

CA390: Special Topics: The Rhetoric of Social Movements

Dr. Brett Lunceford

T/R: 3.30-4.45

University Commons 1263

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Course Description

This course explores the role of social movements in a democratic society by examining rhetorical and sociological theories of social movements and collective action. Areas of inquiry will include historical and contemporary case studies of social movements; the interactions between social movements, institutions and organizations, and the state; social movements as agents of change; and the role of national and transnational social movements in the public sphere.

This course has three primary goals:

- Students will gain an understanding of rhetorical theories of social movements.
- Students will be able to critically analyze social movements.
- Students will be able to describe how social movements form, construct meaning through symbolic action, create collective identities, and encourage sociopolitical action.

These goals will be assessed through assignments designed that allow the student to demonstrate their understanding of the theories (Reflection Papers, Leading Discussions) and apply the theories to actual social movements (Paper).

I expect that each student will come to class prepared to discuss the readings for the day. According to the University of South Alabama's Academic Policies and Procedures, "Each hour of lecture usually requires two hours of outside preparation. Thus, a student carrying sixteen semester hours should be prepared to spend at least 48 hours in class and study per week."

Required Texts

All readings will be available through the library's online course reserves.

Class Climate

The questions that we will grapple with have no easy answers. There will be points where you may disagree with someone else. This is appropriate and, to some degree, desirable. However, respect for others in the class is an essential component of this class. Arguments should be made in a spirit of inquiry rather than as personal attacks.

Attendance Policy

This is an upper division course, so I assume that by now you recognize the value of regular class attendance. This course relies heavily on in-class discussion. Excessive absences will negatively impact your participation grade in this course. If you are not present, you are not able to participate and it is impossible to make up the discussion. You get three absences free—no questions asked. However, after these absences, each absence will decrease your final grade by 5 points (half a letter grade), so use them wisely. In addition, there may be in-class activities, such as the opportunity to lead the discussion, that are impossible to make up. If you are absent, please do not email me asking, “What did I miss?” You missed 75 minutes of discussion and perhaps an assignment. Make friends with your classmates and get the notes from them and/or come to my office hours.

Academic Honesty

From the Student Academic Conduct Policies: “Any dishonesty related to academic work or records constitutes academic misconduct including, but not limited to, activities such as giving or receiving unauthorized aid in tests and examinations, improperly obtaining a copy of an examination, plagiarism, misrepresentation of information, or altering transcripts or university records. . . . Penalties may range from the loss of credit for a particular assignment to dismissal from the University” (*The Lowdown*, p. 249). In short, don’t do it. I don’t like to bust students for plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty but I will. It isn’t fair to others and it isn’t fair to yourself. If you have any questions on what constitutes plagiarism, see <http://www.southalabama.edu/univlib/sauer/plagiarismforstudents.html>.

Assignments

Reflection Papers: Throughout the course, I will ask you to consider how the theories that we are discussing apply (or do not apply) to your chosen social movement. These papers should help you choose appropriate theoretical constructs for your essay.

Final Paper: Each student will examine some aspect of a social movement of the student’s choice. The paper should be between 7-12 pages, double spaced, Times New Roman font, 12 pt. I expect that you will use material from your reflection papers to guide your essay, but do not simply put them all together. An “A” paper will be well thought out, theoretically grounded, and well written. References can be in any standard citation format (APA, MLA, Chicago) and should be present and cited correctly throughout. Papers are due in my box by 5pm December 5.

Participation: As part of your participation grade, students will choose a week to lead the discussion on the readings.

Late work policy for the Reflection Papers: Late assignments will receive half credit at the most and will only be accepted by the next scheduled class. No assignments will be accepted one week past the original due date. If you know that you will be absent when an assignment is due, have a classmate bring it to class or bring it to my office before the class period on which it is due. I will not accept reflection papers by email.

Late work policy for the Final Paper: Because there is no final exam and you will be working on the final paper throughout the course, no late papers will be accepted.

There will be no final exam in this course; the final paper will serve that purpose.

Grading Scale

There are 100 points available in this course:

Reflection Papers: 40

Final Paper: 30

Participation: 30

A=90-100; B=80-89.99; C=70-79.99; D=60-69.99; F=below 60

Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, students with bona fide disabilities will be afforded reasonable accommodation. The Office of Special Student Services will certify a disability and advise faculty members of reasonable accommodations.

If you will need special accommodations please talk to me as soon as possible.

