The study of social movements has often been as contentious as its subject matter, with longstanding tensions across various schools of thought, as well as between those who are primarily interested in developing theory and those who seek to advance practice in the name of social change. As a result, for better or worse, much of the research on movements comes off as detached from the practical concerns facing activists and organizers. Given this backdrop, we will work to present key ideas from the sociological literature, with an emphasis on those areas relevant to social justice work. The course is not a “how-to” primer in organizing, but rather values hands-on empirical engagement with questions salient to organizers. Thematically, our work over the course of the semester will orient to key dimensions of political contention (political opportunities, strategic capacity, tactical repertoires, recruitment mechanisms, framing processes, collective identity, and so on), as applied both to historical and contemporary cases. Consistent with our polarized zeitgeist, we will attend to movements that span the political spectrum. We also will frequently adopt a comparative perspective, assessing ongoing contention through the lens of historical cases such as the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, which has played a canonical role in the development of now-paradigmatic social movement theory. Throughout, we will aim to develop ideas that can be extended to movements in general, and we encourage you to explore wide-ranging cases (including, certainly, those occurring outside of the U.S.) in your assignments and final project. Toward that end, throughout the semester we will draw on a variety of sources in an effort to demonstrate how the study of political contention intimately connects to issues of power, justice, and human agency. 

Office Hours and contact details: David has scheduled office hours on Tuesdays from 11:30am-12:30pm and Thursdays from 1-2pm. If these times are not convenient for you, we are happy to make other arrangements – email is generally a good way to contact any of us, and our email addresses are listed at the top of this page. We encourage each of you to come to office hours to discuss questions, enthusiasms, or problems associated with the class, or any other issues that interest or concern you. We all will generally be available for quick questions immediately after class, and you can also leave messages or other materials in David’s mailbox in the department office in the Sociology suite, located on the second floor of Seigle Hall. Additionally, if you need to contact David at other times, his phone numbers are listed above.
Readings
Three required books for this course are available at the bookstore and other usual outlets:

- *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, by Sidney Tarrow
- *Inside Organized Racism: Women in the Hate Movement*, by Kathleen M. Blee
- *March, Book One*, by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell

We also will draw on a variety of shorter readings: excerpts, chapters, and other media that link to each week’s topics. Any required readings, and/or other accompanying resources, of this sort will be posted in advance on Blackboard.

Assignments
The summaries here provide basic background on each required assignment throughout the semester. Note that we will distribute more detailed guidelines for each assignment closer to the due date.

*Biographical analysis (4 pg. maximum)*
This paper requires that you either develop an analysis based on the interview of an activist, or construct a personal account/testimonial of your own politicized identity.

*Movement event autopsy (4 pg. maximum)*
This assignment asks you to dissect a contentious event, using key conceptual dimensions from readings and class discussion to analyze its associated interactions, messages, trajectory, and outcome.

*Artifact/frame analysis*
This assignment focuses on the aesthetic objects through which challengers communicate claims to broader audiences, and asks you to select and provide a “reading” of a particular such object.

*Final comparative movement analysis*  
(1 pg. proposal = 2%; 10 pg. maximum paper, or equivalent = 33%)
This project will involve an in-depth examination of two or more cases (i.e. movements, organizations, players, claims, campaigns, events, etc.). Adopting a comparative approach, you will analyze similarities and differences associated with multiple dimensions of your paired cases. Your final product can take a variety of forms, but in all instances it will be important to relate elements of your cases to topics explored in readings and during class. We will provide much more detail about this assignment over the course of the semester, but at this point know that we encourage creative proposals for alternative project conceptions. By late March, you will need to submit a brief project proposal, describing your cases and preliminary dimensions of analysis, and identifying key sources.
Participation

15%

Much of the benefit of this course will come through in-class discussion, active engagement with your project topic, and your presence at class-related sessions/events. It is therefore very important for each of you to take these course components seriously, keep up with reading assignments, and come to class prepared to discuss issues you found interesting or want clarified. In a larger class like this one, we understand that in-class participation is sometimes difficult, and therefore view the ‘participation’ component of your grade broadly, meaning that it can include contributions during class, but also questions and/or suggested ideas, possible topics of discussion, and connections between class topics and current events made outside of class (i.e. before or after class, during office hours, or over email).

