

Forms of Protest: Language, Media, and Social Change

Sample syllabus for an undergraduate course.

Course Rationale

This course is designed to familiarize you with some of the basic terms and concepts in communication studies of social movements. Over the course of the semester, we will examine key themes in the discipline, involving the social, political, economic, cultural and technological contexts in which social movements arise as well as the tactics employed to achieve movement goals. Reading classic and contemporary texts in the field, we will ask: what are social movements and how should we study them? Do social movements cause social change and how so? What are the main tactics that movement actors have used and to what effect? What are the ethics and politics of social movement tactics? Formulating responses to such questions will involve learning from a wide variety of case studies from past and present social movements.

By the end of this class, you should be able to:

- Understand why social movements are integral to today's political context.
- Have an understanding and appreciation for the concerns motivating social unrest, organization, protest, and demonstration, as well as challenges facing social movements;
- Have a vocabulary for explaining and analyzing how different protest and demonstration strategies influence public culture.
- Be able to explain how dynamics within and across movements shape movement rhetoric;
- Develop research skills, practice scholarly writing, and apply course concepts analytically through a group research project examining a movement of the student's choosing;
- Gain experience in presenting ideas to others through class discussion.
- Write succinct essays that bring together distinct ideas from the readings, lectures and discussions.

Textbooks:

- *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, Charles E. Morris III and Stephen Howard Browne (M&B)
- *Digital Media and Democracy: Tactics in Hard Times*, edited by Megan Boler (MIT Press)

Assignments

Group Case Study	50%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	20%
Attendance and Participation	15%

Group Case Study (40%)

Over the course of the semester, you will work in groups to develop a critical analysis of the communication tactics of a social movement of your choosing. Each of the steps in this process will build upon the others and will culminate in a 20-minute group presentation during the final two weeks of class. The only restriction on content is that the rhetorical act(s) under analysis cannot be an example discussed at length in class. The goal of this project is to (1) investigate how the social movement came about, what its main tactics were, and what the main effects were; (2) assess, evaluate, and analyze the means and ends of the movement by drawing upon class discussions and texts.

Initial Proposal and Meeting: Two-Step Process (5%): First, with your group, prepare a 1-2 page project proposal describing a movement and its relevance to communication studies. Ideas may be rough at this point. Second, set up a group meeting with me to discuss the project.

Methods Paper (15 %)

In order to aid your case study, you and your group will be tasked with studying and implementing a method or a set of methods. We will discuss various methods in class and in texts, but you will also be encouraged to attend workshops throughout the semester. As a group, you will write a 3-4 page paper identifying and explaining your choice of method(s).

INDIVIDUAL Contextualization Paper and Annotated Bibliography (20%):

Your task is to place the act into historical, political context and analyze relationships between context and rhetorical form. 4-6 pages. Additionally, you must provide an annotated bibliography of at least 5 and not more than 10 sources that may be useful to your final paper.

INDIVIDUAL Textual Analysis Paper (20%):

Your task here is to pick a specific textual artefact and analyze its rhetorical and/or communicative properties. This paper asks you to pay very close attention to what the artefact does and how it does it, providing argument for your interpretation and using the specific properties from the rhetorical act/artifact to support your interpretation. For example, if I were studying the PLO (week 7), I would analyze the Fatah Charter, focusing on the way that the rhetoric achieves a specific framing or how it addresses its audience and elicits international support. 4-6 pages.

Final Presentation (40%):

This presentation builds upon your previous work to develop an argument-driven analysis of the design, aims, and consequences of a movement's communication tactics. You have some freedom with regard to argument, but your analysis must be grounded in course concepts.

Midterm and Final Exams (35%)

Both exams will consist of short essay questions testing your facility with key terms and concepts in the course. Some lecture time will be devoted to discussing and reviewing for both exams.

Attendance and Participation (15%)

This is a discussion-based class. Though I will occasionally lecture, the bulk of the class will be seminar-style. This means that you need to come to each class meeting prepared to engage with

the texts and with each other. Preparation entails: (1) reading assigned course materials; (2) taking notes on reading material; (3) coming to class with questions, comments, discussion points. In-class participation entails: (1) asking and answering classmate's questions; (2) listening to classmates—monitoring your participation to ensure that you are not talking over others; (3) being vulnerable—participating in discussion even if you are not certain and asking questions that could be controversial.

Calendar

Introductory Definitions, Problems, and Debates

Week 1: What is protest? How do we study it?