A Note on my Teaching Philosophy

I believe that every student in my class has the ability to succeed in this course. My goal is to create a comfortable environment in which you can explore and improve your ability to think critically and skillfully present your ideas to an audience. I do not “give” grades; students earn grades—no one is entitled to get an “A” in a class unless they earn it. I cannot grade on effort—I must grade what you actually do. My job is to push students to do their best and to then exceed that standard. I recognize that this is futile unless I also provide the support and assistance that each student needs to excel. Therefore, I provide office hours and expect students to use them and am generally available through email. I assume that attaining a university degree is your first priority. If this is not the case, it is less likely that you will excel. Some of you are here because you want to get a better job. I believe that education should do much more than job training, but if you see it as job training, at least take it seriously. Recognize that you will probably be required to work 40 hours a week (or more) from 8am until 5pm. If you are chronically late, they fire you. If you do not do your work, they fire you. If you drop the ball, you probably will not get a raise, they may fire you, and in some cases legal action may be taken against you. Bottom line—you do your part to excel and I will be there to help you reach that goal.

Reading Schedule:

Week 1 Early Collective Behavior Studies

8/19 Course Introduction

8/21 Gunderson, Robert G. “The Calamity Howlers.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 26, no. 3 (1940): 401-11.

Crandell, S. Judson. “The Beginnings of a Methodology for Social Control Studies in Public Address.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 33, no. 1 (1947): 36-39.

Griffin, Leland M. “The Rhetoric of Historical Movements.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 38, no. 2 (1952): 184-88.

Week 2 Defining “Social Movements” Rhetorically

8/26 Andrews, James R. “History and Theory in the Study of the Rhetoric of Social Movements.” *Central States Speech Journal* 31, no. 4 (1980): 274-81.

McGee, Michael Calvin. ““Social Movement”: Phenomenon or Meaning?” *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 233-44.

8/28 Simons, Herbert W. “On Terms, Definitions and Theoretical Distinctiveness: Comments on Papers by McGee and Zarefsky.” *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 306-15.

Zarefsky, David. “A Skeptical View of Movement Studies.” *Central States Speech Journal* 31, no. 4 (1980): 245-54.

Reflection Paper 1: What social movement do you wish to study? Explain why you find this movement interesting and what elements you plan to examine.

Week 3 The Argument over Definition Continues

9/2 Cathcart, Robert S. “A Confrontation Perspective on the Study of Social Movements.” *Central States Speech Journal* 34 (1983): 69-74.

Sillars, Malcolm O. “Defining Social Movements Rhetorically: Casting the Widest Net.” *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 46 (1980): 17-32.

9/4 Cathcart, Robert S. "Defining Social Movements by Their Rhetorical Form." *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 267-73.

Stewart, Charles J. "A Functional Approach to the Rhetoric of Social Movements." *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 298-305.

Week 4 Early Theory and Practice

9/9 Griffin, Leland M. "The Rhetorical Structure of the 'New Left' Movement: Part 1." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 50, no. 2 (1964): 113-35.

9/11 Cathcart, Robert S. "New Approaches to the Study of Movements: Defining Movements Rhetorically." *Western Speech* 36, no. 2 (1972): 82-88.

Simons, Herbert W. "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, no. 1 (1970): 1-11.

Week 5 Symbolic Action in Protest

9/16 Zaeske, Susan. "Signatures of Citizenship: The Rhetoric of Women's Antislavery Petitions." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88, no. 2 (2002): 147-68.

9/18 DeLuca, Kevin Michael. "Unruly Arguments: The Body Rhetoric of Earth First!, ACT UP, and Queer Nation." *Argumentation & Advocacy* 36, no. 1 (1999): 9-21.

Reflection Paper 2: Does your social movement engage in any kind of symbolic action? If so, how do they employ such actions? If not, why do you think they avoid this strategy?

Week 6 Framing Processes

9/23 Benford, Robert D, and David A Snow. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 611-39.

9/25 Owens, Lynn, and L. Kendall Palmer. "Making the News: Anarchist Counter-Public Relations on the World Wide Web." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 20, no. 4 (2003): 335-61.

Reflection Paper 3: How does your social movement frame the issue under consideration? What slogans do they use? Do they use the media? In what ways?

Week 7 The Ego Function of Protest Rhetoric

- 9/30 Gregg, Richard B. "The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 4, no. 2 (1971): 71-91.
- 10/2 Stewart, Charles J. "Championing the Rights of Others and Challenging Evil: The Ego Function in the Rhetoric of Other-Directed Social Movements." *The Southern Communication Journal* 64, no. 2 (1999): 91-105.

