SOC 515: Social Movements and Collective Action  
Fall 2014  
S SCI 415  
M, W 2-3:15

Professor Jennifer Earl  
Office: Social Sciences 421  
Phone: (520) 621-3296  
Office Hours: F 3-5pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines current theory and research on social movements, political protest, and other acts of collective resistance. Its goals are to examine: 1) major theoretical perspectives for analyzing social movements and other forms of collective action; 2) major areas of research in the study of social movements; and 3) emerging issues in social movement research.

REQUIRED READING:

There are several books that students will need to have full access to during the term:


In addition, many articles assigned for the course are available for online access through JSTOR. Stable URLs for required readings are provided for your convenience, when available. Other required articles and chapters will be available through D2L.

Finally, students will be responsible for at least one monograph from the recommended readings during the semester. Although the list of recommended readings is provided for you, students are required to locate the work they choose.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION:

Class meetings will be dedicated to discussion of the readings. Regular attendance, completion of the assigned readings on schedule, and participation in class discussions are essential.
Grades will be based on the following:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Grade per Assignment</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two questions on readings</td>
<td>1% for each week, 14 weeks</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommended reading summary</td>
<td>10% for 1 summary</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memo on articles</td>
<td>11% each; 6 memos total</td>
<td>66%</td>
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Here are the details:

**Participation:** Students are expected to have completed all required readings before submitting questions for the Monday class (see next entry), unless otherwise noted beforehand. This will allow students to better participate in class. Class participation will be graded based both on frequency and quality. Students should not assume that they will automatically get these points—they must be earned through attendance and meaningful participation. In other words, assume you have earned 0 of these points at the beginning of the term and you accumulate points over the term if you participate frequently and through high quality contributions.

**Questions for class:** Each student will post 2 questions per week about readings throughout the semester. Questions will be posted to the appropriate topic in the Weekly Discussion Forum on Monday of each week by 9am. Questions would ideally take issue with a part of a reading, seek to engage a specific and important point in the reading in more detail, or ask a more general question about what readings have in common (or are in tension about). They are also your chance to indicate things you want to discuss more in class, so it’s best to not just think of them as quick to do items. There are 16 weeks, but students only have to post questions in 14 of those weeks.

**Recommended Reading Summary:** You will write a summary of one of the recommended monographs (articles are not eligible) and post it through D2L to the forum on recommended readings. Summaries should help students who did not read the book to understand its content and should comment critically on the book, pointing out strengths and weaknesses. The length should be equivalent to 4-6 double spaced pages in 12pt font with 1” margins all around. Summaries must be posted to the appropriate forum on D2L on Mondays before noon. You will also present the summary in class on Monday.

**Memo on articles:** All memos should be the text equivalent of 6-7 pages, 12pt font, double-spaced, with 1” margins all around. There are two kinds of memos available for you to write: memos that address a question posed on the syllabus for that week (a maximum of two of your memos may use the syllabus prompts); and memos in which you generate and answer your own question. For the latter, memos often: (1) critique a reading in whole or in part; (2) critically evaluate common themes across multiple readings; (3) apply a theoretical concept or research design from the readings to your own research; or (4) suggest future research projects (including detailed discussion of research questions, data, methods, etc.). These memos should have a clear question and central argument or claim. Memos are due to my mailbox by 9am on Wednesday for each week and must address the readings from the current week.
COURSE POLICIES

1) The course will use D2L to track and submit some of your assignments as well as host class information. Students should be automatically enrolled in the course and are responsible for all material on this site.

2) **Late assignments will receive no credit.**

3) Students requiring any disability-related accommodations should speak with me in a timely manner to secure those accommodations.

4) Students are expected to abide by the student code of conduct and all University regulations.

CLASS SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week &amp; Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics and Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>8/25 &amp; 8/27</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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</table>

(Readings and questions due by Wednesday at 9am, instead of Monday; no memos can be submitted this week.)


**Week 2**  
9/1 (LABOR DAY) & 9/3

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**Major Theoretical Approaches: Irrationality and Strain Models**

(No class on Monday because of Labor Day; so memos and questions are due on Wednesday.)