- Simons, "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements," (M&B)
- McGee, "Social Movements: Phenomenon or Meaning?" (M&B)
- Robert S. Cathcart, "Movements: Confrontation as Rhetorical Form" (M& B)
- Theodore Otto Windt, Jr., "The Diatribe: Last Resort for Protest" (M&B)

Week 2: Social Movements, Politics, and Circulation: Publics and Counterpublics

- Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture*
- Karma R. Chávez, "Counter-Public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movement Coalition-Building" (M&B)
- Phaedra C. Pezzullo, "Resisting 'National Breast Cancer Awareness Month': The Rhetoric of Counterpublics and Their Cultural Performances" (M&B)

Week 3: Protest and Theories of Social Change: Persuasion

- Stewart and Denton, *Persuasion and Social Movements*, 6th edition, ch. 3

Week 4: Protest and Theories of Social Change cont.

- WEB Du Bois and Phil Zuckerman, *The Social Theory of WEB Du Bois*, ch. 4
- Karma Chavez, "From Sanctuary to a Queer Politics of Fugitivity," *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*

Week 5: Formulating Demands

- Stewart and Denton, *Persuasion and Social Movements*, 6th edition, ch. 6
- Darrel Enck-Wanzer, "Trashing the System: Social Movement, Intersectional Rhetoric, and Collective Agency in the Young Lords Organization's Garbage Offensive" (M&B)
- Explore Frameworks Institute: <http://frameworksinstitute.org/>

Week 6: Demanding Demands

- Chris Lundberg, "On Being Bound to Equivalential Chains," *Cultural Studies* 26, no. 1 (2012): 299-318.

- Laura Collins, “The Second Amendment as Demanding Subject: Figuring the Marginalized Subject in Demands for an Unbridled Second Amendment,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 17, no. 1 (2014)
- Joshua Gunn, “Tears of Refusal: Crying with Collins (and Lundberg), with Reference to Pee-Wee Herman,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2015): 347-358

Case Studies: Identifying and Studying Forms, Tactics, and Mediums of Protest

Law and the Language of Rights

Week 7: The Palestinian Liberation Movement—*Charters, Human Rights, and International Institutions*

- Lori Allen, *The Rise and Fall of Human Rights. Cynicism and Politics in Occupied Palestine*, pp. 1-32
- PLO Charter 1964, Excerpts.
- Fatah Charter 1968, Excerpts.
- PLO Charter 1968, Excerpts.
- Palestinian National Council Declaration of Independence (November 14, 1988), Excerpts.
- Palestinian Communiqué attached to the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, 1988, Excerpts.
- Arafat’s Speech at the UN Geneva, 1988, Excerpts. Arafat’s Clarification of the Geneva Speech, 1988, Excerpts.
- Palestine liberation organization: letter transmitting the national council’s resolution to amend the Palestinian national charter fulfilling the PLO obligations, 1997.

Week 8: Sovereignty and Indigenous Peoples—*Legal Briefs and Legal Decisions*

- Interview with Taiaiake Alfred, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgq19l6tM_s
- “Indians of New York” case file
- Dakota Access Pipeline Protest Readings:

Protest 2.0

Week 9: Zapatismo—“*The Web*”

- The Rand Corporation, *The Zapatista ‘Social Netwar’ in Mexico*, ch. 1, 6
- Jeroen Van Laer & Peter Van Aelst, “Internet and Social Movement Action Repertoires,” *Information, Communication, & Society*
- Sean Aday, et. al. *Blogs and Bullets: New Media in Contentious Politics*, _United States Institute of Peace

Week 10: The Arab Spring—*The Twitter Effect?*

- Contradicting Theses:
 - Gilbert Achar, “Theses on the ‘Arab Spring,’” <http://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/25193/Theses-on-the-Arab-Spring>
 - Ekaterina Stepanova, “The Role of ICTs in the ‘Arab Spring,’” *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo*, 2011

- Linda Herrera, “Egypt’s Revolution 2.0: The Facebook Factor,” <http://religionresearch.org/closer/2011/02/18/egypts-revolution-2-0-the-facebook-factor/>
- Data visualization: <http://idep.library.ucla.edu/node/55/case-study-tahrir-square-twitter-visualizations>

Week 11: Move On and Slactivism—*The Click*

- David Karpf, *The MoveOn Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy*, Ch. 1, 2, 7, and research appendix

Week 12: Tactical Media and Others

- Sections (TBA) from Megan Boler, ed. *Digital Media and Democracy: Tactics in Hard Times*

Violence and Its Justification

Week 13: The Bombing of Abortion Clinics

- Ginna Husting, "Neutralizing Protest: The Construction of War, Chaos, and National Identity through US Television News on Abortion-Related Protest, 1991" (M&B)
- Celeste Condit, *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric: Communicating Social Change*,” ch. 8

Week 14: Anti-Colonial Uprising in Frantz Fanon’s Scholarship

- Frantz Fanon, “Concerning Violence” in *The Wretched of the Earth*
- Josh Pallas, “Fanon on Violence and the Person,” <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2016/01/20/fanon-on-violence-and-the-person/>

Case Study Presentations:

Week 15: Student Presentations

Week 16: Student Presentations