SOC 3990 CL: Social Movements in Action
Spring 2024, 3 Credits T/Th 1:15-2:30

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Office: 109 Harris-Millis Commons – *from the UHeights side of Harris-Millis, go in on Millis side; my office is immediately on left after double doors.*
Student hours: T/Th mornings between 9am and noon are best, but email/call to confirm.



Clockwise from upper left: Silent Sentinels, suffrage 1917; March for Our Lives, gun control, 2017; Montgomery Bus Boycott organizing meeting 1955; Earth Quaker Action Team, Vanguard SOS campaign, fossil fuel divestment, 2023.

Course Description
Social Movements in Action is an upper-level sociology seminar where students will explore principles of democratic participation through engaged citizenship by developing and implementing a specific social change campaign. From the beginning of the course, students will be learning organizing skills and - in groups - building their campaigns around issues of their choosing. Significant time in and out of class will be devoted to developing, refining and implementing the campaign plan. Students may have the option to join existing campaigns on campus or in the community. Roughly half of the course content and time is devoted to applied learning through these campaigns, and students are expected to spend 30 hours over the semester in campaign-related implementation activities. In addition, we will consider certain "focal" historical and contemporary social change campaigns, including campus activism at UVM. Written work focuses on critically analyzing campaign development and implementation in light of other social change efforts.

Course Learning Outcomes

After taking this course, students will be able to:

- Critically reflect on the modes of social change, their own preferred modes, and the strengths and weaknesses of community organizing, direct action and protest.
- Identify + evaluate the effectiveness of contemporary and historic efforts for social change through the lens of community organizing, direct action and protest.
- Design and implement a strategic campaign*, drawing on skills of community organizing and direct action, including (but not limited to):
    - Issue research, target analysis + power mapping, qualitative interviews with stakeholders, recruitment + education, launching a campaign publicly, and designing + engaging in at least one campaign action
- Critically reflect upon the design + implementation of this campaign, in connection with focal examples (historic + contemporary).
- Articulate the connection between strategic social change efforts and engaged citizenship in a democratic society.

Considerations + Expectations

- Basic class expectations
    - **Buy the books** + let me know if you can't
    - **Do the reading + reading responses** NO credit for late reading responses, unless significant illness/other issues, and then only half credit.
    - **Come to class –** you have only one excused absence from class. In an experiential + collaborative class, you cannot make up time missed from your group processes. If you have a flexible attendance accommodation, you must check in with me so that we can work out what is best for your situation.
    - **Be on time to class**
    - **Configure Brightspace to allow notifications** so that you receive the emailed "announcements."
    - **Set up Teams** so that you are able to respond to each other outside of class in your channels (resources in Brightspace welcome area).
    - **Treat any guest speakers with respect**
    - **Seek help if uncertain or facing hard things** – see "3. UVM Policies" in the welcome unit in Brightspace and/or come talk to me.
        - Do not ghost your classmates or me

- **Your relationship to "activism"**: Everyone in this course has experiences to offer, and having a prior activist history will not earn you a better grade or more attention from me or anything. Very few of us have been trained in community organizing or direct action campaigns, so we will all be learning about these modes. You do not have to believe that these are the most effective ways to make change, but you are charged with learning from our readings and our experiences in the class campaigns, and reflecting on this.

- **Your political opinions + values**: You also don't have to have any particular set of opinions on current issues. We could have campaigns from opposing political viewpoints within the class, and that would be fine! That said, it generally is more pleasant to work on a project that aligns in general with your beliefs and values.

- **TW**: While we will not linger on the atrocities and harms that at times yield social movements, nonetheless, there will be content about the relevant social issues in our readings, movies + organizing. Further, if we work on an issue that is relevant to you personally, build the support you need to engage with it.

- **Definition of a credit hour + campaign work**: UVM specifies that every hour of credit is equal to 1 hour in class and 3 hours outside of class. This means that I can completely legitimately expect 9 hours of out-of-class work each week. Do not try to tell me that the campaign hours requirement is unreasonable! This is an upper-level seminar and it certainly takes 30 hours to research + write a decent seminar paper.

