

01:790:253

State and Social Movements: Power, Resistance, and Change

Credits: 1.5 credits

Semester: Fall 2025

Duration: 7-week mini course (October 20 – December 7, 2025; final essay due December 15)

Instructor: Pin Lu, pin.lu@rutgers.edu

Office hours: by appointment via Zoom

Course Description

This course examines the interaction between states and social movements. Building on the primary concepts and frameworks of social movement scholarship, it explores the strategies and mutual responses of movements and states in several key arenas, as these differ by region, period, issue, group, and regime type. The course concludes with the assessment of movement outcomes and with contention that extends beyond national borders.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to

- understand the primary concepts and frameworks of social movement scholarship
- recognize the varied strategies in movement–state interaction and the considerations that inform them
- apply these concepts and frameworks to the analysis of empirical cases

Course Format

This is an online asynchronous course. Materials and grades live on Canvas.

Each week the instructor posts a lecture video of no more than 20 minutes. The videos are not limited to explaining the readings; they cover the broader terrain of the week's theme. Students watch each video and answer the questions embedded in it; this counts toward the grade.

Weekly reading annotation runs alongside the videos. Readings sit on Perusall, where students annotate the text and talk with classmates inside it. Each session lists two readings and students pick one and annotate it. Readings are excerpted on Perusall so that the weekly total stays within roughly 30 pages. A Perusall tutorial is posted on Canvas.

Assessment

Component	Points	Description
Self-Introduction	2	A short introduction posted in Week 1 so the class knows who it is reading alongside. Due 10/26, 11:59 pm.
Mid-Term Evaluation	3	A short evaluation of the course, submitted at mid-term. Due Wednesday, Nov 12, 11:59 pm.
Lecture Videos	20	Each week students watch the lecture video and answer the questions embedded in it, at 4 points per week for the best 5 of 7 weeks. Graded on completion. Due Sunday 11:59 pm each week.
Reading Engagement (Perusall)	25	Each session offers two readings and students choose one, for two readings per week. Students annotate their chosen reading on Perusall. Annotation is graded at 5 points per week for the best 5 of 7 weeks, so students may skip up to two weeks. The weeks skipped for annotation and for the lecture videos may not be the same weeks. Due Sunday 11:59 pm each week.
Case Analysis	20	A recorded presentation of about 10 minutes, applying course concepts to one case of movement–state interaction. Due Monday, Nov 24, 11:59 pm.
Final Reflection Essay	30	A reflective essay in which students take stock of what they have learned, drawing on course materials and concepts. Due December 15, 11:59 pm.

Suggested Readings

Tilly, Charles. 2004. *Social Movements, 1768–2004*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

Snow, David A., Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi, eds. 2004. *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Meyer, David S. 2007. *The Politics of Protest: Social Movements in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (Oct 20–26): Introduction and Theoretical Foundations

- The definition and scope of social movements
- Claim-making and contentious repertoires
- Opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing
- The state and other institutional targets

Session 1 *Definitions and repertoires*

Snow, David A., Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi. 2004. "Mapping the Terrain." Introduction to *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, 1–16. Oxford: Blackwell.

Tilly, Charles, and Sidney Tarrow. 2015. "Making Claims." In *Contentious Politics*, 2nd ed., Chapter 1. New York: Oxford University Press.

Self-introduction due 10/26, 11:59 pm.

Session 2 *The political process framework and its critics*

McAdam, Doug, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald. 1996. "Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes." In *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, 1–20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Armstrong, Elizabeth A., and Mary Bernstein. 2008. "Culture, Power, and Institutions: A Multi-Institutional Politics Approach to Social Movements." *Sociological Theory* 26 (1): 74–99.

Week 2 (Oct 27 – Nov 2): State–Movement Interactions

- The openings formal politics offers to contention
- Assimilative and confrontational movement strategies
- Repression and diffuse control
- Protest bargaining and bureaucratic absorption

Session 1 *Opportunity structures and relational fields*

Kitschelt, Herbert P. 1986. "Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies." *British Journal of Political Science* 16 (1): 57–85.

Goldstone, Jack A. 2004. "More Social Movements or Fewer? Beyond Political Opportunity Structures to Relational Fields." *Theory and Society* 33 (3/4): 333–365.

