DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

SOCI 386: Contemporary Social Movements
Fall Semester 2023

Meeting Times: Tue.-Thu.-Fri, 2:35-3:25 p.m.
Location (T-Th-F): ENGMD 279

Professor: Barry Eidlin
(barry.eidlin@mcgill.ca)
Office Hours: Wed. 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.
Make appointment at https://calendly.com/eidlin/office-hours

TA: Kaitlin Wannamaker
(kaitlin.wannamaker@mail.mcgill.ca)
Office Hours: TBA

Land acknowledgment: McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course introduces students to the theoretical analysis of collective protest and social movements. It addresses several key questions, including: Why are people usually quiescent in the face of oppression and exploitation? Why and how do social movements nonetheless arise? What challenges do they face? And why do movements win or lose? The course will address these questions (and others) first through an introduction to some of the foundational texts surrounding questions of collective action, and then by examining three case studies of social movements: 1) the U.S. workers’ movement, focusing particularly on the 2018 teachers’ strike wave; 2) the U.S. civil rights movement, and 3) the “second wave” U.S. feminist movement in the 1960s and 70s. The twin goals of this course are to understand these particular movements better, and to master a variety of general ideas, concepts, and hypotheses for understanding a wide range of popular movements, past, present, and future.

CLASS STRUCTURE, CULTURE, AND STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR

Course Components

Readings offer you the chance to grapple with some of the fundamental questions and challenges surrounding processes of social mobilization and organization. You should do the assigned reading before attending the relevant lecture. Also, as described below, we will be using Perusall as an online tool to allow you to engage with the readings in collaboration with your classmates.

There is no textbook for the course, as a textbook would imply a sense of order and consensus in the study of social movements that does not exist. In real life, the study of social movements, like social movements themselves, is contested and messy. Instead of a textbook, I am assigning to you
some foundational texts related to problems of social mobilization, along with readings that explore our three case studies in depth. My goal is not to give you a comprehensive overview of social movements as a whole. Rather, I want to have you grapple with some of the key problems at the heart of the study of social movements, and develop the conceptual tools you need to analyze and understand other social movements you may encounter or participate in.

As such, I have assigned three books, each of which deals with one of the case studies: Red State Revolt: The Teachers’ Strike and Working-Class Politics by Eric Blanc, Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006, Third Edition by Manning Marable, and Freedom for Women: Forging the Women’s Liberation Movement, 1953-1970 by Carol Giardina. These are available at the McGill Le James bookstore, as well as through various online retailers, including www.biblio.com. However, I have also uploaded PDFs or ebooks of each of these to our course page on myCourses. Please note that it is important to get the third edition of the Marable book, as it includes new material that is not in previous editions.

The remainder of the course readings are either articles or extracts from books. I have compiled them a course pack, also available at the McGill Le James bookstore. PDFs of the articles are also available on the course website, but I strongly recommend that you also purchase the course pack, as I require you to bring hard copies of the readings to class, and the cost of printing out PDFs using uPrint far exceeds the per-page cost of a course pack.

Additionally, I have included a list of recommended supplementary readings at the end of this syllabus. These will be useful for your final paper projects, which will involve delving more deeply into one of the course’s three case studies.

Lectures will explore the core theoretical and empirical questions at the heart of the study of social movements. You are responsible for all material discussed in lectures, as well as any announcements made there.

Conferences are a mandatory and indispensable part of the course. There will be six of them throughout the semester. They will provide you with opportunities to ask questions about the readings or lectures, and otherwise engage the material actively, which is hard to carry off in a large lecture.

“Friday Films”: Understanding the context and dynamics of social movements often involves immersing yourself in the texture and rhythms of the movements themselves. Film is an important medium for capturing this more gut-level understanding of social movements. To that end, I have put five films on the syllabus, each of which relates to the course material in a particular week. I have uploaded the films to the Perusall app within myCourses. As with the readings, you will use Perusall to “mark up” these films. They are scheduled during the usual Friday class time in the week they are assigned (hence “Friday Films”), but you can watch them whenever is most convenient for you.
**No laptops are allowed in class** unless you have a legitimate, OSD-documented reason and have received explicit permission from me. (I know I couldn’t resist surfing the web, emailing my friends, etc., during class, so I’m removing the temptation!) Plus, recent research shows that taking notes on laptops is detrimental to learning because it results in shallower information processing (Mueller and Oppenheimer, *Psychological Science* 2014 – see article abstract at http://pss.sagepub.com/content/25/6/1159). You can also read a summary of other research on classroom electronics in this piece by a professor of Media Studies (i.e. someone whose job it is to study the internet and electronic communication), explaining why he does not allow electronics in class:  http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/09/25/why-a-leading-professor-of-new-media-just-banned-technology-use-in-class/.

