

Sociology 180 • Social Movements and Social Protest • Fall 2015
Prof. Isaac W. Martin • iwmartin@ucsd.edu • SSB 469 • Office hours M 3-5 or by app't
PETERSON 104 • T, Th • 3:30 – 4:50 PM

Why do people sometimes put up with injustice, and why do they sometimes rebel? Who are the rebels who join protest movements, and what makes them different from other people? When should activists expect to be met with repression, and under what conditions can they expect to win? What does winning even mean for a protest movement? Questions like these are obviously important questions for anyone who is interested in politics. They have been hotly debated for hundreds of years by protesters who want to know the answers, the better to defy authority; and by authorities who want to know the answers, the better to quell protest.

For the last hundred years they have also been hotly debated by scholars who have approached these questions with the tools of social scientific inquiry. In this course we will read some of the best scholarship on these questions. It is a premise of this course that it is worth taking the science of protest seriously: this research has something to teach you, regardless of whether your purpose is to understand the world or to change it.

The subject of social protest is dramatic and some of the movements we will discuss are exciting. But you should not expect to sympathize with every movement we discuss. Nor should you expect the assigned reading to be filled with stories or impassioned manifestos. The texts we will read are not easy. They are almost all reports from professional journals of sociology; they are not addressed to activists, but to scholars; and some of them may at first seem dry, demanding or technical. You will find the reading easier to understand if you have taken Sociology 60 or an equivalent class on research methods. The reward for working through these readings will be insights that we could not acquire any other way, for it turns out that the accumulated knowledge of social science has some very important implications for social movement activists—as well as for authorities and bystanders who care about the outcomes of movements. One of our most important tasks as a class will be to discover those implications.

Come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Class discussions and exercises will build directly on the reading. Participation will involve active discussion and, not infrequently, small-group exercises. I will lecture from time to time, but this is not a class where you get to sit back and enjoy the performance. You will be on stage with me, too, and you will learn more for it.

There is one required book and one required reader. The book is Nathan Schneider's *Thank You, Anarchy: Notes from the Occupy Apocalypse*. It has been ordered at the bookstore, and it is also available in inexpensive Kindle and Nook editions that you can download instantly and read on your computer. The reader is a collection of articles that will be made available at A. S. Soft Reserves.

Class grades will be based on participation (10%), and three paper assignments worth 30% each, due in weeks 3, 6, and 10.

The last of these is the *practical applications* paper. For this assignment, you will be asked to choose one of the assigned readings—you will be asked to sign up in week 1—and you will write a short paper (no more than 6 pages, double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman or similar font) explaining the *practical* implications of the author's research findings for activists who wish to protest injustice effectively. An excellent practical applications paper will offer one or two key lessons or points of advice, and explain clearly how those lessons can be drawn from the research in question. Your applications paper may be turned in early, and it is wise to complete it by the day for which the respective reading is assigned. *But it must in every case be completed by Tuesday of week 10.*

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Week 1

We will meet each other; you will learn something about movements of social protest, and we will discuss expectations for the course.

Schneider, *Thank You, Anarchy*, Part I (chapters 1 and 2)

Week 2. What sorts of things do we protest?

Social movement participants often justify their actions as a protest against an injustice or suffering of some kind; and yet this usually seems an unsatisfying explanation for their actions, because the most oppressed are rarely the most rebellious. Why do some injustices provoke rebellion—while others do not?

Snow, David, Daniel Cress, Liam Downey, and Andrew Jones. 1998. "[Disrupting the 'Quotidian': Reconceptualizing the Relationship between Breakdown and the Emergence of Social Protest.](#)" *Mobilization* 3 (1): 1-22.

Levitsky, Sandra R. 2008. "['What Rights?' The Construction of Political Claims to American Health Care Entitlements.](#)" *Law and Society Review* 42 (3): 551-590.

Heaney, Michael and Fabio Rojas. 2011. "[The Partisan Dynamics of Contention: Demobilization of the Antiwar Movement in the United States, 2007-2009.](#)" *Mobilization* 16 (1): 45-64.

Week 3. Are protesters really people with nothing to lose?

Protest—defiance of authority—sometimes seems like a lonely and dangerous path. It can separate activists from their families and communities; in extreme cases it can cost them their freedom or their lives. What would ever make someone choose these risks? Why do some people stick with activism, while others "burn out"?

McAdam, Doug and Ronnelle Paulsen. 1993. "[Specifying the Relationship between Social Ties and Activism.](#)" *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (3): 640-667.

McVeigh, Rory and Christian Smith. 1999. "[Who Protests in America: An Analysis of Three Political Alternatives—Inaction, Institutionalized Politics, or Protest.](#)" *Sociological Forum* 14 (4): 685-702.

Kevin Lewis, Kurt Gray, and Jens Meierhenrich. 2014. "[The Structure of Online Activism.](#)" *Sociological Science*, vol. 1 (February).

| |
|---|
| <p>Assessment: 5-7 page paper due before class on Thursday. Your paper should draw on class readings to address the question: Why weren't more people more active in the Save Darfur campaign?</p> |
|---|

Week 4. Who's paying for this protest?

