural Power and Social Movements.” In *Culture and Politics*, 269–283. Springer, 2000.
* *Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, 1996, 261–74.
* Gould, Deborah. “The Emotion Work of Movements” *The Social Movements Reader: Cases and Concepts*, 2009

**Week 6 March 7**

**The Civil Rights Movement in the US in the 1950s and 1960s – A Model Case**

Questions for discussion/response paper

* Why did the Civil Rights Movement happen when it did and not before or after?
* Who joined the Civil Rights movement and why? What was the role of networks in the movement?
* Why was the movement successful? In what ways was it successful? In what ways was it unsuccessful? What tactics were most successful and why?

Readings: (114 pages, but the 55 pages from My Soul is Rested are a fast and beautiful read)

* McAdam, Doug. 2010. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*. University of Chicago Press. Ch. 6 and 7 (Ch. 8 is an optional reading)
* Morris, Aldon D. “A Retrospective on the Civil Rights Movement: Political and Intellectual Landmarks.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 25, no. 1 (1999): 517–539.
* Raines, Howell. 1983. “My Soul Is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered.” 75-130

**Week 7 March 14**

*Abstract for the presentation and final paper due by the end of the week*

**1968**

Questions for discussion/response paper

* What caused the global disruption of 1968? What are some explanations to the fact that protests broke in so many locations around the world during this period?
* Who joined the protest in 1968? Why did they join?
* Why did 1968 fail to achieve many of the protesters’ goals?

Readings (63 pages)

* Judt Revolutionaries New York Review of Books
* Ferrante, Elena. Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay: The Neapolitan Novels, Book Three. Text Publishing, 2014.ch. 13-14
* Suri, Jeremi. Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente. Harvard University Press, 2009.164-212. Skim ch. 6
* Steinfels. “Paris, May 1968: The revolution that never was” NYT

**Week 8 March 21 - Spring Break!**

**Week 9 March 28**

**Women’s Movements**

Questions for discussion/response paper

* What recruitment and mobilization problems did women’s movements face? Are they unique to women’s movements?
* How are multiple identities like class and race interact with women’s rights?
* What are some of the early challenges facing women which are still present today? Why?

Readings (57 pages without the play, with the play it’s more!)

* Jenson, Jane. “Struggling for Identity: The Women’s Movement and the State in Western Europe.” *West European Politics* 8, no. 4 (1985): 5–18.
* Mansbridge, Jane J. 1986. *Why We Lost the ERA*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 10
* Swale, Jessica. 2014. *Blue Stockings*. Nick Hern Books. (A Play)
* Freeman, Jo. “The Women’s Movement.” *The Social Movements Reader: Cases and Concepts*, 2009, 24–35.

**Week 10 April 4**

*The second response paper is due in class by today*

**1989**

Questions for discussion/response paper

* How can we explain the discrepancy between the 1989 events in Central Eastern Europe, and the weak civil society there?
* What was the driving force behind 1989?
* 1989 in the region is largely viewed as a disappointment today. Why? Is that a concern for many social movements?

Readings (54 pages)

* Beissinger, Mark R. “Nationalism and the Collapse of Soviet Communism.” *Contemporary European History* 18, no. 3 (2009): 331–347.
* Bernhard, Michael. “Civil Society after the First Transition: Dilemmas of Post-Communist Democratization in Poland and Beyond.” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 29, no. 3 (1996): 309–330.
* Margaret McMillan. 2018. “1989 The Year of Unfulfilled Hopes” Wall Street Journal
* Jan Cienski. 2019. “Poland’s Transformation is a Story Worth Telling” Politico

**Week 11 April 11**

**The Color Revolutions**

Questions for discussion/response paper

* Were the Color Revolutions social movements driven? Why or why not? How does the context of the state influence social movement activity?
* What are the important differences between social movement activity in democracies and non-democracies?
* What can the Color Revolutions tell us about the spread of protests and the role of learning?

Readings (70 pages)

* Finkel, Evgeny, and Yitzhak M. Brudny. “No More Colour! Authoritarian Regimes and Colour Revolutions in Eurasia.” In *Coloured Revolutions and Authoritarian Reactions*, 9–22. Routledge, 2014.
* Way, Lucan. “The Real Causes of the Color Revolutions.” *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (2008): 55–69.
* Hale, Henry E. “Democracy or Autocracy on the March? The Colored Revolutions as Normal Dynamics of Patronal Presidentialism.” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 39, no. 3 (2006): 305–329.
* Beissinger, Mark R. “Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions.” *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 2 (2007): 259–276.

**Week 12 April 18**

**The Transnational Environmental Movement**

Questions for discussion/response paper

* What are transnational movements? How do they differ from national movements? What are the unique and common aspects of the environmental movement?
* What are the methods for organizing a campaign against a social movement? Who can organize it successfully? Why?

Readings (80 pages)

* Sikkink, Kathryn. *The Justice Cascade: How Human Rights Prosecutions Are Changing World Politics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2011.Ch 1,8
* Wapner, Paul. “Transnational Environmental Activism.” *The Social Movement Reader: Cases and Concepts*, 2003, 202–209.
* Papadakis, Elim. *The Green Movement in West Germany (RLE: German Politics)*. Routledge, 2014.
* Rowell, Andrew. *Green Backlash: Global Subversion of the Environment Movement*. Routledge, 2017.

**Week 13 April 25**

**Social Movements and Social Media**

Questions for discussion/response paper

* Does social media change the nature of social movements in a fundamental way or does it only add to the arsenal of means?
* What are the advantages and disadvantages of social media for social movements mobilization? Why?

Readings (78 pages)

* Bennett, W. Lance, and Alexandra Segerberg. “The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics.” *Information, Communication & Society* 15, no. 5 (2012): 739–768.
* Tufekci, Zeynep. *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. Yale University Press, 2017.
* Shirky, Clay. “The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change.” *Foreign Affairs*, 2011, 28–41.

**Week 14 May 2**

*The third response paper is due in class by today*

**The 2011 Protests in Europe**

Questions for discussion/response paper

* How important was social media in the 2011 protests? Would the protests not have happened without it? Would they be different? In what way?
* Who participated in the 2011 protests? Why did they choose to participate in them?

Readings (51 pages)

* Gerbaudo, Paolo. *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism*. Pluto Press, 2018. Chapter 3
* Hughes, Neil. “‘Young People Took to the Streets and All of a Sudden All of the Political Parties Got Old’: The 15M Movement in Spain.” *Social Movement Studies* 10, no. 4 (2011): 407–413.
* Castañeda, Ernesto. “The Indignados of Spain: A Precedent to Occupy Wall Street.” *Social Movement Studies* 11, no. 3–4 (2012): 309–319.
* El Pais Editorial. 2016. “The Legacy of the 15M Movement” El Pais
* Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. “The Fight for ‘Real Democracy’at the Heart of Occupy Wall Street.” *Foreign Affairs* 11 (2011): 301–20.

**Week 15 May 9**

Conclusions:

* How powerful are social movements? Under what circumstances are they able to reach their goals? Why are certain strategies chosen but not others? Is the role of movements/transnational movement increasing in recent years? What are some of the main causes for change? How important is new media in the process?
* Student Presentations