**Cell phones** must be switched off (not just set to vibrate) unless you have a legitimate need (e.g., you are on call at work, family emergencies) that you have told me about.

**Usual Weekly Schedule**

Most weeks, your study process will involve the following steps. This does not include time studying for exams or researching and writing the paper assignment for the course:

1. **Read the assigned readings**, They are all available on myCourses under the “content” tab. However, after the end of add/drop period (Tuesday, September 12), you must read the assigned readings on Perusall, a peer-based online reading tool. Perusall enables you to discuss the readings together with other students. Please note that engaging the readings on Perusall is a course requirement and will constitute part of your grade (see “Exams and Assignments”).

2. **Attend the week’s lectures (usually two, sometimes three)**. The lectures are designed with the assumption that you have done the assigned reading beforehand, so prepare accordingly.

3. **In the weeks they are scheduled, attend the TA-led conferences**. These conferences are a mandatory, integral part of the course, and will take place on Fridays, when scheduled.

**Exams and Assignments**

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).

Your performance in class will be evaluated over the course of the semester with the help of five main assignments. These will test your ability to grapple with the central questions of the course
and apply them to one of the three case studies we will examine over the course of the semester. They will include:

1. **Two in-class exams**, one on **Thursday, October 19**, and one on **Tuesday, December 5**. The exams will cover all course content, including the material covered in the readings and lectures. They may consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The first exam will cover the first half of the semester, and the second exam will cover the second half of the semester (i.e. the second exam will not be cumulative, although it will be impossible to do well on the second exam without having absorbed the material from the first half of the course).

2. **Your Perusall reading grade**. After the end of add/drop period (Tuesday, September 12), you will be required to engage the course readings by using Perusall, a browser-based, collaborative reading tool. Perusall enables you to discuss the readings together with other students. Perusall will grade your reading engagement on a pass/fail basis for each single reading. It considers the quantity and quality of comments and the degree to which your comments engage and also inspire other students.

In order to receive credit for completing a reading, you have to a) complete the reading in full **before** the course meeting for which I have assigned it, and b) engage the reading by substantially commenting on passages, asking pertinent questions, and addressing the comments and questions that other students have logged. Note that you won’t receive credit if you complete your reading late or if you do not substantially engage the reading by logging comments on questions on Perusall.

At the end of the course, your overall Perusall reading grade will be the simple average of your pass/fail grades for each assigned reading. For example, if I had assigned only four readings and you would have received credit for three readings, your reading grade would be 75%.

3. **A research proposal**, using theories discussed in class to analyze in depth a question related to one of the three case studies we examine in class, due on MyCourses on **MONDAY, OCTOBER 2**.

4. **A first draft of your research paper** analyzing in depth a question related to one of the three case studies (10 pages maximum), due on MyCourses at 11:59 p.m. on **MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6**.

5. **A final draft of your research paper** analyzing in depth a question related to one of the three case studies (8-10 pages maximum, double-spaced), due on MyCourses at 11:59 p.m. on **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8**.
Grading

Your final grade will be based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exams (two total, 10% each)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>October 19, December 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perusall Reading Grade</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Throughout semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences (Attendance 5%,</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Six total: Sept. 15, Sept. 22, Sept</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation 5%, Engagement 5%)</td>
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<td>29, Oct. 13, Nov. 14, Nov. 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research proposal</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>October 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First draft of research paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>November 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final draft of research paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>December 8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**IMPORTANT NOTE ON GRADING:** Your preliminary paper and first complete draft of your research proposal will be graded by double-blind peer review, using an online software package called Eduflow ([https://app.eduflow.com](https://app.eduflow.com)). Peer-review is the main form of evaluation in the real world of scholarly research, not to mention grant proposals, business plans, and more. This will give you an introduction to how that process works.

That means that, in addition to submitting your own work, you will be responsible for evaluating and providing *constructive criticism* on three of your classmates’ work. “Double-blind” means that you will not know the identity of the students whose work you will be evaluating, and the students whose work you will be evaluating will not know your identity. It also means that for the preliminary and first draft of your policy proposal, your grade will consist of three components: 1) the quality of your assignment, as judged by THREE of your peers (50%); 2) the quality of the peer evaluations you provide for THREE of your classmates (40%); and 3) whether you complete all three parts of the assignment (submitting your own work, evaluating the work of three of your classmates, and evaluating the quality of the three reviews of your work that you receive from your classmates) on time (10%).

For the preliminary proposal and first draft, you will have **ONE WEEK** to read and evaluate three of your classmates’ assignments, using the Eduflow software. **IF YOU DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR PEER REVIEWS, YOU WILL NOT RECEIVE A GRADE FOR THAT ASSIGNMENT.**

Your final papers/policy proposals will be graded by me and your TAs, with the full grade consisting of our evaluation of the quality of your research and writing.