Protest movements require a lot of resources—not just intangible resources like free time and charismatic leadership, but also resources as tangible, and as expensive, as buildings to meet in, or buses to get to a big demonstration. We might think of protest as a political weapon of the poor, but sometimes it seems like you have to be rich to do it! How can we make sense of this apparent paradox?

McCarthy, John D. and Mayer Zald. 1977. "[Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory.](#)" *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (6): 1212-41.

Walker, Edward T. and John D. McCarthy. 2010. "[Legitimacy, Strategy, and Resources in the Survival of Community-Based Organizations.](#)" *Social Problems* 57 (3): 315-40.

Week 5. Is protest just like pushing on an open door?

People may be more likely to start or join a movement if they think it is likely to win. This simple intuition motivates the theory that the structure of opportunities has an independent influence on the emergence and growth of a social movement. Does this mean that protest movements only get going when they are least needed?

Jenkins, J. Craig, David Jacobs, and Jon Agnone. 2003. "[Political Opportunities and African-American Protest, 1948-1997.](#)" *American Journal of Sociology* 109 (2): 277-303.

Amenta, Edwin, Neal Caren and James E. Stobaugh. 2012 "[Political Reform and the Historical Trajectories of US Social Movements in the Twentieth Century.](#)" *Social Forces* 90 (4): 1073-1100.

Heaney, Michael and Fabio Rojas. 2007. "[Partisans, Nonpartisans, and the Antiwar Movement in the United States.](#)" *American Politics Research* 35 (4): 431-64.

Week 6. Can the master's tools ever dismantle the master's house?

In the heat of struggle, protesters often find it useful to form organizations; but activists in many movements have argued that this is a mistake. According to these activists, the effort needed to maintain a formal organization is a distraction at best; at worst, a formal organization may re-create the very authority structures that people were rebelling against in the first place. How much merit is there in these criticisms?

Schneider, *Thank You, Anarchy*, Part II (chapters 3-5)

Taylor, Verta. 1989. "[Social Movement Continuity: The Women's Movement in Abeyance.](#)"

American Sociological Review 54 (5): 761-75.

Leach, Darcy. 2013. "[Culture and the Structure of Tyrannylessness.](#)" *The Sociological Quarterly* 54 (2): 181-91.

Assessment: 5-7 page paper due before class on Thursday. Your paper should address the question: Of the social movement theories we have studied, which provides the best explanation for the emergence of the Occupy movement in the summer and fall of 2011?

Week 7. Why do people do what they do when they protest?

Strikes, sit-ins, occupations, barricades in the streets, marches on Washington: all of these are familiar images of protest, but they were once new and surprising tactics.

Where do such new tactics come from? Why do they sometimes catch on and spread?

Ganz, Marshall. 2000. "[Resources and Resourcefulness: Strategic Capacity in the Unionization of California Agriculture, 1969-1966.](#)" *American Journal of Sociology* 105 (4): 1003-1062.

Soule, Sarah. 1999. "[The Diffusion of an Unsuccessful Innovation.](#)" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 566: 120-131.

Biggs, Michael. 2013. "[How Repertoires Evolve: The Diffusion of Suicide Protest in the Twentieth Century.](#)" *Mobilization* 18 (4): 407-428.

Week 8. Why do protesters sometimes get pepper-sprayed?

Authorities sometimes try to quell movements with force or the threat of force. When—that is, under what conditions—can protest movements expect to be met with brutality?

And under what conditions can authorities expect repression to backfire?

Davenport, Christian and Molly Inman. 2012. "[The State of State Repression Research since the 1990s.](#)" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24 (4): 619-34.

Reynoso, Cruz et al. 2012. "[The Reynoso Task Force Report.](#)" Pp 1-32 only (you may omit appendix 2, "The Kroll Report," although it is also worth reading).

Week 9. How do protesters sometimes win?

Authorities at other times may respond to protest by giving in: that is, conceding new rights or resources to the protesters, or to the people that the protesters claim to represent. Under what conditions can protesters expect to win significant concessions?

Schneider, *Thank You, Anarchy*, Part III (chapters 6 and 7)

Amenta, Edwin, Neal Caren, Elizabeth Chiarello, and Yang Su. 2010. "[The Political Consequences of Social Movements.](#)" *Annual Review of Sociology* 36: 287-307.

Joseph Luders. 2006. "[Business Responses to Civil Rights Mobilization.](#)" *American Journal of Sociology* vol. 111, no. 4 (January): 963-98.

Week 10. What do we know, and what do we still need to learn?

The social science of protest movements is woefully incomplete. We will assess what we know and what we do not know but still need to know.

Assessment: 3-5 page paper due Tuesday. This is your practical applications paper: see instructions on p. 2 of this syllabus.

Schneider, *Thank You, Anarchy*, Part IV (chapter 8)