Memo Questions:
1. Which concepts from strain and/or breakdown are still useful for understanding collective action? Which are not? Explain/argue your answer.
2. What led to the rejection of strain and breakdown theories? Do you think this rejection went too far? Explain/argue your answer.

Buechler 2011, Chapters 1-6 [Students with some sociological background will be able to skim chapters 1-4, and most likely chapter 5 as well; students without such background will likely need to read those chapters, as opposed to skimming.]


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**Recommended Articles:**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>9/8 &amp; 9/10</th>
<th><strong>Major Theoretical Approaches: Resource Mobilization</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Memo Questions:</strong></td>
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<td>(1) What are alternative definitions of resources? What do you think is the best definition of resources and why? Tie this definition of resources to the ability to explain mobilization. (2) Discuss the basic tenets of resource mobilization theory. In what ways did it represent a paradigm shift compared to previous theories?</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>**Buechler 2011, Chapter 7</strong>**</td>
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<td><strong>Recommended Articles:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Recommended Monographs:</strong></td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>9/15 &amp; 9/17</td>
<td><strong>Major Theoretical Approaches: Political Process</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Memo Questions:</strong></td>
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<td>(1) What are alternative definitions of political opportunities? What do you think is the best definition of political opportunities and why? Tie this definition of political opportunities to the ability to explain mobilization.</td>
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<td>(2) In what ways is a political process approach similar to a resource mobilization approach to social movements? In what ways is it different?</td>
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Buechler 2011, Chapter 8, Ch 12 (only pp. 193-202)  

**Recommended Articles:**  

**Recommended Monographs:**  
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>9/22 &amp; 9/24</th>
<th><strong>Major Theoretical Approaches: Framing and Constructivist Approaches</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Memo Questions:</strong></td>
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<td>(1) Is framing theory in competition with resource mobilization and political process theories, or does it simply complement them? What does framing theory contribute to our understanding of collective action that other theories do not?</td>
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<td>(2) In what ways does framing theory take audience and audience reception seriously? Is this sufficient? If so, why? If not, what could be done to correct it?</td>
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**Buechler 2011, Chapter 9**


**Recommended Articles:**


**Recommended Monographs:**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>9/29 &amp; 10/1</th>
<th>Major Theoretical Approaches: New Social Movements and Identity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Memo Questions:</td>
<td>(1) Are new social movements actually new? Why does it matter if they are new or not—position the importance of this issue in the larger debate over new social movements? (2) What about new social movements are other major theories unprepared to adequately explain? Argue/explain your answer.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Buechler 2011, Chapters 10-11</td>
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<td>Recommended Articles:</td>
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<td>Recommended Monographs:</td>
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Week 7  10/6 & 10/8  

**Contemporary Issues: Culture and Emotions**

Memo Questions:

(1) How is contemporary work on emotions and social movements different than early irrational models of collective action? How is it similar?

(2) How do social movements manage emotions to further their goals?

**Guest: Heidi Reynolds-Stenson**

*Buechler 2011, Chapter 12 (pp. 202-209)-Epilogue


**Recommended Articles:**


**Recommended Monographs:**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 8</th>
<th>10/13 &amp; 10/15</th>
<th><strong>Contemporary Issues: Micro-mobilization and Leadership</strong></th>
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<td>Memo Questions:</td>
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<td>(1) Discuss the major explanations for differential recruitment and the evidence supporting each explanation? Based on this, what factor(s) do you think are most decisive? Argue/explain your answer.</td>
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<td>(2) Although leadership is an important issue to social movements, there has not been a large amount of research on it. Give a broad review of what research has established. Then, explain why you think there has been so little research on leadership? Argue/explain your answer.</td>
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**Recommended Articles:**


**Recommended Monographs:**

Week 9  
10/20 & 10/22  

**Contemporary Issues: Organizations**

(No class on 10/22, so all materials are due on Monday.)

Memo Questions:
(1) Discuss the major functions that organizations play for social movements, giving empirical examples for each from the readings, and other cases you are familiar with if possible.
(2) What are the benefits of institutionalizing collective action through organizations? What are the drawbacks?