Week 8 Case Studies: Civil Rights Era

- 10/7 Stewart, Charles J. "The Evolution of a Revolution: Stokely Carmichael and the Rhetoric of Black Power." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83, no. 4 (1997): 429-46.
- Simons, Herbert W. "Patterns of Persuasion in the Civil Rights Struggle." *Today's Speech* 15 (1967): 25-27.
- 10/9 Haiman, Franklyn S. "The Rhetoric of the Streets: Some Legal and Ethical Considerations." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 53, no. 2 (1967): 99-114.
- Murphy, John M. "Domesticating Dissent: The Kennedys and the Freedom Rides." *Communication Monographs* 59, no. 1 (1992): 61-78.

Week 9 Sociological Theories: Resource Mobilization and Political Opportunity

- 10/14 McCarthy, John D., and Mayer N. Zald. "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6 (1977): 1212-41.
- 10/16 Meyer, David S., and Debra C. Minkoff. "Conceptualizing Political Opportunity." *Social Forces* 82, no. 4 (2004): 1457-92.

Reflection Paper 4: These are two sociological theories of social movement practice? Do either of them apply to your chosen social movement? Why or why not?

Week 10 Social Movement Tactics

- 10/21 Granovetter, Mark S. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *The American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 6 (1973): 1360-80.

- 10/23 Soule, Sarah A. "The Student Divestment Movement in the United States and Tactical Diffusion: The Shantytown Protest." *Social Forces* 75, no. 3 (1997): 855-82.

Reflection Paper 5: What tactics does your social movement employ to create change? How effective do they seem to be? Do you see any traces of what Richard Gregg refers to as the "ego-function" of protest in these tactics?

Week 11 Media and Protest

- 10/28 Van Aelst, Peter, and Stefaan Walgrave. "New Media, New Movements? The Role of the Internet in Shaping the 'Anti-Globalization' Movement." *Information, Communication & Society* 5, no. 4 (2002): 465-93.

- 10/30 Scott, Alan, and John Street. "From Media Politics to E-Protest." *Information, Communication & Society* 3, no. 2 (2000): 215-40.

Reflection Paper 6: How does your social movement use the media? How does the media frame your movement?

Week 12 New Social Movements

- 11/4 Pichardo, Nelson A. "New Social Movements: A Critical Review." *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997): 411-30.

- 11/6 Atton, Chris. "News Cultures and New Social Movements: Radical Journalism and the Mainstream Media." *Journalism Studies* 3, no. 4 (2002): 491-505.

Reflection Paper 7: New social movements are generally concerned with identity politics and cultural change. How does your social movement fit into this paradigm? Would you classify your social movement as a new social movement or a traditional social movement?

Week 13 Professionalization of Social Movements

- 11/11 Staggenborg, Suzanne. "The Consequences of Professionalization and Formalization in the Pro-Choice Movement." *American Sociological Review* 53, no. 4 (1988): 585-605.

- 11/13 Tate, Helen. "The Ideological Effects of a Failed Constitutive Rhetoric: The Co-Option of the Rhetoric of White Lesbian Feminism." *Women's Studies in Communication* 28, no. 1 (2005): 1-31.

Reflection Paper 8: How professionalized is your social movement? How does this influence the way the frame the issues or the tactics they employ?

Week 14 Transnational Social Movements

11/18 Bennett, W. Lance. "Communicating Global Activism." *Information, Communication & Society* 6, no. 2 (2003): 143-68.

Tesh, Sylvia N. "The Internet and the Grass Roots." *Organization & Environment* 15, no. 3 (2002): 336-39.

11/20 **NCA Convention: TBA**

Week 15 The Future of Social Movements?

11/25 Taylor, Verta. "Mobilizing for Change in a Social Movement Society." *Contemporary Sociology* 29, no. 1, Utopian Visions: Engaged Sociologies for the 21st Century (2000): 219-30.

11/27 **No Class: Thanksgiving Break**

Week 16 Conclusion

12/2 **Last Day of Class**

12/5 **Final Papers due in my mailbox by 5pm.**

Regarding Changes in Course Requirements

Since all classes do not progress at the same rate, the instructor may wish to modify the above requirements or their timing as circumstances dictate. For example, the instructor may wish to change the number and frequency of exams, or the number and sequence of assignments. However, the students must be given adequate notification. Moreover, there may be non-typical classes for which these requirements are not strictly applicable in each instance and may need modification. If such modification is needed, it must be in writing and conform to the spirit of this policy statement.