Session 2 *State responses to protest*

Earl, Jennifer. 2011. "Political Repression: Iron Fists, Velvet Gloves, and Diffuse Control." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37: 261–284.

Lee, Ching Kwan, and Yonghong Zhang. 2013. "The Power of Instability: Unraveling the Microfoundations of Bargained Authoritarianism in China." *American Journal of Sociology* 118 (6): 1475–1508.

Optional viewing. *Do Not Split* (dir. Anders Hammer, 2020, 35 min). Hong Kong, 2019–2020.

Week 3 (Nov 3–9): Legal Mobilization and Judicial Strategies

- The conditions for turning to litigation
- The limits of judicial power
- Movement gains from losing in court
- Intersectionality and legal mobilization

Session 1 *Pursuing social change through litigation*

NeJaime, Douglas. 2011. "Winning Through Losing." *Iowa Law Review* 96: 941–1012. (Excerpt — see Perusall.)

Rosenberg, Gerald N. 2023. "The Dynamic and the Constrained Court." In *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?*, 3rd ed., Chapter 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Excerpt — see Perusall.)

Session 2 *Legal strategies across movements*

Vanhala, Lisa. 2018. "Is Legal Mobilization for the Birds? Legal Opportunity Structures and Environmental Nongovernmental Organizations in the United Kingdom, France, Finland, and Italy." *Comparative Political Studies* 51 (3): 380–412.

Butterworth, Elizabeth. 2023. "What if You're Disabled and Undocumented?: Reflections on Intersectionality, Disability Justice, and Representing Undocumented and Disabled Latinx Clients." *CUNY Law Review* 26 (2): 155–214. (Excerpt — see Perusall.)

Week 4 (Nov 10–16): Media, Discourse, and State Control

- Normative models of the public sphere
- The suppression of dissent inside democracies
- Regimes that co-opt the tools of protest
- Counterpublics and hashtag networks

Session 1 *State control of media and discourse*

Boykoff, Jules. 2007. "Limiting Dissent: The Mechanisms of State Repression in the USA." *Social Movement Studies* 6 (3): 281–310. (Read the introduction and the sections on the Mechanisms of Repression; the typology of ten actions may be skimmed.)

Gunitsky, Seva. 2015. "Corrupting the Cyber-Commons: Social Media as a Tool of Autocratic Stability." *Perspectives on Politics* 13 (1): 42–54.

Session 2 *Contesting public meaning*

Ferree, Myra Marx, William A. Gamson, Jürgen Gerhards, and Dieter Rucht. 2002. "Four Models of the Public Sphere in Modern Democracies." *Theory and Society* 31 (3): 289–324.

Jackson, Sarah J., and Brooke Foucault Welles. 2016. "#Ferguson is everywhere: initiators in emerging counterpublic networks." *Information, Communication & Society* 19 (3): 397–418.

Optional viewing. *Whose Streets?* (dir. Sabaah Foleyan and Damon Davis, 2017, 90 min). Ferguson, 2014.

Mid-Term Evaluation due Wednesday, Nov 12, 11:59 pm.

Week 5 (Nov 17–23): Culture, Emotion, and Symbolic Politics

- The collective reconstruction of oppositional emotions
- Storytelling and collective identity in protest
- Government through fear and the promise of security
- Hidden dissent and sudden mobilization

Session 1 *Emotion and narrative in movements*

Whittier, Nancy. 2001. "Emotional Strategies: The Collective Reconstruction and Display of Oppositional Emotions in the Movement against Child Sexual Abuse." In *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements*, 233–250. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Polletta, Francesca. 1998. "'It Was Like A Fever...' Narrative and Identity in Social Protest." *Social Problems* 45 (2): 137–159.

Optional viewing. *BPM (Beats Per Minute)* (dir. Robin Campillo, 2017, 143 min). ACT UP Paris. Fiction.

Session 2 *Fear and the appearance of consent*

Berezin, Mabel. 2002. "Secure States: Towards a Political Sociology of Emotion." *The Sociological Review* 50 (S2): 33–52.

Kuran, Timur. 1991. "Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989." *World Politics* 44 (1): 7–48. (Read pp. 7–26.)

