

## **Colloquium: Grassroots Activisms and Social Change**

Department of Political Science  
Barnard College  
Fall 2024

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Email:  
Office Hours:

Course Time:

### **Course Description**

How do ordinary people come together to enact social change in society? Focusing on the United States, this course explores how everyday people engage in collective action from the ground up, through social movements, community organizing, and other forms of advocacy and activism. In particular, we will consider the role of grassroots movements and organizations as agents of democratic representation and catalysts for political transformation for marginalized communities. We will engage key questions about why groups choose to make political demands outside of formal institutional spaces, what kinds of visions for social change they put forward, how they seek to achieve their ideals, and how successful they are. The course will focus on contemporary activism around racial justice, immigrant rights, LGBTQ+ rights, feminism, and labor.

### **Learning Objectives**

In this course, a successful student will learn to:

- Critically examine the role of social movements and activist groups as agents of democratic representation and political change, particularly for marginalized groups
- Be comfortable with and evaluate a range of social science methodologies, including qualitative, quantitative, theoretical, and historical research
- Develop a research question and apply social science tools to analyze it, forming an argument supported by carefully organized evidence
- Build close reading and critical thinking skills, and an understanding that knowledge is provisional

### **Required Readings**

Note: All of these books have e-copies available through the library and you are not required to purchase hardcopies.

These two books we will read in full and return to for multiple class sessions:

- Woodly, Deva R. 2022. *Reckoning: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Necessity of Social Movements*. Transgressing Boundaries. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Zepeda-Millán, Chris. 2017. *Latino Mass Mobilization: Immigration, Racialization, and Activism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

We will also read selections from the following books. Each book will be used in one class session only.

- Benjamin, Ruha. 2022. *Viral Justice: How We Grow the World We Want*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Cohen, Cathy J. 1999. *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Gillion, Daniel Q. 2013. *The Political Power of Protest: Minority Activism and Shifts in Public Policy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Han, Hahrie, Elizabeth McKenna, and Michelle Oyakawa. 2021. *Prisms of the People : Power and Organizing in Twenty-First-Century America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Hooker, Juliet. 2023. *Black Grief/White Grievance: The Politics of Loss*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- McAlevey, Jane F. 2018. *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

### Assignments

**Participation:** The success of this colloquium depends on thoughtful and intensive participation from each student. I expect you to come to class having done the readings carefully, ready to ask questions and contribute thoughtfully to our class discussions. Participation is not only about the quantity of contributions (our discussion should be equitably distributed across the class), but about the quality. This does not mean you have to say the “correct” thing; in fact, there are rarely correct answers in this course, and I encourage you to pose questions, grapple with different ideas, and think out loud. Rather, your participation should reflect you engaging deeply with the course materials and your peers’ comments.

**Discussion Facilitation:** Each student will sign up for one week of the semester to facilitate a 30-minute class discussion. To start off the discussion, please prepare a 5-8 minute presentation. The presentation should spend no more than one minute on summary, and instead focus on analyzing the readings (e.g. highlighting strengths or posing limitations/questions), drawing out themes for the week, placing the week in broader context of the course, and/or connecting the week’s materials to current issues. Please also prepare a list of discussion questions for us to tackle in class. Your list of discussion questions should be circulated to the rest of the class by 5pm the day before class.

**Reading Responses:** You are required to write weekly reading responses and post them to Canvas the day before class. These responses should be 350-500 words. The purpose of these responses is not to summarize the readings, but to articulate your reactions, thoughts, and questions about the readings. You can also draw connections between the different readings or connect them to real world events. The goal is to develop a routine of engaging critically with what we are reading. You may skip three weeks of your choice, including the week you are facilitating discussion, for a total of 10 responses throughout the semester.

**Final Research Paper:** The final project of the course is a 20-25 page research paper. The paper should ask and answer a well-articulated research question about a social movement or activism of your choice. We will discuss the research and writing process in greater detail over the course of the semester.

- Paper Proposal (due Week 4): Your paper proposal should be 3-5 pages. It should articulate a clear research question and present a case for the significance of the question. It should include an annotated bibliography of sources you plan to consult and how these sources will help you answer your research question. Finally, the proposal should include a preliminary outline of how you plan to structure your analysis.
- Paper Proposal Conferences (Week 5): You are required to sign up for a 1-1 meeting with me to discuss your paper proposal.
- Paper Draft (optional, due week 12): I am happy to read a draft of your final paper and share comments prior to the final deadline. If you would like to receive comments on your draft, you must send it to me no later than the end of week 12. This is optional, but highly encouraged.
- Paper Presentation (in-class, Week 13): Each student will give a 10-minute presentation about their research paper in class. In your presentation, you should plan to discuss your research question, argument, evidence, and the broader significance of the topic.
- Final Paper (due Finals Week)

### **Grading**

Participation.....	20%
- Discussion Facilitation:	5%
Reading Memos.....	30%
Final Research Paper.....	50%
- Paper Proposal:	5%
- Presentation:	5%
- Final Paper:	40%

## **Attendance**

This course is designed to be participatory and I expect you to attend all class sessions unless you have a valid reason for missing. If you are unable to attend due to illness, emergency, or religious holiday, please inform me via email beforehand. Barring unforeseen circumstances, you should inform me at least 24 hours in advance via email.

