Assessment and Participation

Grading will be based on a combination of assignments, a mid-term exam, and a final project. Attendance and participation in class discussions are also important components of the final grade.

Assignments

Assignments will be given in class and will be due on specified dates. They will include essay assignments, research papers, and short reflective pieces. The assignments are designed to encourage critical thinking, analytical skills, and active engagement with course materials.

Mid-term Exam

The mid-term exam will be held during the exam period. It will cover the material discussed in the first half of the term. The exam will be a closed-book, in-class test.

Final Project

The final project will be a research paper on a topic related to the course. The project will be due one week before the end of the term. It will be evaluated based on the quality of the research, the clarity of the writing, and the effectiveness of the argument.

Enrollment

The course is limited to 30 students. Enrollment is based on the order of application. Students are encouraged to apply early to ensure their place in the course.

Special Topics: Social Movements in the Global South (IS 419/809)

Course Syllabus

School for International Studies, Simon Fraser University

Fall 2017

Instructor: Dr. Christopher Gibson (clgibson@sfu.ca)
Class Meetings: Thursdays 1:30PM to 5:20PM in HC 7356
Weekly Office Hours: Fridays 9am to 11am in HC 7333

Course Description

From Brazil’s landless workers to China’s pro-democracy protesters, social movements are commonly credited with driving multiple processes of political, social, and cultural transformation around the world. But how can we define and understand phenomena as diverse and complex as contemporary social movements? This course aims to build a conceptual and theoretical toolkit for doing so by examining the interplay between foundational and emerging scholarship on social movements in the global South. The seminar introduces current research on movements globally and considers how such scholarship dialogues with canonical work from sociology and other social sciences. Thus, we become familiar with key concepts and theories that social movement scholars have used to gain analytic purchase on major questions in the field, such as the following: What are social movements? What do social movements do? How do they operate? What relationships have they had to political parties, states, and media? What kinds of consequences have they had? When do social movements get what they want?

As an international studies seminar, we examine widely-ranging, social scientific analyses of social movements in multiple countries across the global South, including Brazil, El Salvador, Argentina, India, China, Iran, Turkey, Rwanda, South Africa, and other countries. To do so, we consider how such research interfaces with established concepts and theories, many of which originated from accounts of U.S. and European social movements. These include the following: resources, repertoires, political opportunities, framing, political process/mediation, organizations, networks, media, outcomes, and consequences. Our meetings consider how contemporary scholarship about social movements in the global South often adopts, adapts, and sometimes aims to supplement such concepts and theories. In this way, the course not only reviews major questions, concepts, and theories in the field. It also highlights the insights, debates, and areas for future research that emerging knowledge about social movements in the global South can contribute to this evolving field.

Learning Goals

Students will finish the course with the following knowledge and skills:

- A basic familiarity with major paradigms, concepts, and theories in the social scientific study of social movements.
- A working understanding of how social scientists apply key concepts and theories in the field of social movements to contemporary movements in the global South.
- The ability to critically evaluate the contributions and limitations of these concepts and theories for scholarly understandings of social movements in the global South.
Required Readings
Selected book chapters and articles constitute the bulk of the required reading for the course. These readings will be made available in digital form online through our Canvas website. The following book is required:


Assignments and Grading
Grades will be assigned based on the following formula:

1. Class Participation 20%
2. Critical Discussion Papers (5) 35% (7% each x 5)
3. Responses to Discussion Papers (5) 5% (1% each x 5)
4. Final Essay 30%
5. Proposal for Final Essay 5%
6. In-class Presentation of Final Essay 5%

1. Class Participation (20%):
Since our learning will be especially dependent upon collective discussion of course readings, it is essential that you participate fully in class discussions and complete all assigned readings prior to the seminar. It is also essential that all students enter discussions with an open mind and be respectful of one another’s viewpoints. Our seminar will be an open, collaborative one in which we rely upon one another’s active listening and thoughtful responses to our readings and one another’s understandings of them. Your class participation grade will be determined by the consistency of your attendance, the quantity, and especially the quality of your contributions to class discussions. You must actively participate in class discussions to receive full credit.

