POLITICS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Instructor: Professor Paul Haber
Political Science Department, course #343
Spring 2012
Meets: Wednesdays 4:10-6:30
Office hours in LA 350: Wednesday 3-4 and after class for a half hour

Books available for purchase in UC Bookstore:

Other readings listed can be found on Moodle.

"Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress." Fredrick Douglass

This is a seminar - not a lecture class - on left leaning social movements in the United States. The class is heavily historical; both required texts are political histories of the American Left. We will also read some social movement theory. We will conclude the class with a focus on the Occupy Movement.

Learning Goals: There are two primary learning goals for this course. The first goal is to significantly bolster students' knowledge of the political significance of social movements. Second, to provide a forum for students to develop their analytical skills, in both their writing and verbally in class discussion.

No assumptions are made regarding students' familiarity with this subject. I do, however, assume that all students taking this class will devote considerable time each week reading and reflecting on the material. We will grapple not only with matters of historical and contemporary interpretation regarding the political power and influence of the movements, organizations, and individuals of the left but also with the value of the ideas they proposed and attempted to realize. One most certainly need not be on the left to take the class, in fact, it will be a much more interesting discussion if we have a diversity of political identities and orientations. However, an interest and willingness to work hard studying the history of the left and the Occupy Movement today is a prerequisite.

Grading (check in with me as often as you like about your participation grade)
The Occupy Movement in Comparative Historical Perspective Paper  50%
Class attendance, homework assignments, and contributions to class discussions  50%

All assigned readings must be read carefully and analytically before the class listed below for discussion. Students must come prepared to summarize the readings and armed with questions and comments from the readings. Students are expected to attend all classes unless ill or in case of emergency. Make a serious effort to get to class on time. If you are absent or late, send me an email explaining it. Do not explain it to me on the phone, in class, before class or after class. I am happy to speak with you in my office if you are having personal challenges that are negatively affecting class performance or attendance.

Students are expected to think analytically about the material, and to subject the material to rigorous scrutiny in class and in their written statements. Students are strongly encouraged to bring outside perspectives and readings as contributions to our conversations. The number of pages of required reading has been limited so as to allow students time to search and read outside readings and bring insights from them to class discussion. Time spent on homework is anticipated to be a minimum of five hours a week.

Graduate Increment: Expectations of graduate students will be higher than for undergraduate students in this class. Specifically, graduate students will be required to read and bring outside perspectives to class discussions on a regular basis. I will work closely with graduate students to assist you in doing this. Furthermore, papers from graduate students will be required to address significant theoretical concerns and will also be required to be 15-20 pages in length.
Participation Evaluation (learning outcomes):

A range. This student is energetic and engaged. This student is highly motivated to make significant contributions to class. This student is consistently well prepared, having read at a minimum the assigned reading, if not beyond. This student’s ideas and questions are substantive and generate class discussion. This student may certainly ask clarifying questions but also asks analytical questions and makes analytical comments. Importantly, this student listens and responds to the contributions of other students.

B range. This student participates consistently in discussion. This student comes to class prepared and contributes regularly by sharing thoughts and questions that show insight and a familiarity with the material. This student asks helpful clarifying questions and from time to time asks analytical questions or makes analytical comments. This student shows interest in other students' contributions.

C range. This student meets the basic requirements of class participation. This student is usually prepared and participates occasionally but not on a regular basis. This student’s contributions are almost always clarifying rather than analytical and rarely if ever generate class discussion.

D range. This student should not have taken this class. This student rarely if ever meets the basic requirements of class participation. This student misses class often or comes in late, and shows up for class inadequately prepared. The student rarely participates in class discussion or participates in such a way that does not contribute to the quality of the conversation.

Paper Evaluation:

All students will write a paper that focuses on the Occupy Movement in historical and/or comparative perspective. The paper must make an argument regarding some important aspect or aspects of the readings. All papers will follow a strict organization. All papers will have these five subheadings.

2. Definition of key terms in the thesis.
3. Reasoned explication of the causal relationships contained within the thesis.
4. Evidence that illustrates and illuminates the thesis. Evidence will come from the assigned readings and outside readings. There should be periodic reference to how the evidence presented relates to the thesis and its causal claims.
5. Concluding comments and questions for further reflection and research.

The paper should be 10–15 pages, double-spaced. Bibliography required. Footnotes optional – no endnotes.

A range. This paper is outstanding in form and content.
The thesis is original and insightful.
The thesis is well defined and the causal relationships clearly articulated.
The evidence illustrates and illuminates the thesis.
Strong bibliography and use of citations and quotes.
The concluding comments and questions are thought provoking and generate ideas for future pursuit.

B range.
The thesis is interesting but not original or notably important and insightful.
The thesis is well defined and the causal relationships are addressed coherently.
The evidence illustrates the thesis but does not illuminate it in a nuanced fashion.
The analysis is simple with less appreciation for nuance than an A paper.
The paper is reasonably well written and proofread.

C range.
The thesis is not all that interesting.
The thesis lacks clarity.
Key terms in the thesis are not defined well and causal relationships are addressed but not well explained.
There are problems in linking the evidence to the thesis.
The paper may be poorly written or having spelling or grammatical errors. It is clear that the student did not adequately proofread the paper or have help from others in doing so. Weak bibliography and use of readings to support the narrative.

D range.
Poorly written on most if not all fronts.
READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Part I: Broad historical introduction to left leaning American dreamers and some theory

February 1  Assignment on 1) issue of accountability and 2) Occupy Movement (see handout)
February 8  introduction and chapters one and two: 1820s – 1870s (Pp. xi – 67)
February 15  chapters three and four: 1870s – 1920s (Pp. 68 – 154)
February 29  Piven and Cloward, intro and chapter 1 (Pp. ix – 37) and John Gaventa, chapter 1 (Pp. 3-32)
March 7  Piven and Cloward, chapter 4 (Pp. 181 – 263)
March 14  chapters six and seven (Pp. 209 – 278)

Part II: Socialism made in the USA

March 21  Nichols, preface and chapters one and two (Pp. vii – 60)
March 28  chapters three and four (Pp. 61 – 140)
April 4  Spring Break
April 11  chapters five and six (Pp. 141 – 230)

Part III: The Occupy Movement

April 18  Afterword (Pp. 231 – 264) and readings on Occupy Movement

Students are required to come to class with a paper prospectus (to be turned in) and having read at least 3 articles and/or interviews conducted on the Occupy Movement about which you are prepared to share insights. The prospectus and annotated list of the readings read will be due no later than 6am April 18 (email it to me). Send me these as two separate files. Put your name on both of them.

April 25

Students are required to come to class having read at least 3 articles and/or interviews conducted on the Occupy Movement about which you are prepared to share insights. These insights must include at least two historical/comparative references. The annotated bibliography and brief (one paragraph each) historical/comparative references are due no later than 6am April 25. Send this to me as one file. Put your name on it.

May 2  Paper writing workshop and course evaluation
May 9  Papers due. This date is firm.