**Recommended Articles:**


**Recommended Monographs:**

| Week 10 | 10/27 & 10/29 | 10/27: **Contemporary Issues: Networks**  
(1 question on networks is due on Monday; memos or recommended monographs on networks are due on Monday)  
Memo Questions:  
(1) How do networks matter in mobilization? What are the mechanisms by which ties shape participation?  
Recommended Articles:  
Recommended Monographs:  
10/29: **Contemporary Issues: Tactics**  
(1 question on tactics is due on Wednesday; memos or recommended monographs on tactics are due on Wednesday)  
Memo Questions:  
(1) What makes for an effective tactic? Use empirical examples from the readings to justify your answer. Also, evaluate the quality of evidence for effectiveness.  
Recommended Articles:  
Recommended Monographs:  
Memo Questions:
(1) Is there a difference between social movement spillover and diffusion? Argue/explain your answer and discuss the theorized mechanisms underlying these processes.
(2) What are the boundaries around social movements – how are movements situated vis-à-vis larger fields of activity and other kinds of actors (e.g., counter-movements, bystanders, etc.)? Is this ecology important to understanding social movements? Argue/explain your answer.

http://www.jstor.org/stable/2777718


Recommended Articles:


Recommended Monographs:


Contemporary Issues: The Social Control of Protest

Memo Questions:
(1) Describe the weakness approach and evaluate evidence for and against it. Why do you think the evidence is so mixed? Argue/explain your answer.
(2) Describe different potential reactions to repression and evidence for each. Why do you think the evidence is so mixed? Argue/explain your answer.


Recommended Articles:

Recommended Monographs:
Contemporary Issues: Social Movement Outcomes and Consequences

Memo Questions:
(1) What kinds of outcomes do we know the most about? What do we know about them? Why do you think scholars know more about these outcomes than others?
(2) How would theories of movement or protest event/campaign outcomes conceptualize the importance of protester effort, risk, or costs to explaining outcomes or consequences? What evidence can you find in the literature for being concerned with these factors in explaining or predicting consequences?


Recommended Articles:

Recommended Monographs:
| Week 14 | 11/24 & 11/26 |
|----------------|
| **Contemporary Issues: Media** |
| (All assignments are due on Monday because of the possibility that class will be canceled on Wednesday because of Thanksgiving.) |

**Memo Questions:**
1. Why do some movements, organizations, or protests receive more media coverage than others? What can SMOs do to increase their coverage?
2. Why does media coverage matter? How does it impact social movements? Does all coverage matter the same—i.e., are there risks or extra advantages associated with some kinds of media coverage?


**Recommended Articles:**

**Recommended Monographs:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week 15</th>
<th>12/1 and 12/3</th>
<th><strong>New Frontiers: Technology and Social Movements, I</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Memo Questions:</strong></td>
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<td>(1) All of the articles from this week are at least co-written by communication scholars. Are there differences in how these scholars approach studying the intersection of technology and social movements that might differ from a sociological approach? Explain/argue your answer. (2) Overall, how much of an impact do you think technology use is having on social movements? Explain/argue your answer. Describe evidence for the impacts that you think are most important and evaluate their theoretical consequence.</td>
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http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661 |
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03637750600557099 |
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13691180600630773 |
|         |              | **Recommended Articles:**  
http://stx.sagepub.com/content/27/3/220 |
http://ssc.sagepub.com/content/25/1/13 |
http://nms.sagepub.com/content/11/5/749 |
|         |              | **Recommended Monographs:**  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 16</th>
<th>12/8 &amp; 12/10</th>
<th><strong>New Frontiers: Technology and Social Movements, II</strong></th>
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<td>Memo Questions:</td>
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<td>(1) Discuss the primary ways that ICTs are changing</td>
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<td>how social movements organize. Give empirical</td>
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<td>examples from the readings (you may use examples</td>
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<td>from last readings, but not exclusively), and from</td>
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<td>cases you are familiar with if possible, for each.</td>
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<td>(2) What impact is technology use having on social</td>
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<td>movement organizations? Argue/explain your answer.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Earl, Jennifer and Katrina Kimport. 2011. <em>Digitally</em></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>*Enabled Social Change: Activism in the Internet Age.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.</td>
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<td><strong>Recommended Monographs:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Oxford University Press.</td>
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