- **Our class praxis**
    - **Listen + contribute thoughtfully, pay attention, take initiative + follow through**
        - Every one of these attributes is critical to success in this class.
        - In class discussion + campaign groups, pay attention to group dynamics, to your involvement, to the ideas you are working with.
        - At the same time, taking initiative will be key to individual and group success: share your ideas, respond to challenges, reflect on what you are learning and identify emerging problems or challenges.
        - Following through on your commitments will likely be the difference between a campaign that sputters and one that comes together.
        - In this class, your collaborative participation <u>is</u> your learning.
    - **"Demands", empathy, othering + belonging**: The social action model is based on the concept that ordinary people make change by building power and running campaigns with specific demands. You will not need to use the word "demand" but your campaign will develop specific, actionable actions that you want your target powerholder to do. We will do this in a framework of "bridging" rather than "breaking"; of "belonging" rather than "othering."
    - **Learn from failure and repeated attempts**: You cannot possibly complete <u>every</u> task in your campaign perfectly, or probably even well. I don't expect you to. You will demonstrate learning through your persistent navigation of obstacles + challenges and your ability to connect these experiences to the concepts and examples in the books/readings.

Course Organization

- **Tuesdays**: We will have mini-lectures on the readings, class discussion and short campaign group check-ins.
- **Thursdays**: We will have more extended campaign group meetings, with class time functioning as "campaign office hours." Groups are required to record their activities and next steps for every Thursday meeting, and may be asked to briefly present their progress during the class time for discussion + feedback.
- **During weeks 10-15:** after campaign launches, students will also present on their focal movements (see course schedule).
- **Final presentation**: Friday, May 10th, 1:30-4:15 **all students must be present**

Course Assignments + Grade Weights

More specific details of the assignments, grading + rubrics will be provided in Brightspace. Note that the "portfolio assignments" in Change! are not your course assignments, although some of the questions may appear in the assignments.

- **Weekly Reading Responses** (15%) **Tuesdays before class**
  - Individual assignment
  - Weekly responses to the readings (substitute for quizzes)
  - Due Tuesdays before class
- **Weekly Campaign Status Reports** (5%) **Thursdays by end of class**
  - Group assignment (by note-taker)
  - Written during Thursday class – weeks 4-8)
  - Given verbally during Thursday class – weeks 10-15
- **Campaign Assignments / Portfolio** (60%) **Portfolio due at final presentation, May 10th**
  - Issue Backgrounder **Assignments due during semester**
  - Power Mapping
  - Stakeholder Interviews
  - Target Analysis
  - Campaign Plan drafts
  - Recruitment Plan
  - Press Statement
  - Final Campaign Plan
- **Focal Movement presentation** (5%) **Weeks 11-15**
  - Brief individual presentation on focal movement + their target/ demand/ strategy/ tactics.
- **Campaign Final Presentation** (5%) **May 10th**
  - Individual grade for each person's portion of the presentation
- **Final Reflective Essay** (10%) **May 10th**
  - Individual reflection connecting campaign activities, focal movement and personal experience with the big picture

Books, Materials + Technology

There are two required books, that you should have ordered online (email, January 1st). Both books are written as guides to developing specific campaigns for social change. Change! is a course book written specifically for student-run semester-long social action campaigns, by the designer of "Social Action Teaching", Scott Myers-Lipton. How We Win is written by a renowned activist from Philadelphia, with a greater focus on direct action campaigning.

We will be using both Brightspace and Teams for this course. Brightspace will be the vehicle for all my communications with you, as well as the readings, delivery of assignments, feedback + grading. Teams will be the communication vehicle for your campaigns. You will use *channels* for communication with each other, *whiteboard* for posting materials, and possibly other features as well. Think: Teams=campaign, Brightspace=course.