COMM 131*
Dissent, Protest, and Social Movements
Winter, 2022 M / W 5:00 - 6:20

“Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world. The point is to change it.”
Karl Marx, Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach (1845)

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Office Hours: By appointment


Course Description

If power and domination are primary features of modern society, as Michel Foucault argued, dissent and protest are its mirror image. At the foundation of this course are 3 basic questions: how does collective protest emerge in challenging structures of power in society; who are the actors and actor groups involved in collective protest; and finally, what are the consequences of dissent and protest? In addressing these questions, this course examines the existence of collective protest in both historical and contemporary environments, and the relationship of dissent and protest movements to media systems and social change.

The course has 4 aims. First, the course is designed to provide students with a theoretical foundation of dissent and protest as catalysts of social change. Second, the course explores the sources of modern power, and the challenges to power from groups who critique certain social situations as unjust and pursue collective forms of protest to overturn practices of injustice embodied in laws, beliefs, and institutions. Third, the course examines the role of media in circulating dissenting ideas and helping build movements of popular protest. Finally, the course assesses the impacts of protest on society. The overall aim of the course is to examine the interplay of power and protest in the making of the modern world.

The opening sessions of the course focus on building a theoretical framework of power, dissent, and collective protest. The bulk of the course will survey both contemporary and historical experiences of social movements highlighting institutions of power, and the organizations and actors who resist domination and injustice. The course is intended to be theoretically rigorous, historically rich, and topically interesting while exposing students to different arguments about protest and social change.
Course Format and Requirements

Due to the COVID pandemic, and especially the recent situation with the Omicron variant, the entire course will assume an online format. In principle, the class will have one 80-minute asynchronous lecture each week posted to the Canvas site by the time of the Monday class. Wednesday sessions of the class will be synchronous discussion sessions consisting of material from the Monday lecture and readings. There will be two primary written assignments of 3-4 pages, one a midterm on the theoretical portion of the course in the opening weeks, the second a final paper of 4-5 pages on a more contemporary controversy from the second half of the course. There will also be requirements to frame questions for the discussion sessions on Wednesdays. The instructor will provide a prompt for these assignments. Grades will be based on written work with the midterm being 35%, the final 45% and the question submissions 20%. Active participation in Wednesday discussion sessions can raise grades.

Course Readings

Readings for the course will be available from a combination of library e-reserves, Canvas, or from links on this syllabus. Sessions and readings are organized as follows:

COMM 131 WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1 DISSENT, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, AND SOCIETY

Film: Gandhi (1982). [Go to electronic version on UCSD Library Website and watch from 6:00 – 16:15.]

Snow, David and Soule, Sarah (2010). Conceptualizing Social Movements. A Primer on Social Movements. New York: W.W. Norton [pp. 6-19]. Read on Canvas from Week 1 Module


Week 2 POWER, CONSENT, AND DISSENT: BUILDING A MODEL OF PROTEST


Week 3 ‘WE SHALL OVERCOME’: THE MOVEMENT FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

Injustice, Ideas and the Impulses for Equality


Media in the Movement for Civil Rights

“How the Lynching of a 14-year old Boy Sparked a Movement.” *NBC News Archive.*

“The Civil Rights Movement Gets a Boost from TV News.” *NBC News Archive.*

“Analyzing Martin Luther King’s Media Strategy.” *NBC News Archive.*

“MLK Planning the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Media.” *NBC News Archive.*

Week 4 ‘SAY THEIR NAMES’: POLICING AND MATTERS OF BLACK LIVES


[https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/from-civil-rights-to-black-lives-matter1/](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/from-civil-rights-to-black-lives-matter1/)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nyE5n11nRJI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nyE5n11nRJI)


Week 5 BRING THEM DOWN: THE MOVEMENT TO BRING DOWN CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS


**Week 6**

‘THOU SHALT NOT KILL’: THE MOVEMENT AGAINST CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

“Death Penalty: Racial Dimensions of Criminal Justice in the U.S.

**Film:** When They See Us [Watch only Part 1: View on Netflix]  https://www.netflix.com/title/80200549


**Week 7**

‘I DO THEE WED’: GAY RIGHTS & THE MOVEMENT FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY


Isenberg, Sasha (2021). The Engagement: America’s Quarter-Century Struggle Over Same-Sex Marriage. Also listen to podcast at 27:00: https://www.npr.org/2021/06/09/1004739713/biden-and-lgbtq-rights-healing-trauma-through-writing

**Week 8**

BACKLASH! WHITE FURY AGAINST PEOPLE OF COLOR


Week 9  WHEN MOVEMENTS MEET RESISTANCE: ARAB SPRING AND HONG KONG


Mackey, Robert (2019). “What a Protest in Hong Kong Looks Like When Pro-Democracy Marchers Lose Their Fear of the Police.” *The Intercept.*  


Week 10  BOYCOTT!  DEBATES OVER PROTESTING ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF PALESTINE


Omar Barghouti / Amy Goodman video (2013). [pay particular attention beginning at 6:45]  

[http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2016/02/12/february-12-2016-israel-boycott-controversy/29038/](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2016/02/12/february-12-2016-israel-boycott-controversy/29038/)


Other Resources


Before Black Lives Matter there was Black Power https://www.nbcnews.com/video/black-lives-matter-and-black-power-mlk-50-1194398275927


King, Martin Luther (1967). Interview with Merv Griffin. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9md0Fa5eik

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/memorial-murdered-boy-emmett-till-has-been-shot-again-180969928/

Rosen, David (2016). “Could it have Been Different?” *Counterpunch.* 
http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/12/30/could-it-have-been-different/


file:///C:/Users/Gary/AppData/Local/Temp/2675477.pdf


http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/19/blacklivesmatter-birth-civil-rights-movement


TPF Student Action (2015). “10 Reasons Why Homosexual ‘Marriage’ is Harmful and must be Opposed.” 
https://www.tfpstudentaction.org/blog/10-reasons-why-homosexual-marriage-is-harmful-and-must-be-opposed

Tufeckci, Zeynep (2017). “Why are Social Movements Easy to Launch but Hard to Win.” NPR 

https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/YearEnd2017


BBC News (July 8, 2012). How Facebook Changed the World – the story of the Arab Spring. 
http://vimeo.com/45410957


