Community Power and Grassroots Politics

This course is intended for students who are involved in political or volunteer activity in the community. It is designed to give students an opportunity to become part of scholarly debates over the character and significant of political organizations and social movements. Topics covered in this class include the origins of social movements, political power, fundraising, multi racial coalitions, identity politics, and environmental justice. Course content consists of lectures and discussions. The major project is a research paper analyzing the student’s involvement in a local political organizations or social movement.

The following books are on reserve and have been ordered at the Rainbow Book Store for purchase:


Course Requirements

I. Class Participation

Classroom participation is required. In order to facilitate our understanding of social movement politics, students will be asked to participate in classroom discussion. There are many ways that you can earn your class participation credit. Discussing the readings, engaging in debate, asking good questions, and presenting the results of your research project all count toward your class participation credit. If you need help participating in class discussions, drop by to see me in my office. I will be happy to help you. In addition to keeping up with the assigned reading, I encourage you to subscribe to a good daily newspaper like the New York Times. The paper version of the New York Times is available at a substantial discount to students and it is free on line. For the latest in urban social movement research, I recommend that you visit the Cyberhood at: http://www.thecyberhood.net/
Because participation is so important, attendance constitutes half of your participation grade. You can have one excused absence for medical and/or personal emergencies. An unexcused absence will cause you to lose half of your participation credit.

Please remember that this class has a two-hour meeting from 10:00 to 12:00 on Saturday December 7th so that everyone will have ample time to present their research.

II. Five Book Critiques

Students are required to write five (5) five page book critiques. The objective is to analyze the author’s thesis, methods, evidence, and conclusions of the reading assignments. Guidelines will be handed out in class.

Time will be set aside to discuss all of the assigned readings. In order to facilitate our critique of the assigned readings, all students will be assigned to a small discussion group. On the days discussions of the assigned readings are scheduled, students in these groups will spend about fifteen minutes reading each others papers, offering constructive criticism to one another, as well as raising issues and questions to be brought before the whole class. All students are required to critique Charles Tilly’s book, Social Movements, 1768 – 2012. If you are interested in critiquing the readings on funding in week eight, please see me.

Even if you do not write a book critique during a given week, it is still essential that you read the assigned books each week before coming to class. Participation is a big part of your grade and it is not possible to put off any of the readings and expect to do well in the class. Book critiques are due on the day the books are discussed. Late critiques will not be accepted.

III. A Research Paper.

All students are required to write a research paper based on their volunteer activities. The research paper will consist of three parts:

1. A typed, one page description of your activist/volunteer activities and a tentative research plan. Include the name of the organization you are working with, its address and the name and telephone number of your immediate supervisor. I would like to have an informal discussion with you about your project, methods, and objectives. All students must meet with me in my office by September 20th. Bring the one page description along with you.

2. A research proposal describing your work, the literature you will draw upon for your analysis, a working hypothesis, and some tentative conclusions. The research proposal is due on October 17th.
3. The finished product. The final paper is due on December 12th.

When preparing to research and write your term paper, I recommend that you refer to Bert Klandermans and Suzanne Staggenborg’s edited book, Methods of Social Movement Research. Written guidelines for the proposal and term paper will be handed out in class.

IV. A Comprehensive Final Exam

See Timetable for time and place. Format to be announced.

Grades will be determined using the following weighing scheme:

Book Critiques………………………………..25% (5% each)
Research Paper……………………………………30%
Class Participation………………………………..20%
Final Exam………………………………………25%

Students must complete all required work in order to be eligible to receive a passing grade in the course. In calculating the final grade, number rather than letter grades will be averaged. Make-up exams will be given only in the case of a medical emergency. Students affiliated with the McBurney Center should see me about exam arrangements and any other accommodations.

Office Hours:

My office hours are on Wednesdays from 9:00 to 11:00 or by appointment. I can be reached via email at marquez@polisci.wisc.edu. Feel free to make an appointment to see me or drop by during my office hours. I welcome students.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week One. September 3 & 5: Introduction

Tuesday: Course objectives and assignments. Book critique guidelines distributed.
Thursday: What is a social movement organization/interest group?

Week Two. September 10 & 12: Exercising Power

Thursday: Decisions and Non Decisions: A Radical Critique of Pluralism.
Week Three. September 17 & 19: Theoretical and Conceptual Debates (cont).


Thursday: Video. “We Are Wisconsin: This Is What Democracy Looks Like.”

Week Four. September 24 & 26: The Civil Rights Movement and Social Change


Week Five. October 1 & 3: The Civil Rights Movement and Social Change (cont.)


Thursday: Identity Politics in Social Movement Organizations

Week Six. October 8 & 10: The Civil Rights Movement and Social Change (cont.)

Tuesday: Cause Lawyering: Activist Attorneys and Civil Rights Organizations


Week Seven. October 15 & 17: Student Research Projects

Tuesday: In-class presentation of research plans and ideas.

Thursday: In-class presentation of research plans and ideas. **Research Proposals Due**


Tuesday: Funding Political Organizations.


Week Nine. October 29 & 31: Labor, Political Parties and New Social Movements

Tuesday: Organized Labor, Trends and Prospects.
Thursday: Third Parties and Grassroots Politics.

Week Ten. November 5 & 7: Labor, Political Parties and New Social Movements

Tuesday: Discuss Lisa García Bedolla and Melissa R. Michelson. Transforming the Electorate through Get-Out-the-Vote Campaigns.
Thursday: Power Relations in the Garment Industry.

Week Eleven. November 12 & 14: Environmental Justice

Tuesday: The Environmental Justice Movement.

Week Twelve. November 19 & 21: Multi Racial Coalitions

Tuesday: Discuss David Pellow. Resisting Global Toxics. Five Page Critique Due
Thursday: Bridging the Racial Divide.

Week Thirteen. November 26: Building Cross Racial Alliances

Tuesday: Guest Speaker TBA

****Thanksgiving Recess November 28 – December 1****
Week Fourteen. December 3, 5 & 7: Student Research Presentations


Thursday: Presentation of Research Projects.

Saturday: Presentation of Research Projects.

Week Fifteen. December 10 & 12: Student Research Presentations

Tuesday: Presentation of Research Projects.

Thursday: Presentation of Research Projects.