Purpose of the Course
This course examines the field of social movements through major theoretical positions and illustrative studies. Questions concerning the origins, dynamics, and impacts of social movements will be addressed. Early weeks of the semester will focus on major theoretical approaches, debates among them, and research that applies and tests major theories. Particular attention will be devoted to collective behavior, rational actor, resource mobilization, political process, social cultural and relational/network theories. We will also examine major analytic questions concerning social movements including recruitment and participation, strategy, leadership, organization, the state and repression, diffusion, mass media, and outcomes/success.

Along the way, we will learn about a broad array of social movements. In addition, we will consider various strategies available for studying social movements – including historical and comparative methods, surveys of organizations and individuals, experiments, analyses of events, ethnographic fieldwork, and qualitative interviews.

Course Requirements
Class meetings will be organized as discussions. I will circulate reading questions for each class session. For class meetings, two students will be responsible for preparing a brief set of comments responding to those questions to get discussion started. Typically, I will take a few minutes at the beginning of class to comment on the week’s themes and topics with an eye toward locating our reading in the broader field. Discussion leaders will then have an opportunity to reflect on the readings. These comments might include critical observations about the reading, identification of further questions to pursue, reflections on the applicability of concepts and theories in the reading to other cases, and so forth. Your comments should focus attention on key analytic questions and areas for debate and discussion. Each student will comment on readings for one or possibly two class sessions during the semester.

In addition to the class presentation(s) and discussions, the other major requirement is a research proposal. Your proposal will be developed through an initial statement of your research question and empirical case (due Monday, September 13th), an initial draft on October 25th, and a final version due at the end of the semester. If appropriate, this paper should include the findings of preliminary research. The goal for this assignment is a proposal suitable for a master’s paper,
grant/fellowship application, or dissertation. Over the semester, everyone will have a chance to present on their project and research plans and gain feedback from the class. These presentations will be spread out over the semester. Most likely, we will schedule two for each of our regular class sessions and devote the final 30 minutes of each class to hearing about everyone’s projects.

Course grades will be based on class participation throughout the semester, presentations, and the research proposal.

**Reading**
The following books have been ordered:


All other readings will be available through Blackboard. There are several general overviews of the field that you may find helpful. I would recommend: Suzanne Staggenborg’s *Social Movements* (Oxford, 2010), David Snow and Sarah Soule’s *A Primer on Social Movements* (Norton, 2009), or Mario Diani and Donatella Della Porta’s *Social Movements: An Introduction* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2006). In addition, *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (edited by David Snow, Sarah Soule and Hanspeter Kriesi) is a collection of essays reviewing many areas of scholarship that would help you identify further scholarship on a topic.
**Course Schedule**

**Aug 27**  
Introduction  
What is a social movement? When did the social movement emerge? How is it similar and different from related phenomena such as resistance, riots, interest groups, and so forth? What are the central questions in the field?


**Sept 3**  
Collective Behavior  
Collective behavior approaches dominated the field from the early 20th century through the 1960s. What are the core claims of this approach concerning the origins of movements, the characteristics of movement participants, and the defining features of movements? Why was this approach abandoned? Does the theory have continuing relevance for understanding movements?


**Sept 10**  
Rationality, Interests and Planning  
Beginning in the 1960s, many scholars began to see movement participation (and non-participation) as rational, calculated, and self-interested. What are the core claims of this perspective? How does it differ from collective behavior theory? Can selective incentives overcome free-riding?


**Sept 17**

Resource Mobilization and Movement Organizations

Beginning in the 1970s Resource Mobilization theorists incorporated insights from organizational theory to understand movements. What kinds of organizations facilitate movement emergence? What drives growth and change in populations of movement organizations? Does the increasing professionalization of movements advance or undermine a movement’s collective power?


**Sept 24**

Political Opportunity, Power, and Protest

How do broad social, economic and political changes shape the rise, development and decline of movements? To what degree are challengers capable of generating their own leverage and to what degree are they dependent on electoral realignments, support from allies, political crises, elite support, and so forth?


Oct 1  

**Cycles and Diffusion of Protest**  
How can we explain the dynamic aspects of movements including the ways that ideas, tactics, and information spread rapidly in the midst of popular struggles? What factors shape the rise and decline of movements?


Oct 8  

**Culturalist Theories: Macro Approaches and Frames**  
How are movements shaped by popular beliefs, understandings, and practices? What are the cultural obstacles to mobilization?


Oct 15  Culturalist Approaches: Solidarity, Identity, and Emotions
To what degree does movement emergence and recruitment depend on pre-existing identities, the transformation of existing ones, and the creation of new ones?


Oct 29  Social Networks and Relationships
How do an individual’s relationships shape the likelihood of participating in movements? How do movement organizers mobilize through networks? How do the relationships people bring to movements matter, how do they shape emergence and ongoing development of movements, and how do movements transform relationships?


Nov 5  Organizations, Markets and Social Movements
A new strand of research has begun to pursue the relationship between movements and markets, workplaces and consumption drawing on organizational and social movement theory. How well do existing theoretical approaches explain the formation and success of these movements?


Nov 12  Strategy and Tactics in Movements
What is strategy and how can we study it? Are some leaders, organizations, and movements able to develop better strategy, and, if so, what determines this?


Nov 19  Interactions with States, Countermovements, and Media
What are the main forms of social control and repression that movements encounter and have those changed? When does repression “work” to undermine movements and when does it “backfire” escalating movements? Why do some social movements become involved protracted struggles with countermovements? How do the mass media and social movements shape one another?


Dec 3 Social and Political Consequences of Movements
Can movements succeed? How can we tell whether they have or not? Beyond obtaining success, what enduring consequences do movements have? How do movements matter?