Week 6 (Nov 24–30): Countermovements and Oppositional Mobilization

- The conditions that call a countermovement into being
- Grassroots activism and elite backing
- The manufacture of a shared enemy
- Populist backlash against globalization

Session 1 *Countermovement dynamics*

Meyer, David S., and Suzanne Staggenborg. 1996. "Movements, Countermovements, and the Structure of Political Opportunity." *American Journal of Sociology* 101 (6): 1628–1660.

Williamson, Vanessa, Theda Skocpol, and John Coggin. 2011. "The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism." *Perspectives on Politics* 9 (1): 25–43.

Optional listening. "1977: Anita Bryant's War on Gay Rights" (podcast).

Case Analysis due Monday, Nov 24, 11:59 pm.

Session 2 *Anti-gender politics*

Corredor, Elizabeth S. 2019. "Unpacking 'Gender Ideology' and the Global Right's Antigender Countermovement." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 44 (3): 613–638.

Graff, Agnieszka, and Elżbieta Korolczuk. 2021. *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment*, Introduction. London: Routledge. (Open access.)

Week 7 (Dec 1–7): Movement Outcomes and Global Activism

- The political consequences of mobilization
- Insider access and outsider pressure in policy gains
- External allies pressing an unresponsive state
- States pursuing their exiles abroad

Session 1 *What mobilization achieves*

Amenta, Edwin, Neal Caren, Elizabeth Chiarello, and Yang Su. 2010. "The Political Consequences of Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36: 287–307.

Andrews, Kenneth T. 2001. "Social Movements and Policy Implementation: The Mississippi Civil Rights Movement and the War on Poverty, 1965 to 1971." *American Sociological Review* 66 (1): 71–95.

Session 2 *Activism across borders*

Keck, Margaret E., and Kathryn Sikkink. 1999. "Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics." *International Social Science Journal* 51 (159): 89–101.

Moss, Dana M. 2016. "Transnational Repression, Diaspora Mobilization, and the Case of the Arab Spring." *Social Problems* 63 (4): 480–498.

Optional viewing. *The Square* (dir. Jehane Noujaim, 2013, 108 min). Cairo, 2011–2013.

Final Essay due December 15, 11:59 pm.

Course Policies

Late Work Policy

Weekly Perusall reading assignments: No extensions permitted. The platform automatically closes at the deadline.

Other assignments: Late submissions are not accepted unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor.

Students who anticipate difficulties meeting a deadline due to documented extenuating circumstances should contact the instructor before the deadline to discuss possible accommodations.

AI Usage Policy

AI is permitted only for correcting grammar and formatting. Students may be required to arrange a meeting with the instructor to explain the thinking behind an assignment. A student who does not do so may receive a zero on that assignment.

Academic Integrity

Students complete all assignments independently and cite all sources. All submissions are checked through Turnitin. Plagiarism will result in course failure.

Accommodations

Students with documented disabilities or other special needs should contact the instructor as early as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Appendix: How to Access and Complete Perusall Assignments

Finding the Materials

- In your Canvas course, click “Perusall” in the left navigation bar or the relevant assignment in weekly modules to access the platform.
- Once in Perusall, locate your reading materials under “Assignments.”
- Use the left sidebar to access annotation tools and other features.

Assignment Instructions

Each week, select two of the assigned readings. As you read, add comments and questions directly in the text.

Your annotations will be automatically scored by the Perusall system based on criteria set by the instructor. The specific parameters will not be disclosed, but the system takes into account: the duration, breadth, and depth of your engagement with the reading, the quantity and quality of your comments, and your interactions with other students and the instructor.

The instructor will read all annotations and may respond before or after the weekly deadline. Reading the instructor’s feedback is a useful way to understand how to improve your work. The instructor will review and might adjust automatically generated scores.

You may revise your annotations before the deadline to improve your score. For this reason, starting early is strongly encouraged — the sooner you post, the more time you have to refine your work based on scores and feedback received.

Notes

- Weekly readings are due by midnight on Sunday, unless otherwise specified. Late submissions are not accepted without prior approval.
- All comments must be written in your own words. The system automatically blocks copied text from external sources — you must type your annotations manually.
- Your Perusall scores are automatically synced to Canvas.

This syllabus is subject to modification based on class needs and progress.