

# **POL 345U: Social Movements and Protests**

Semester: Spring 2026

Room Harrison Hall 202

Time Tues/Thurs 8:30 AM - 9:50 AM

Instructor: Dr. Kevin Reuning (ROY-ning)

Email: reunink@miamioh.edu

Course Website: Canvas

Office: Harrison Hall 222

Office Hours: Monday: 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Tuesday: 12:00 – 2:00 PM

Schedule appointments: <https://calendly.com/reuning>

## **Course Description**

The purpose of this course is to better understand social movements. Social movements are a critical component of modern governance. We will analyze how movements form, who participates in social movements, what they do, and how they can be successful. Although the focus will be on American social movements we will not be limited to that.

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- Define what social movements are and explain theories for their mobilization.
- Demonstrate evidence-based reasoning by writing a paper on a particular social movement and using evidence to argue how this movement fits into the theories we study.
- Critically assess the methodologies used to study social movements and when particular methods are and are not appropriate.
- Explain the mobilization of contemporary social movements using the theories that we discuss in class.
- Explain the role of social movements in a modern democracy and evaluate the normative implications of their impact.

## **Required Books**

- Chong, Dennis. 1991. *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement*. University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 9780226104416

## **Course Policies**

## Respect

This course will discuss and tackle issues where opinions can differ, and where opinions can be strongly held. We will do so with respect for all members of the class, in a way that everyone feels welcome to share and discuss. It is also important to remember that this is a *political science* class, not a discussion of politics. We will be discussing how movements mobilize around a variety of issues, but we will not, necessarily, be discussing our own opinions on the issues. I do not expect anyone to be detached from the subject matter, as these are important subjects, but I do expect everyone to remain focused on the goals of the class: understanding how and why people engage in contentious politics.

## Preparation

This is a 300 level courses and so you will be expected to do the readings for the day prior to coming to class and be engaged throughout class (taking notes, participating in discussion, etc). In addition, given the nature of the course, I expect you to be aware of current events. Class discussion will revolve around translating what we have been discussing in class to social movements, including contemporary movements. As such, you will be better prepared to participate if you are aware of what is happening.

## Technology

In the class you are expected to be focused on what is going on within the class. Laptops will be required on some days. On those days that laptops are not required you may bring one to take notes, etc. If the laptop becomes a distraction to those around you we will look at reevaluating this policy.

## Generative AI (ChatGPT, etc)

The basic question to ask over when you can and cannot use AI is whether your use of AI supplements what you have done or if it replaces what you have done. Below I provide where AI use is acceptable, where it is unacceptable, and places where we can have a conversation about AI use. **Note: This is true for my class. Other faculty might create different boundaries/rules that reflect their pedagogical goals.**

Table 1: AI Use

Acceptable Uses	Unacceptable Uses
Checking for grammar or spelling.	Rewriting whole sections of your paper.
Creating catchy titles.	Summarizing an article you have not read
Checking code, asking questions of how code works.	Writing code without your intervention beyond providing it the assignment.
Formatting citation.	Generating assignments in their entirety.

## **Philosophy**

Generative AI is a powerful tool but there are two important reasons for why you shouldn't use AI for the "bad uses" above. First, in order to learn you need to actually complete tasks. By completing these tasks you can build up basic skills that you can then use to do things that AI tools cannot do. For example, I can find information online that AI tools cannot find because I have a lot of experience finding more basic things.

Second, AI tools have a lot of flaws. These flaws are noticeable to experts but not to beginners. You will only be able to work past these flaws though if you practice things on your own without using AI. For example, AI is very good at making confident claims without any real evidence or support for those claims. You need to learn how to provide evidence for a claim so you don't fall for this.

## **Email Policy**

I will check email between 8am and 6pm, and will try to always respond to any contact within 24 hours (excluding the weekend). Although I do not expect formality in email communications, I do expect you to respect that emails are not a costless act.

