SOCI 511
Social Movements and Collective Action
Winter 2009

Thursdays, 11:35-13:25
in LEA819

Professor: Marcos Ancelovici
Office: 728 Leacock
Phone: 514-398-5682
Email: marcos.ancelovici@mcgill.ca
Office Hours: Fridays, 10:30-12:30.

Course Description:

This seminar provides an introduction to the major topics and issues in the study of social movements and contentious politics. Instead of attempting the impossible task of surveying the entire field, we will concentrate on the main theoretical approaches and assess their contributions through the discussion of in-depth case studies. We will address the following questions: What is a social movement? Why and how do people become involved in protest? How do they experience collective action? What are the forms and strategies of social protest? What role do organizations play in this process? How are coalitions formed and sustained over time? To what extent and how does the political-institutional and cultural context shape collective action? What factors contribute to the transnationalization of collective action? To what extent and how do social movements matter?

Course Requirements:

1) Weekly Readings:

This is a reading-intensive course (around 100-150 pages a week). All students are expected to complete weekly readings so as to have a better grasp of the subject matter and participate in class discussions.

The following required books are available at the university bookstore and on reserve at the library:


I have also placed the *Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* on reserve at the library; it surveys the main topics and provides good bibliographical references.

In addition to these books, there are *required* articles in PDF format that can be downloaded from the course website.

2) **Class Participation:**

All students are expected to attend class regularly and participate in class discussions. All students are required to prepare one comment and one discussion question for each assigned reading. Comments/questions can either focus exclusively on one particular reading or compare readings and draw parallels; they should be typed and handed in at the beginning of each class and should not exceed half a page. Comments/questions will not be graded as such but your participation in the seminar will count for 20% of the final course grade.

3) **Papers:**

*Response papers:*

All students are expected to write two response papers during the term. Response papers should be two pages long, double-spaced, and critically assess all the readings assigned for a given week. Each response paper will count for 10% of the final course grade.

*Term Paper:*

Each student will have to write a term paper. The latter can either (1) focus on a specific social movement organization, protest event, or social movement, (2) compare two organizations, events, or movements in a single country or across countries, or (3) discuss a general theoretical issue. If your paper focuses on one of the theories or movements discussed in class, you are expected to go beyond class discussions and readings. However, you need not collect original data or do interviews with activists; you can rely only on secondary sources.

You must submit a one-page proposal by **February 5** and hand in your paper on Monday **April 13** (in the mailbox of the sociology department). Papers should be approximately 20 double-spaced pages long and will count for 60% of the final course grade.

Make sure to include references to sources in the text. Failure to do so is plagiarism.

*McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information).*
4) Summary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Response Papers</td>
<td>20% (10% each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term Paper</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Course Outline

1) Overview of Course (January 8)

2) Definitions and Traditions (January 15)


3) Why Do Movements Do What They Do? Performances and Repertoires (January 22)


4) Cultural and Psychological Dimensions: Frames, Identity, and Emotions (January 29)


5) Experiencing Collective Action (February 5)


6) Mobilizing Resources (February 12)


7) Case Study: The American Labor Movement (February 19)


8) Coalitions and Fields (March 5)


9) The Political Opportunity Structure and the Political Process Model (March 12)


10) Case Study: The Civil Rights Movement (March 19)


11) Mobilization Beyond Borders (March 26)


12) Case Studies: Transnational Labor Campaigns and the Zapatistas (April 2)


13) Social Movement Outcomes (April 9)

