Sociology 924
Seminar in Political Sociology: Social Movements
Spring 2011

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8143 Social Science
262-6829 (office)/ 262-2921 (messages)/ 829-3692 (home) No calls after 10:00 p.m., please.
Office Hours: Please make appointments. Best days for me are Tuesday after 2 and Thursday after 12:30 and Wednesdays
(except frequent faculty meetings 12-2). I can also sometimes do Fridays or Mondays before class.
Class Meets: Mondays 3:00-6:00 p.m. (assigned room is # Sewell Social Science; we may relocate to a seminar room)

Reading assignments are posted on the course web page: http://ssc.wisc.edu/~oliver/SOC924/SOC924.HTM
The username and password for article copies posted on this site will be posted on my.uw and the learn@uw course site and
sent out in email.
Please DO NOT print out all the articles in advance on the SSCC printer!! (If you wish, I will see if it is possible to arrange
group rates at a copy center.)

I have listed two books as "required" as they provide synthetic overviews of literature. You should probably have both,
although I have no moral feelings about whether you own books as opposed to sharing them.
2006. This is a graduate-level text that provides an excellent overview.
The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements. Edited by David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi. As I
indicated in email, I just discovered in September that this book (previously priced at $150) has just come out in a
$35 paperback. I am therefore very strongly recommending it.

This seminar is designed to pull students into current theoretical and empirical issues in the study of social
movements. As I will explain, will give very little attention to the question of whether a particular phenomenon is or is not a
social movement. Instead the emphasis in this course is on "social movement processes and mechanisms" by which I
generally refer to regularities in what happens when people go about trying to change society. Research in the social
movement terrain addresses questions like the following:

1. Mobilization questions: How can people organize themselves to act collectively to pursue social change? What
kinds of resources and social organization do they need? What kinds of organizational forms do people adopt and
how do these affect the effectiveness of their actions? What is the role of leaders? How do ideas and symbols affect
mobilization? What happens in the process of gathering people together to act – how does that work?
2. Grievance and group formation questions: When and how do people come to define a situation as unjust? How do
the major cleavages in society -- the lines of conflict and alliance -- get drawn? What is the role of systematic
ideology? What is the role of culture, ethnicity, religion, regionalism, class? What is the interplay between ideas and
material conditions? How does it work? Why are there often popular movements on both sides of major issues like
pro- and anti-abortion, or pro- and anti- civil rights, or pro- and anti-war or pro- and anti-environmentalist?
3. Motivation questions: Why do some people participate and not others? What makes people feel solidaristic and
committed to a movement? What happens when people come to identify with a movement? Why do different people
identify with and feel committed to different movements? What is the role of interest? What is an interest, anyway?
What is the role of identity? What is an identity, anyway?
4. Dynamics questions: How do the actions of movements and their opponents (or others) flow over time in ongoing
strategic interaction? What is the role of repression? How does it work? What are the dynamics of movement-
countermovement pairs over time? What role do powerful elites play in popular mobilizations?
5. Organizational and political questions: How do political, economic and other social structures shape and constrain
the possibilities for action? How do social movements relate to parties? To unions or interest groups or voluntary
associations? When and how do movements change the structures themselves? What is the interplay of structure and
agency? How are movement dynamics affected by national political culture and a country's geopolitical location?
6. Outcome questions: What factors affect whether groups "win" the social changes they want? What does it mean to
win? What is the relation between social movements and public policy? When and how do social movements
matter?
These are just sample questions. The field of social movements has grown from a disciplinary insurgency to a sprawling field with connections to virtually all areas of social science. It includes work on "movement processes" within organizations or other formations that are not themselves social movements, work on the social conditions that give rise to the things we call social movements, work on how people go about producing social change in formations that do not look anything like the "social movement" as it has been understood in the US and Western Europe, and work on the ways in which elites sometimes create/foment movements or attempt to portray themselves as popular mobilizations. What remains at the core of the field is the image of agentic people who want to produce social change. Everything else flows from this. The field draws on and has had major influence on organizational sociology, social psychology, political sociology, and media studies, among others. Theorizing in this area has long tended toward the synthetic, and in recent years, theorizing has become increasingly dynamic, and interactive. It is a field that has typically been focused on understanding how things work, not on dividing into polarized theoretical armies. Research and theory at any level of analysis will be improved by an awareness of the others, and I urge all students to work to develop some understanding of topics that are not of central interest to them.

There are two school of theorizing. The first is militaristic: opposing theories are pitted against each other to see which one "wins." The second is utilitarian: the goal is to understand how something works, and theories are judged as more or less useful for understanding a particular problem. My own philosophy is solidly in the second school. As we compare theories, we will emphasize not which ones are "best," but what kinds of empirical phenomena each theory illuminates. We will seek to focus on the processes and mechanisms that commonly operate in social movements, being aware that most of these processes occur in other contexts as well. As we analyze writings, we will attempt to focus on what research question the author is trying to answer and what methods s/he uses to go about answering it.