Extra credit

Sporadically throughout the semester, we expect (but do not guarantee) that opportunities will arise to contribute to the class in what we hope will be interesting, but non-required ways. In some of those instances, we are happy to offer extra credit toward your final grade in return for your participation. As this offer provides a direct illustration of the “collective action problem” at the heart of social movement theory, we reserve the right to tweak the “incentive structure” as needed. But like you, we place a high value on transparency in grading, so we will do our best to be clear at all times about how extra credit will operate.

Accommodations

Washington University is committed to providing accommodations and/or services to students with documented disabilities. Students who are seeking support for a disability or a suspected disability should contact Disability Resources at 935-4153. Disability Resources is responsible for approving all disability-related accommodations for WU students, and students are responsible for providing faculty members with formal documentation of their approved accommodations at least two weeks prior to using those accommodations. We will accept Disability Resources VISA forms by email and in person. If you have already been approved for accommodations, we request that you provide a copy of your VISA within the first two weeks of the semester.

We are committed as well to offering academic accommodations to students who are victims of sexual assault. Students are eligible for accommodation regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your request to Kim Webb (kim_webb@wustl.edu or 935-8761), Director of the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center, located on the 4th floor of Seigle Hall. This office provides resources confidentially; however, requests for accommodations will be shared with the appropriate University administration and faculty. The University will maintain as confidential any accommodations or protective measures provided to an individual student, so long as doing so does not impair the ability to provide such measures.
“Activists are the heroes of modern society, turning a critical lens on what is and imagining what can be.”

– Kathleen Blee

Course Outline

Week 1 (16-18 January):
• Introductory business
• Starting point(s) I: What do social movements look like, and what do they do?

Week 2 (23-25 January):
• Starting point(s) II: How can we define and bound social movements?
  - readings: Sidney Tarrow, Power in Movement, Ch. 1
  Charles Tilly, “Social Movements as Politics” (from Social Movements, 1768-2004)

Week 3 (30 January – 1 February):
• Repertoires and WUNC: How do movements make credible claims to audiences?

Week 4 (6-8 February):
• Political opportunities & process: Under what conditions do social movements arise?
  - readings: Tarrow, Power in Movement, Ch. 8
 Doug McAdam, Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, Chs. 1-2 (skim), 3 (read carefully)
 Charles M. Payne, “Setting the Stage” (from I’ve Got the Light of Freedom)
**Week 5 (13-15 February):**

- Grievances: How and when does injustice or threat motivate activism?
  
  
  
  David Cunningham, Klansville, U.S.A. (excerpt)

**Weeks 6-7 (20 February – 1 March):**

- Biographical trajectories: How do individuals become activists, and how does activism impact their lives?
  
  - readings: Doug McAdam, “The Biographical Roots of Activism” (from Freedom Summer)
  
  John Lewis, et al., March, Book One, p. 3-78
  
  Blee, Inside Organized Racism, Ch. 1-3 and “Personal Effects from Far-Right Activism” (from The Consequences of Social Movements)

**Biographical analysis due March 2**

**Week 8 (6-8 March):**

- Resource Mobilization: How do movements cultivate leadership and other resources?
  
  - readings: Tarrow, Power in Movement, Ch. 6
  
  
  John Lewis, et al., March, Book One, p. 79-121
  
  Blee, Inside Organized Racism, Ch. 5

**Week 9 (13-15 March):** No classes (Spring break)

**Weeks 10-11 (20-29 March):**

- Frame alignment: How do movements connect with audiences?
  
  - readings: Tarrow, Power in Movement, Ch. 7
  
  

**Artifact/frame analysis due March 23**
Week 12 (3-5 April):
  • Tactical interaction & the “R-M nexus”: How do authorities engage challengers?
    - readings: Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, Ch. 10
      Charles M. Payne, “Greenwood” (from *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom*)

Project proposal (1 page) due April 6

Weeks 13-14 (10-19 April):
  • Political repression: How do police and other authorities work to control protest?
    - readings: Clark McPhail, David Schweingruber, & John McCarthy,
      “Policing Protest in the United States, 1960-1995” (from *Policing Protest: The Control of Mass Demonstrations in Western Democracies*)
      Pete Simi & Robert Futrell, *American Swastika* (excerpt)
      Doyle Murphy. 2017. “‘Riot King’ Brian Rossomanno Has Become the Police Department’s Protest Hammer.” *Riverfront Times* (11 October).

Movement event autopsy due April 13

Week 15 (24-26 April):
  • Course wrap-up: How do social movements matter?
    - readings tba

Final project, due date tba