## **Course Assignments**

### **Weekly Quizzes (25%)**

There is no attendance in this class, instead, there will be *weekly in-class quizzes*. These quizzes are meant to test whether you've been keeping up with the readings and taking notes in class. Each quiz will be 5 multiple choice questions (with maybe a few short answer questions throughout the course of the semester), and you will have access to your notes. We will hold the last 5-10 minutes of class for those quizzes and can be on either class day during the week.

If you take notes on your computer you will be allowed to access your computer but you **cannot** type on it during the quiz time. If you are typing I will assume that you are using ChatGPT or something similar to help answer the question and you will receive a 0 on that week's quiz.

If you miss a quiz you will not be able to make it up unless you miss it for a university sanctioned event, a religious holiday or military training. The lowest 3 will be dropped, so missing one or two it should not impact your grade significantly, as long as you are keeping up and doing well on the other quizzes.

### **In Class Activities (5%)**

Throughout the semester we will work on in-class activities that will require you to research or apply knowledge from what we have learned. You will be graded in your participation in these activities. If you miss class you need to check canvas. I will post any activity we did there and you will be expected to submit it within a week of the class you missed. These assignments will be worth 5 points total.

### **Movement Analysis Project**

For this class you will select a social movement that you will analyze. You will work spend most of the semester collecting data about this movement. The data will be collected based on a series

of assignment (see below). At the end of the semester you will put this information together into a final paper that will provide a history and analysis of your movement.

**Selecting a Historical Movement** You will be given a list of potential movements to pick from and complete a project about it.

- **Movement Timeline** You will put together a timeline of your movement, writing a paragraph about each “event.” This will include citations to academic (and related) sources.
- **Movement Success** You will answer a variety of questions about when the movement was at its “peak” (this will be defined in a variety of ways).
- **Macro Theory Application** You will pick a theory for the social movement you are studying and again answer several questions about that theory and your movement.
- **Final Paper** You will use the information from the previous assignments to put together an analysis of your movement. You will answer the question “How well does theory X explain movement Y?”

Item	Percentage
Weekly Quizzes (3 lowest dropped)	25%
In class Activities	5%
<b>Movement Analysis Project</b>	
Movement Timeline	15%
Movement Success Project	15%
Macro Application	20%: AI Use {#tbl-ai}

#### **Final Paper | 20%**

Assignment Weights {#tbl-weights}

#### **Extra Credit**

I will provide several extra credit opportunities throughout the semester and will announce them in class and on Canvas.

#### **Late work policy**

In order to receive a deadline extension on parts of the project, you should contact me more than 24 hours before the deadline. If an assignment is turned in late without an extension but within 24 hours of the due date, your grade will decrease by 5 percentage points (a 95% would become a 90%). For every additional 24 hours after this you lose another 5% point.

#### **Letter Grade Distribution**

Table 2: Grade Distribution

Percent		Percent	
>= 93.00	A	73.00 - 76.99	C
90.00 - 92.99	A-	70.00 - 72.99	C-
87.00 - 89.99	B+	67.00 - 69.99	D+
83.00 - 86.99	B	63.00 - 67.99	D
80.00 - 82.99	B-	60.00 - 62.99	D-
77.00 - 79.99	C+	<59.99	F

## Academic Integrity

Miami University is a scholarly community whose members believe that excellence in education is grounded in qualities of character as well as of intellect. We respect the dignity of other persons, the rights and property of others, and the right of others to hold and express disparate beliefs. We believe in honesty, integrity, and the importance of moral conduct. We defend the freedom of inquiry that is the heart of learning and combine that freedom with the exercise of judgment and the acceptance of personal responsibility.

Miami demands the highest standards of professional conduct from its students, faculty, and staff. As a community of scholars, our fundamental purpose is the pursuit of knowledge. Integrity in research and creative activities and in academic study is based on sound disciplinary practices and expectations, as well as a commitment to the values of honesty and integrity.

Any student caught committing academic dishonesty will, at a minimum, receive a 0 for the assignment at hand. For more information on academic dishonesty and potential punishments visit <http://MiamiOH.edu/integrity>.