## **Laptops and Electronic Devices**

I expect that your use of laptops or other electronic devices is solely limited to classroom activities. I highly encourage you to take notes by hand, as research has shown that is more effective at facilitating learning than typing notes.

## **Email Communication and Office Hours**

Please do not hesitate to reach out over email if anything comes up. If you email me during the work week (Monday to Friday evening), I am committed to responding to your emails within 24 hours.

If you cannot make my regularly scheduled office hours, I am more than happy to set up a different time to meet. To schedule, please send me an email with a few dates/times that work for you.

## **Barnard Honor Code**

Approved by the student body in 1912 and updated in 2016, the Code states:

“We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by engaging with integrity in all of our academic pursuits. We affirm that academic integrity is the honorable creation and presentation of our own work. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to seek clarification of proper forms of collaboration and use of academic resources in all assignments or exams. We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources.

We will respect the rights of others to engage in pursuit of learning in order to uphold our commitment to honor. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.”

## **Wellness Statement**

It is important for undergraduates to recognize and identify the different pressures, burdens, and stressors you may be facing, whether personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. We as a community urge you to make health, sanity, and wellness--your priority

throughout this term and your career here. Sleep, exercise, and eating well can all be a part of a healthy regimen to cope with stress. Resources exist to support you in several areas of your life, and we encourage you to make use of them.

Should you have any questions about navigating these resources, please visit these sites:

Primary Care at Barnard: <http://barnard.edu/primarycare>

Counseling: <https://barnard.edu/about-counseling>

Wellness: <http://barnard.edu/wellwoman/about>

### **Center for Accessibility Resources & Disability Services (CARDS)**

If you believe you may encounter barriers to the academic environment due to a documented disability or emerging health challenges, please feel free to contact me and/or the [Center for Accessibility Resources & Disability Services \(CARDS\)](#). Any student with approved academic accommodations is encouraged to contact me during office hours or via email. If you have questions regarding registering a disability or receiving accommodations for the semester, please contact CARDS at (212) 854-4634, [cards@barnard.edu](mailto:cards@barnard.edu), or learn more at [barnard.edu/disabilityservices](http://barnard.edu/disabilityservices). CARDS is located in 101 Altschul Hall.

### **Affordable Access to Course Texts and Materials**

All students deserve to be able to study and make use of course texts and materials regardless of cost. Barnard librarians have partnered with students, faculty, and staff to find ways to increase student access to textbooks. By the first day of advance registration for each term, faculty will have provided information about required texts for each course on CourseWorks (including ISBN or author, title, publisher, copyright date, and price), which can be viewed by students. A number of cost-free or low-cost methods for accessing some types of courses texts are detailed on the [Barnard Library Textbook Affordability](#) guide. Undergraduate students who identify as first-generation and/or low-income students may check out items from the [FLI lending libraries in the Barnard Library](#) and in [Butler Library](#) for an entire semester. Students may also consult with their professors, the Dean of Studies, and the Financial Aid Office about additional affordable alternatives for having access to course texts. Visit the guide and talk to your professors and your librarian for more details.

### **Course Schedule**

Week 1: Introductions

Week 2: Theories of Movements and Power (or *What is a movement (for)?*)

- King, Martin Luther. 1963. Letter from Birmingham Jail
- McAdam, Doug. 1982. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. \*Chapter 3
- Young, Iris M. 1992. "Social Groups in Associative Democracy." *Politics and Society* 20: 529-34.
- Han, Hahrie, Elizabeth McKenna, and Michelle Oyakawa. 2021. *Prisms of the People : Power and Organizing in Twenty-First-Century America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. \*Chapter 1, 3

Week 3: Movement Mobilization (or *When and how does a movement begin?*)

- Zepeda-Millán, Chris. 2017. *Latino Mass Mobilization: Immigration, Racialization, and Activism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. \*Introduction-Chapter 3
- McAdam, Doug. 1986. "Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer." *American Journal of Sociology* 92(1): 64-90.
- Gould, Deborah H. 2015. "Ch. 24: The Emotion Work of Movements," in *The Social Movements Reader: Cases and Concepts*, p. 254-264.

Week 4: The Art of Organizing (or *What is political organizing?*)

- Inouye, Mie. 2022. "Starting with People Where They Are: Ella Baker's Theory of Political Organizing." *American Political Science Review* 116(2): 533-46.
- McAleve, Jane F. 2018. *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age*. \*Chapter 1-3
- Wong, Diane. 2019. "Shop Talk and Everyday Sites of Resistance to Gentrification in Manhattan's Chinatown." *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 1 & 2, pp. 132-148.