This term we will begin with several weeks in which we get oriented to some of the major lines of research and theory. We will generally read this chronologically as the field developed, beginning with resource mobilization and political process theories and then picking up work on frames and identities and then dynamic models of events over time. Because they are my central interests, we will have sessions on issues of repression and media effects. Later sessions will be adapted to the particular interests of students in this class, either workshops on your term papers or reading and discussing issues of particular interest to students in this class.

Course Requirements

(1) Reading and preparing for seminar, pulling together your thoughts. 25% [This is the sole requirement if you take the course on a S/U basis.] The expectation is that you will do more reading and writing in the first half of the course and that the reading/writing burden will ease in the second half, when you are devoting more attention to your term paper.

WRITING REQUIREMENT:
   a) Bring to class on paper notes that demonstrate that you have done the required reading. My intention is that you give to me whatever notes you are preparing for yourself, so that this activity feeds into your larger academic/professional agenda, rather than conflicting with it. I will discuss in class the forms this might take. For some students this will be brief article summaries. For some your comments will focus on the relevance of the papers for your own research interests. Comments: (i) I prefer that you come to class on time rather than arrive late because you are finishing the writing or printing. If you are running late, print out or email to me what existed at 2 or 2:30 (in time to arrive at class on time) as a sign of good faith and then get a completed paper copy to me as soon as possible. If you don't have it done at all before class, submit it later for partial credit. (ii) Actual illness or other circumstances beyond your control that impact your ability to do the work will be a basis for accepting the written work late without penalty. Communicate with me about any such issues. (iii) I will read these over and make brief comments; I will retain them for my records as I find it is easiest to evaluate a collection of writings rather than any one. We can discuss the best way to provide you with feedback. (iv)
   b) Use the learn@UW discussion board to post questions or discussion topics by 10am on Monday. These can be brief. I'll be using them to get a sense of what is on people's minds as I prepare for the seminar. You should post these at least 5 times in the first 8 weeks of the term and at least 4 times in the last 6 weeks of the term.

(2) Participate actively and constructively in the seminar. 25%
   a) Obviously, you have to be present to participate. Barring circumstances beyond your control, you should expect that missing more than 1 class will have some effect on your grade. If your grading is S/U, missing more than 4 classes will
generally lead to a grade of U. Chronic tardiness is disruptive and irritating to those who are on time. Occasional lateness due to unforeseen circumstances can happen to anyone, but please organize your life so that you can arrive promptly on a regular basis. Missing a significant amount of class due to tardiness or leaving early will be treated the same as absence. Please DO NOT come to class if you have symptoms of H1N1 or other communicable illness. If you have problems that force you to miss class too much, speak with me about extra written assignments to compensate for missed class time.

b) Active participation is not the same as engaging in monologues or shouting down other students. Rather, it involves listening to others, asking questions, and building on others' ideas, as well as giving your own ideas. Contrary to the goals in many classes, my central goal is NOT to teach you to find fault with everything you read (although criticism is certainly important). Instead, the main goal in this class is to understand how social movement processes work, and what research and theory tell us about these processes. We do need to be aware of the limitations of research results or the blind spots in theorizing, but we also need to pay attention to the usefulness of research for understanding phenomena we want to understand.

c) Provide process feedback on discussions, either publically in the learn@UW discussion board or privately to me by email. Do you feel the discussions are going well? Do you have suggestions for improvement? I would like to see your feedback every week, especially in the first half of the term, as I am getting a sense of you and your needs as a class. (You may incorporate this into your after-class writing.)

d) I will periodically ask you to provide anonymous feedback on each others' participation, especially based on small groups.

e) Help organize one of the sessions March 21, 28, April 4, 11, 18, 25, May 2. These will return to previous topics in more depth, address specific theoretical or empirical topics of interest to students (e.g. transnational movements, religious movements, specific types of movements) and/or will feature depth discussions of students' term paper topics.

(2) Term paper due May 14. 50% The goal is "article length," about 20 pages, but the number of pages per se is not a criterion. How far along the paper should be by the end of the term depends on what its state was at the beginning of the term. Papers that are wholly new this term will be held to different standards than those that are revisions of earlier work. If your paper builds on work you have previously done, I want to see the prior work (paper, thesis, etc.). If you wish to prepare one paper or two closely related papers for my class and another class, you need to provide full disclosure to me and the other professor and we need to have a clear agreement in advance about what is for what class. There are several types of appropriate papers.

a) A draft of an empirical article destined (hopefully) for publication; such an article poses a research question, locates it in a broader literature, and uses data to answer the question. If this is a first draft, you should think of it as a conference paper. If it is a revision, you may well be moving it towards publication.

b) A grant proposal, which poses a research question, locates it in a broader literature, and proposes a plan of research to answer the question. (This is also the format of a thesis or dissertation proposal.)

c) A review article, similar to an Annual Review article (or the chapters in the Blackwell Companion) in which you pick a particular body of research and build an argument about the state of the literature. This model selects one segment of social movements literature (for example relations to parties, identity, treatment of gender) and reviews a broader range of literature than we have covered in class and examining it in more depth than we did in class.

