

## Sociology 3141- 002 U.S. Social Movements

Fall 2008

Instructor: Dr. Mike Haffey;  
Office hours: Thurs. 1- 2 p.m.

Office & phone: Ketchum 11A 303-492-8838  
e-mail: mhaffey@Colorado.edu

Welcome to what I hope will be a pertinent and intriguing investigation into the role of social movements in U.S. society. Social Movements are, without a doubt, one of the most most exciting topics for sociological inquiry. They are conspicuous and contentious social happenings. By their very nature, social movements challenge fundamental aspects of society. Indeed it is difficult to think of a major social issue in which social movements are not involved on one or both sides. Environmental protection, race and ethnic relations, family values, gun control, labor rights, nuclear weapons, abortion, gender equity, poverty, homosexuality, toxic waste, globalization / privatization are only a few of the issues around which social movements have organized. Social movements continue to represent central mechanisms for social change and are key actors in the contemporary political process.

The purpose of this course is to provide students with a sociological understanding of past and present social movements in the United States; their organizational structures, ideologies, support-base, strategy and tactics, resources, discourse framing, multi-organizational fields of action, political opportunity structure, social control agents, etc. We will employ a range of social movement theories to explain origins, dynamics, and activities of social movements. Finally, we will highlight the central role of social movements in the changing sociopolitical landscape in the United States.

Specifically, we will address such questions as:

- \* Under what kind of historical conditions do social movements arise?
- \* What is the life cycle of social movements?
- \* Who joins social movements?
- \* Why are there people dissatisfied with the current state of our society?
- \* Why and when do movement actors move beyond institutionalized channels?
- \* Why do some social movements succeed and others fail?
- \* Do contemporary movement actors differ tactically, organizationally and demographically from those of the past?
- \* How have movement issues changed over the course of the 20th century?
- \* Does a single-issue movement fare better than one that proposes multiple changes?
- \* What are the strengths and weaknesses of centralized and decentralized organizational forms?

In C. Wright Mill's classical formulation, the sociological imagination involves seeing the connections between broad social structures, emerging historical moments, and prevailing individual biographies. This way of seeing the social world has particular relevance in the case of collective action. Social movements provide some of sociology's most vivid examples of individuals recognizing shared social concerns and uniting with one another at a certain historical moment to change the workings of society in some manner. A broader sociological understanding of these ubiquitous social phenomena underscore the dialectical relationship between social inequality, social movements, and the shape of contemporary society. Such an understanding holds the promise of a more informed citizenry, a more active democracy, and a more equitable society.

The following three course books are required for this course and are available exclusively at **Left Hand Books, located at 1200 Pearl Street**. Left Hand Book Collective is an all-volunteer, not-for-profit, collectively-run bookstore, which has served Boulder since 1979:

The Politics of Protest: Social Movements in America  
by David Meyer Oxford University Press 2006

Grassroots Resistance: Social Movements in Twentieth Century America  
by Robert Goldberg Waveland Press 1996

The Social Movements Reader: Cases and Concepts  
ed. J. Goodwin & J. Jasper Blackwell Publishing 2003

**Grading:** This course will be organized in seminar fashion, involving informal discussion and student presentation of the material. It is my hope that we will engage the topic of social movements in a relaxed and comfortable forum. It is important to me and extremely beneficial to you to make every effort to attend every class meeting. I favor frequent and informed participation. You will be expected to contribute as a "regular member" of this class, please show up prepared. Your grade for this course will be determined as follows: daily participation (20%), three exams (20% each), and a social movement research paper (20%).

**Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities who qualify for academic accommodations must provide me notification from Disability Services and discuss specific needs with me, preferably during the first two weeks of class. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (303-492-8671, Willard Hall, room 322.)

**Classroom Behavior Policy:** Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities.

**Student Honor Code:** All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council(honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and nonacademic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion).

**Policy on Discrimination and Harassment:** The University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships applies to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550.