Week 5: Movement Visions (or *How does a movement know what they want?*)

- Armstrong, Elizabeth A. and Suzanna M. Crage. 2006. "Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth." *American Sociological Review* 71:724-751.
- Woodly, Deva R. 2022. *Reckoning: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Necessity of Social Movements*. Transgressing Boundaries. New York: Oxford University Press. \*Preface-Chapter 4

Week 6: Inclusion/Exclusion (or *Who and what does a movement care about?*)

- Cohen, Cathy J. 1999. *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. \*Chapters 1-3, 6-9.
- Bonilla, Tabitha, and Alvin B. Tillery. 2020. "Which Identity Frames Boost Support for and Mobilization in the #BlackLivesMatter Movement? An Experimental Test." *American Political Science Review* 114 (4): 947-962.

Week 7: Changing Hearts and Minds (or *How does a movement impact the public and political elites?*)

- Wasow, Omar. 2020. "Agenda Seeding: How 1960s Black Protests Moved Elites, Public Opinion and Voting." *American Political Science Review* 114(3): 638–59.
- Wallace, Sophia J., Chris Zepeda-Millán, and Michael Jones-Correa. 2014. "Spatial and Temporal Proximity: Examining the Effects of Protests on Political Attitudes." *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (2): 433–48.
- Gillion, Daniel Q. 2013. *The Political Power of Protest: Minority Activism and Shifts in Public Policy*. \*Chapter 1, 3-5
- Simonson, Jocelyn, Sameer Ashar, Amna A. Akbar. 2022. "What Movements Do to Law." <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/what-movements-do-to-law/>

Week 8: Backlash and Countermovements (or *What happens when a movement makes some angry?*)

- Meyer, David and Suzanne Staggenborg. 1996. "Movements, Countermovements, and the Structure of Political Opportunity." *American Journal of Sociology* 101(6): 1628-1660.
- Williamson, Vanessa, Theda Skocpol, and John Coggin. 2011. "The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism." *Perspectives on Politics* 9(1): 25-43
- Hooker, Juliet. 2023. *Black Grief/White Grievance: The Politics of Loss*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. \*Chapter 1, 2

Week 9: Decline and Impact (or *Why does a movement end? How do we know if a movement was successful?*)

- Zepeda-Millán, Chris. 2017. *Latino Mass Mobilization: Immigration, Racialization, and Activism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. \*Chapter 4-6

- Rubio, Elizabeth Hanna. 2019. "'We Need to Redefine What We Mean by Winning': NAKASEC's Immigrant Justice Activism and Thinking Citizenship Otherwise." *Amerasia Journal* 45 (2): 157–72.
- Woodly, Deva R. 2022. *Reckoning: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Necessity of Social Movements*. Transgressing Boundaries. New York: Oxford University Press. \*Chapter 5, Conclusion

Week 10: The Non-Profitization of Movements (or *What happens when a movement turns into an interest group?*)

- Strolovitch, Dara Z. 2007. *Affirmative Advocacy: Race, Class, and Gender in Interest Group Politics*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. \*Chapter 3-5
- Chung, Angie Y. 2005. "'Politics Without the Politics': The Evolving Political Cultures of Ethnic Non-Profits in Koreatown, Los Angeles." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31 (5): 911–29.
- Incite! Women of Color Against Violence. 2017. *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*. \*The political logic of the non-profit industrial complex, In the shadow of the shadow state

Week 11: Social Media (or *Is social media helping or hurting political activism?*)

- Mundt, Marcia, Karen Ross, Charla M. Burnett. "Scaling Social Movements Through Social Media: The Case of Black Lives Matter." *Social Media + Society*, 4(4).
- Kuo, Rachel and Sarah J. Jackson. 2023. "The Political Uses of Memory: Instagram and Black-Asian Solidarities." *Media, Culture, and Society* 46(1): 164-186.
- Nguyen, Terry (Vox) - How Social Justice Slideshows Made by Activists Took Over Instagram\* <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/21359098/social-justiceslideshows-instagram-activism>
- Williams, Jamillah Bowman, Lisa Singh, Naomi Mezey. 2019. "#MeToo as Catalyst: A Glimpse into 21st Century Activism." *University of Chicago Legal Forum*: Vol. 2019 , Article 22. <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol2019/iss1/22>

Week 12: Dilemmas of Social Change (or *What do we mean when we say social change?*)

- Fraser, Nancy. 1995. "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age." *New Left Review*, July 1, 1995.



- Táíwò, Olúfẹ́mi O. 2022. *Elite Capture: How the Powerful Took over Identity Politics (and Everything Else)*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Rodríguez, Dylan. 2021. "The 'Asian exception' and the Scramble for Legibility: Toward an Abolitionist Approach to Anti-Asian Violence."  
<https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/the-asian-exception-and-the-scramble-for-legibility-toward-an-abolitionist-approach-to-anti-asian-violence>.
- Coates, Ta Nehesi. 2014. "The Case for Reparations."  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

Week 13:

- Final Paper Presentations – No Readings

Week 14: Movement Visions (or *Where do we go from here?*)

- Liu, Roseann, and Savannah Shange. 2018. "Towards Thick Solidarity: Theorizing Empathy in Social Justice Movements." *Radical History Review*, no. 131: 189–98.
- Benjamin, Ruha. 2022. *Viral Justice: How We Grow the World We Want*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. \*Chapter 3-4, 6-7