d) A pedagogic review of the social movements literature. This paper type may be most appropriate for people studying for prelims. In this paper type, you write the equivalent of a series of lectures or textbook chapters for a social movements course in which you give clear statements of theoretical issues and provide examples. This model emphasizes breadth rather than depth in literature coverage and pulls together a broader range of literature than we have examined in class, with an emphasis on providing a clear explanation of the most important issues. This kind of paper would ideally feed into teaching a course on social movements or a segment of a course on political sociology.

e) A pedagogic review of some subset of the social movements literature, sort of a cross between options c and d. If you are doing one of the pedagogic options, you may wish to consider whether you could improve the Wikipedia page on social movements (or create a page for one topic within social movements).

By Feb 21 in person or in writing, communicate with me about your paper idea and receive general approval. This is the time to negotiate the boundaries of your project and/or its relevance to this course. Do enough preliminary work to guarantee the feasibility of your idea. Write up a paragraph of your understanding of what we agreed to, and upload it to the dropbox folder in learn@UW.

By March 7 submit the “official” paper proposal for official approval. This proposal should be at least 500 words long and should include a tentative outline of the final paper, some detail on the kinds of sources you are looking for or data
you will be using, and some elaboration of the issues you expect to explore. That is, you should already have done several hours of preliminary work before you submit the proposal. ("I think I’ll do something about framing in the environmental movement" is not a proposal.) I will tell you if I have concerns or suggestions about the project as it is defined in this proposal.

By Mar 28 submit a report of about two pages on a detailed library literature search using Sociological Abstracts or other appropriate data bases. The report will summarize your search strategy (which data base/s, which search strings, how many “hits”) and give a few paragraphs of summary of the nature of the literature based on your reading of abstracts. In addition, you will email or upload the file with your annotated bibliography to me. (Most of the annotations will be the abstracts you download, although you may add your own comments as you skim materials.) Identify the materials that look worth reading, and take the necessary steps to have them available to you when you are ready to work on the paper. NOTE: If your paper will be based on data analysis or data collection, submit a detailed report about the availability of the data and simple descriptive information such as the number of cases and variables.

By April 30 submit a detailed progress report, an outline of the whole paper, and a draft of at least five pages. (The draft may be of any part of the paper, not necessarily the beginning.) This is your chance to get my feedback on how you are doing. If you realize you need to scale back your paper to make it doable, this is the time to do it.

Final Due Date: Saturday May 14 is the last day of exams. I will accept your papers through 6am on Monday May 16. If you wish to request “a few more hours” to finish, upload what you have by the deadline to learn@UW with a note saying "this is a draft" and also send me an email telling me what the deal is and how to reach you by email and telephone. Please give the final version when it is done a different file name from the draft!

About Incompletes: Taking an incomplete is like going into debt with a loan shark. The day the deadline is past, interest starts accruing and the quality of paper you think you need to write grows exponentially. Most of the students I have given incompletes to in the past have NEVER gotten them done, and I decided I had to change my formerly lax policy. You are far better off doing the paper you can do now than trying to do the paper you wish you could do later. If you realize you have defined your paper more broadly than you can execute, speak to me about narrowing the bounds of the paper, not about taking longer to do it. If you realize you simply cannot do the paper, you may take this course for a grade of S (satisfactory) rather than a letter grade; this will count as credits toward a degree but will NOT count toward the Sociology program’s "four seminar" requirement. Talk to me as soon as possible if you get into trouble in this class.

Grading benchmarks: If I give you a grade of AB, it means that you are doing good quality graduate work that is consistent with making good progress toward a PhD. I begin the term expecting to give most students an AB. If I give you an A, it means that your performance is truly excellent in some way, unusually good compared to other grad students. It is by definition not possible for most people to be above average, although averaging across many semesters it is sometimes the case that a particular class will have a large proportion of unusually good students in it. If I give you a B, it means that your work needs to improve in some way for it to be consistent with PhD quality work. (Students have to maintain a 3.25 average to stay in good standing in graduate school.) I do not anticipate giving any grade below a B, although I will if it is merited: A grade of BC means that there are serious deficiencies, typically in simply not doing the work and a grade of C is the equivalent of an F for a graduate student and does not count for graduate credit.

Schedule

The detailed schedule of topics and readings is posted on the course web site. The plan for the first seven weeks is as follows:

Jan 24. Introduction, overviews.
Feb 7. Organizations & Networks.
Feb 14. Political constraints and contexts; other structural conditions
Feb 21. Political dynamics: movements affect states, counter-movements, repression, etc.
Feb 28. Frames and framing
March 7. Identities, consciousness, emotion
March 14 No class, spring break

This will provide a once-over-lightly review of the range of most theory in the area. The rest of the class will focus in on narrower topics within this terrain, other theoretical issues, and specific movements and will be organized in light of students' interests.