## Disability Services

If you are a student with a physical, learning, medical and/or psychiatric disability and feel that you may need a reasonable accommodation to fulfill the essential functions of the course that are listed in this syllabus, you are encouraged to contact the Office of Student Disability Services at 529-1541 (V/TTY), located in the Shriver Center, Room 304.

## Course Outline

- *Introduction*
  - **August 27 & 29:** Introduction to Class and Political Science
    - No reading
- *What are social movements? What do they look like?*
  - **February 3 and 5:** What is a social movement
    - Chapter 2 of *Theories of Political Protest and Social Movements* by Karl-Dieter Opp
  - **February 10 and 12:** Repertories of Contention
    - Select social movement

- Ostarek, Markus, Brent Simpson, Cathy Rogers, and James Ozden. “Radical climate protests linked to increases in public support for moderate organizations.” *Nature Sustainability* 2024:1-7.
- *Why do individuals get involved in social movements?*
  - **February 17 and 19:** The Free Rider Problem
    - Chong, Chapters 1 & 2
  - **February 24 and 26:** Selective Incentives
    - Chong, Chapters 3 & 4
    - Thursday: One-on-one meetings with students about Movement Timeline.
- *What leads to new social movements appearing or old social movements re-energizing?*
  - **March 3 and 5:** Macro Theories, Strain and Breakdown
    - Movement Timeline due
    - Caren, N., Gaby, S. and Herrold, C., 2017. “Economic breakdown and collective action.” *Social Problems*, 64(1), pp.133-155.
  - **March 10 and 12:** Resource Mobilization
    - Ward, Mathew. 2017. “Opportunity, Resources, and Threat: explaining local nativist organizing in the United states.” *Sociological Perspectives*, 60(3), 459-478.
  - **March 17 and 19:** Political Opportunity Structure
    - Williams, Dana W. and Matthew T. Lee. 2012. “Aiming to Overthrow the State (Without Using the State): Political Opportunities for Anarchist Movements.” *Comparative Sociology* 11:558-593.
  - **March 31 and April 2:** Framing Theories
    - Movement Success Project due
    - Michelle S. Phelps, Anneliese Ward, Dwjuan Frazier. 2021. “From Police Reform to Police Abolition? How Minneapolis Activists Fought to Make Black Lives Matter.” *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 26(4):421-441.
  - **April 7 and 9:** Policing of protests and repression
    - Police after action reports
    - English J, White A, Eckhouse L. 2025. “How Police Behavior Shapes Perceptions of Protests: Evidence from Black Lives Matter.” *Perspectives on Politics*. 23(4):1271-1285.
    - Thursday: Talking about AI/LLMs (Complete AI module prior to class)
- Who actually protests and what happens to them?
  - **April 14 and 16:** Who participates in social movements?
    - Munson, Ziad. 2010. “Mobilizing on Campus: Conservative Movements and Today’s College Students” *Sociological Forum*. 25(4):769-786.
  - **April 21 and 23:** Participation: Consequences and Leadership
    - Macro Theory Application due
    - Nepstad, Sharon, and Clifford Bob. 2006. “When do leaders matter? Hypotheses on leadership dynamics in social movements.” *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 11(1): 1-22.
- Contemporary Discussions of Movements
  - **April 28 and 30:** Does the Internet Matter?

- Rohlinger, Deana A. and Leslie A. Bunnage. 2018. “Collective Identity in the Digital Age: Thin and Thick Identities in MoveOn.Org and the Tea Party Movement.” *Mobilization* 23(2):135-157.
- **May 5 and 7:** Antifa and the White Power Movement
  - Thursday: work day
- **Finals Week**
  - Final paper due

## **Additional Resources**

- Howe Writing Center: <http://miamioh.edu/hcwe>
- If you are a student who may be experiencing mental or emotional distress, you are encouraged to call Student Counseling Service (513-529-4634). For emergencies outside of business hours, the H.O.P.E. Line is available at all times for Miami students at 855-249-5649.
- Students come to Miami from a variety of economic backgrounds. If you are having financial trouble I urge you to make use of the services available through Miami Cares Resources: <https://www.miamioh.edu/emss/offices/student-success-center/miami-cares/index.html>