2. Five Short Discussion Papers (35% total: 7% x 5 papers):
During five weeks of class, you will write a short but analytic discussion paper of approximately 700 words. These papers should not only synthesize and critically engage at least one of our readings for that week, but also pose at least two discussion questions that will help us delve into readings more deeply. These single-spaced, 12-point font papers must be posted in the relevant week’s Discussion thread in Canvas no later than 1:30pm on Wednesdays (i.e. 24 hours before our class). Please paste the text of your paper into the discussion window. Include endnotes and/or line citations. In order to facilitate an even distribution of papers on any given week, I will divide the class into Group A and Group B. Each student in Group A will post a discussion paper for our Sep. 14, Sep. 28, Oct. 12, Oct. 26, and Nov. 9 meetings. Each student in Group B will post a discussion paper for our Sep. 21, Oct. 5, Oct. 19, Nov. 2, and Nov. 16 meetings. Regardless of group, all students will have an opportunity to replace their grade for one discussion paper by writing an additional (6th) discussion paper for Nov. 23. Discussion papers should be written primarily on the basis of required readings for that week and EXCLUSIVELY on the basis of reading listed on our course syllabus. Write your name and the week for which you are writing on the top line. Please be sure to provide properly cited references, where appropriate.
Each discussion paper should contain four explicit sections: an introduction, a synthesis, an assessment, and questions to help stimulate class discussion. Below is more detailed description of what each of these sections should contain.

1) First, your introduction should consist of a brief paragraph that raises a central question or paradox about the readings. It should also provide a very brief agenda or outline of what you will write about in the rest of your discussion paper.

2) Second, you should provide a brief synthesis of a reading or piece of a reading in which you identify the central questions, main points, concepts, and/or core arguments. Please do not confuse a synthesis an exhaustive inventory of all the ideas, question, points, concepts, or core arguments made in a given reading. Unlike this sort of inventory, a synthesis focuses in depth on the most significant aspects of a reading, noting and defining the key concepts used by the author. When noting such concepts, please include a reference to a specific page number, or provide the author’s most synthetic rendering of the concept(s) by using a textual quotation (with a page number). Crafting a synthesis can be difficult because doing so assumes that you have understood the text deeply enough to identify and focus upon its most central parts. Including citations and/or quotations is essential, in part because it constitutes the “evidence,” about which you will write in the remainder of the paper.

3) Third, please provide a brief and original assessment of the contributions and limitations of the author’s central argument, ideas, or concepts. There are many ways to organize an assessment. For example, one may comment on whether or not and why an author’s evidence or analysis supports their arguments and/or conclusions. Rather than simply stating your opinion, provide tangible reasons for why you were convinced or not convinced by their arguments/conclusions and be sure to describe what parts of these argument/conclusions were especially compelling/insightful or less than persuasive and why. This is a good place to help launch a healthy debate in class by developing your own reason-based claim about how compelling (or not compelling) you found a reading to be.

4) Finally, please provide two discussion questions or puzzles about our readings, whose resolution would do the following: 1) help illuminate the finer points and complexities of a reading; 2) further clarify the author’s argument; and 3) foster a vibrant class discussion.