I will provide more details on the peer review process and the overall assignment in class.

*** If you experience a significant situation that affects your ability to complete the work in this class in a timely fashion **DO NOT DELAY IN DISCUSSING THE PROBLEM WITH ME.**
Procedure for appealing grades. To appeal a grade on the research project or the exams please follow this procedure:

1) Within **10 working days** after the project or exam is handed back to you, write a note explaining why you think your grade should be changed. One or two paragraphs should be sufficient to argue the merits of your case.

2) Make an appointment to meet with the TA during office hours, during which time your TA will explain her decision about your appeal. If you cannot meet your TA during office hours, your TA will respond to you via email.

3) If you are not satisfied with your TA’s decision and reasoning, within **10 working days** of receiving your TA’s decision, make an appointment to meet the professor, who will evaluate the TA’s decision. After that, students are entitled to a re-read or re-assessment by a professor not teaching the course should they request it.

**Academic honesty:** McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).

According to a recent U.S. national survey (the National Study of Youth and Religion Wave 2), 50% of college students reported cheating at least once in the previous year and 18% reported more frequent cheating. It is a mathematical certainty that some members of our class will try to cheat at some point during the semester. In fairness to students who are honest, those who are detected cheating will be dealt with as severely as University policy allows. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, using notes or written or electronic materials during an exam or quiz; copying another person’s quiz or research project; allowing someone to copy your quiz or research project; having someone take an exam for you; or plagiarizing any written assignment. Any suspected cheating will be immediately reported to the Office of the Dean of Students. Note that to support academic integrity, your assignments may be submitted to text-matching software to check for plagiarism.

**Technology and academic honesty**

The use of generative artificial intelligence tools and apps is strictly prohibited in all course assignments unless explicitly stated otherwise by the instructor in this course. This includes ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants. Use of generative AI in this course may be considered use of an unauthorized aid, which is a form of cheating.
Copyright and the reproduction of course material

Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., lectures, notes, summaries, exam questions) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without the explicit permission of the instructor. Specifically, you may not reproduce or place in the public domain lecture and course session recordings. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow-up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

Accommodations

If you require special accommodations for this class, please let me know as soon as possible. You are never required to tell me personal information; however, if you are having problems that affect your ability to attend, participate, or keep up with the workload in this class, please don’t wait until right before the exams to ask for help, and don’t just disappear. I may be able to help you or direct you to someone else who can help you.

The McGill Office for Students with Disabilities (514-398-6009, https://www.mcgill.ca/osd/office-students-disabilities) provides resources for students with disabilities. You will need to provide documentation of disability to them in order to receive official university services and accommodations.

Absences

If you are absent, you are still responsible for the course materials you missed. You should get the notes from someone in the class, review those notes, and come see me in office hours if you have any questions. I do not deviate from the syllabus, and if I do, I will email the class, so you can assume that what is on the syllabus is what we covered in class. Please do not email me to ask if you “missed anything important,” as that implies that not every class is important.

Respect

Please be respectful of yourself, your peers, and me. In this world of virtual learning, this means writing respectful comments on the class discussion board and in the Perusall reading comments. I will also discuss how to be respectful when evaluating your peers’ work when we get to that point in the semester. Also, if you make an office hours appointment with me, please show up. If you cannot come, send me an email letting me know ASAP.

Online Communication and Email

I will be communicating with you via email a lot. Please check your McGill email regularly.

I am not always available via email. I will usually be able answer your email within 24 hours (except on weekends). Please do not expect an immediate response to your emails.
Please write your emails to me like you would write an email to your employer or fellow work colleague. Emails should have a proper greeting (Hi, Hello, Dear, Greetings, etc.) followed by my name (you may call me Dr. Eidlin, Professor Eidlin, or Barry. “Mr. Eidlin” is not an appropriate form of address for university professors. And as a side note, it is highly inappropriate to refer to your female university professors as “Ms., Mrs., or Miss X.” DO NOT DO THIS. Also, please be mindful that you should address your male and female professors with the same degree of formality. If you address me as “Professor,” please do so with my female colleagues). The body of your email should be written in complete sentences, using standard English grammar and spelling (not in “text speak”), and should use a respectful, professional tone. Please be sure to sign your emails with at least your first name. It can be hard to tell who the email is from if you do not sign it.

Questions

You can approach me with questions at any time. My preference is to answer questions in class or in office hours – this format is best for avoiding misunderstandings (which are common via email or when conversations are rushed). I am also available to answer quick questions via email (allow up to 24 hours to respond, longer if on the weekend) and right after or before class. If at any time you feel that what I am doing is not advancing your learning, please let me know (in a respectful manner) – I want each and every one of you to feel safe and to learn, so please let me know if that is not happening.