3. Five Short Response Papers (5% total: 1% x 5 responses):

During five weeks of class, you will write a 250-word (minimum) response to your at least one of your peers’ discussion papers. More specifically, each student in Group B will respond to the discussion papers written for our Sep. 14, Sep. 28, Oct. 12, Oct. 26, and Nov. 9 meetings, while each student in Group A will respond to the discussion papers written for our Sep. 21, Oct. 5, Oct. 19, Nov. 2, and Nov. 16 meetings. These single-spaced, 12-point font papers must be posted to the relevant week’s Discussion folder on our Canvas website no later than 12pm on Thursdays (i.e. 1.5 hours before our class). Each response should address the discussion paper of at least one other student from that week. The most constructive responses do not simply state an opinion. Rather, they engage in a substantive dialogue with the author in a way that helps disentangle and promote a deeper understanding of our readings. Your responses should be based on your peers’ rendering of the text and must use citations and quotations to their discussion papers, as needed. Please do not start a new discussion thread if one already exists for the week. Instead click “Reply” by the discussion paper posting of one peer, whose paper your response addresses, and then post your response in the appropriate window.
4. Final Essay (30%)
Due in our final class on November 30th, the final essay is a research paper that will examine a social movement in the global South of your own choice, although the instructor must approve your topic. This is your opportunity to study a movement about which you are passionate or curious and which may (or may not) have been included in our course readings. More detailed instructions will be provided in advance of the due date. But, at a minimum, your essay must include critical examination of any existing scholarly literature on the movement of your choice and should develop an academic argument related to central themes of the course. Thus, the essay may not be exclusively descriptive in nature. Instead, it should feature sustained critical engagement between accounts of the movement, on the one hand, and the concept and theories we examine through course readings, on the other. Students may conduct original research on the movement using publicly-available sources in the public sphere. Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor during office hours to discuss potential topics. Undergraduate students will write between 3500 and 4000 words, while graduate students will write between 4000 and 4500 words. You will turn in the essay in two ways: 1) by electronic submission to turnitin.com; and 2) in hard copy at the beginning of our final class. Additionally, students are welcome (but not required) to submit an optional outline and/or draft of your essay by Nov. 19th.

5. Final Essay Proposal (5%)
Students will first submit a brief (one to two-page) proposal for your essay by Oct. 26. The proposal should state the movement and the topic that you will examine, a research question, a synopsis of any preliminary argument, and an annotated bibliography of at least five sources.

6. Final Essay Presentation (5%)
In our final class, students will make a brief (10 min. plus five minutes of Q&A) presentation, summarizing the main argument you make in your final essay. Breadth, rather than depth, will be of the essence in this presentation. You are welcome to use PowerPoint slides and video clips.

Class Policies

- **Use Technology Respectfully and Only for Class Purposes:** Turn off or mute all cell phones before coming to the classroom. You may use laptop computers and tablets but only for class purposes, such as consulting electronic copies of our readings. Do not use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or any other social media during class, unless directed to do so by the instructor.
- **Attend Class:** Attendance and active participation are mandatory. If you have to miss a class for any reason, consult me beforehand, either by email, during class, or in office hours.
- **Do All of Your Reading On-time:** Finish all readings for each week before that week’s class.
- **Be Honest:** All students taking courses in International Studies are expected to read and understand the university’s policies regarding academic dishonesty. The School for International Studies takes academic dishonesty very seriously and expects that you understand these policies (access them here: [http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/student/s10-01.html](http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/student/s10-01.html)). Here is a useful link for understanding and avoiding plagiarism: [http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/tutorials/plagiarism-tutorial](http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/tutorials/plagiarism-tutorial).
- **No Late Papers Accepted:** Exceptions include illness extraordinary circumstances.
- **Syllabus Changes:** The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus, as needed.
Overview of Course Schedule

Class #1 on Sept. 7
Class #2 on Sept. 14
Class #3 on Sept. 21
Class #4 on Sept. 28
Class #5 on Oct. 5
Class #6 on Oct. 12
Class #7 on Oct. 19
Class #8 on Oct. 26
Class #9 on Nov. 2
Class #10 on Nov. 9
Class #11 on Nov. 16
Class #12 on Nov. 23
Class #13 on Nov. 30

Detailed Course Schedule

Class #1 (September 7) Syllabus Review & Course Introduction (no readings – first day)

Class #2 (September 14) Conceptualizing Social Movements


Class #3 (September 21): Conceptualizing Movements; Organizations and Networks


Class #4 (September 28) Repertoires of Contention


Class #5 (October 5): Framing and Meaning-making


Class #6 (October 12) Political Opportunity Structures


Class #7 (October 19) Mechanisms, Processes, and Cycles of Contention


Class #8 (October 26): Professionalization and NGOization


**Class #9 (November 2): Transnational and Subnational Contention**


**Class #10 (November 9): New Media**


Class #11 (November 16) Movement Outcomes and Consequences


Class #12 (November 23) The Future of Movements


Readings TBA by instructor and as suggested by students based on reading for their final papers

Class #13 (November 30) In-Class Presentations

[no readings]