(COURSE SCHEDULE STARTS ON NEXT PAGE)
COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1

August 31: Course introduction: logistics, syllabus, overview. What are social movements, and why should we care about them?
Reading: Course syllabus

September 1: Justice, social protest, and the law
Reading: King, Jr., Martin Luther. 1963. Letter from a Birmingham Jail.

Week 2

September 5: Class Conflict and Social Change
Reading: Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, part 1 (Bourgeois and Proletarians)

September 7: Party and Class/Organizers and Organized
Reading: Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, part 2 (Proletarians and Communists)

September 8: Film, The Young Karl Marx (highly recommended, but there is no assignment attached to this film)

Week 3

ADD-DROP DEADLINE IS TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12
REGISTER FOR CONFERENCES STARTING WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 AT 8:00 AM

September 12: Social Movements and the Paradox of Organization—I

September 14: Social Movements and the Paradox of Organization—II

September 15: CONFERENCE 1
Week 4

(PERUSALL READING ENGAGEMENT BEGINS)

September 19: Barriers to Mobilization—An Incentive Model—I

September 21: Barriers to Mobilization—An Incentive Model—II
Reading: Olson, The Logic of Collective Action, Chapter 1, Sections E-F and Chapter 2 (pp. 36-65).

September 22: CONFERENCE 2

Week 5

September 26: Barriers to Mobilization—A Class Conflict Model—I

September 28: Barriers to Mobilization—A Class Conflict Model—II
Reading: Offe and Wiesenthal, “Two Logics of Collective Action”

September 29: CONFERENCE 3

(RESEARCH PROPOSAL (2-3 PAGES) DUE ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 2 AT 11:59 P.M.)

Week 6

October 3: Barriers to Mobilization—Power and Hegemony—I

October 5: Barriers to Mobilization—Power and Hegemony—II
Reading: Gaventa, Power and Powerlessness, Chapter 7: pp. 165-201.

October 6: FALL BREAK—NO CLASS

Week 7

October 10: FALL BREAK—NO CLASS
October 12: Film, “Harlan County, USA”

(Peer evaluations of research proposal due on Thursday, October 12, at 11:59 P.M.)

October 13: Conference 4

Week 8

October 17: Exam #1 review session

October 19: Exam #1

October 20: The U.S. Labour Movement—The 2018 Teachers’ Strikes


(Back evaluations of research proposal reviews due on Monday, October 23 at 11:59 P.M.)

Week 9

October 24: The U.S. Labour Movement—The 2018 Teachers’ Strikes


October 26: The U.S. Labour Movement—The 2018 Teachers’ Strikes


October 27: The U.S. Labour Movement—The 2018 Teachers’ Strikes


Week 10

October 31: Live meet the author discussion with Eric Blanc (will also be recorded for later viewing).

November 2: The U.S. Civil Rights Movement: Background and Origins


Week 11

November 7: The U.S. Civil Rights Movement: Ascendancy, Zenith, and Decline  
Reading: Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, chapters 4-6

November 9: The U.S. Civil Rights Movement: Retreat  
Reading: Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, chapters 7-8

November 10: The U.S. Civil Rights Movement: Legacies  
Reading: Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, chapters 9-10

(Peer Evaluations of Research Paper Drafts Due on Monday, November 13 at 11:59 P.M.)

Week 12

November 14: Conference 5

November 16: Second-Wave Feminism in the U.S.: History and Origins  

November 17: Film, “She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry”

(Back Evaluations of Research Paper Draft Reviews Due on Monday, November 20 at 11:59 P.M.)

Week 13

November 21: Second-Wave Feminism in the U.S.: Development and Diffusion  
Reading: Giardina, *Freedom for Women*, Chapters 9-11, Epilogue

November 23: Second-Wave Feminism in The U.S.: Lessons for Today  

November 24: Conference 6
**Week 14**

November 28: Wrap-Up

November 30: NO CLASS—MONDAY SCHEDULE

December 1: Exam #2 review session

**Week 15**

December 5: Exam #2

*(FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE ON MYCOURSES ON FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8, AT 11:59 P.M.)*
Supplementary Readings

For your research project, you will be expected to investigate in depth a problem related to one of the four case studies we examine over the course of the semester (U.S. and Canadian labour movements, the U.S. civil rights movement, and the U.S. feminist movement). This will require doing reading and research beyond the assigned course materials. Below I include a small, completely unrepresentative sampling of additional materials related to the three case studies. These materials can provide a useful starting point for your own research. They are not sufficient for your research project. You must find additional sources of your own.

Civil Rights


Feminism

Labour


