Contesting Injustice
PLSC 378, SOCY 170, LAST214

Why, when and how do ordinary people organize collectively to challenge political, social and economic injustice? Drawing on films as well as social science theories and relevant case studies, we analyze popular mobilization against injustice in international as well as US settings.

This lecture course is intended for first and second year students (but open to upper classes as well). The course meets the social science distribution requirement and an optional track meets the writing requirement.

We will analyze the conditions that lead ordinary people organize to contest injustice, the various forms of mobilization (including demonstrations, land occupations, strikes, boycotts, and violence) in which they may engage, the moral, political, and strategic dilemmas that activists face, and the conditions for success in altering the norms and institutions that sustain injustice. Films that document the experience of injustice as well as the process of mobilization are an integral part of the course.

As the course proceeds, we will explore various theoretical approaches to understanding mobilization against injustice, including those centered on self-interest, moral outrage, social preferences, social networks, political opportunity, and movement culture.

Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30-2:20, WLH 208, plus a section meeting

Section meetings (required; will begin the second week of classes):

Monday:  7:00 pm Jason Stearns (WR)
Thursday: 7:00 pm Michael Weaver (WR)
Thursday: 7:00 pm Tommaso Bardelli (WR)
Friday: 2:30 pm Christine Slaughter (non WR)

Office Hours: Wednesdays 4:00 – 6:00 (sign up on office door), Rosenkranz 234.

Course requirements

All students are required to attend lecture and section, write a number of response papers on the week’s lectures and reading, and take two in-class exams.

Students taking the course on the track to meet the writing requirement will write two response papers, will take only the short-answer section of the exams and will work on two 8 – 10 page (double-spaced) papers. Students will attend special, small sections led by teaching fellows trained to teach writing.
Participation in section (20% of final grade)

Two 500-word response papers (10%)

In-class exam 1, short answer section only (10%)

In-class exam 2, short answer section only (10%)

Paper 1 (25%)

Paper 2 (25%)

Students not on the writing track will write five response papers, will write the essay as well as the short-answer section of the exams and will also submit a final essay applying course concepts to design a campaign to contest an injustice chosen by the student.

Participation in section (20% of final grade)

Five 500-word response papers (20%)

In-class exam 1 (20%)

In-class exam 2 (20%)

Final essay (5 pages double spaced, 20%)

The response papers (maximum length 500 words) should not summarize the week’s lectures and readings but critically assess their strengths, weaknesses, and implications. What appears well established, and why? What claims are inadequately supported? Do they hold in other settings as well as the one analyzed? And so on.

The papers for the WR track will focus on topics chosen by the student and developed in consultation with the teaching fellow. After receiving comments on both the writing and substance of a draft, the student will submit a revised version to be graded. Students may opt to write a single 16-20 page paper but only if approved by the teaching fellow (in which case, an outline, bibliography, first and second draft must be submitted for comments before the final paper). Exemplary papers from last year will be posted on the course website.

For the final essay, those not on the writing track will choose a particular form of injustice and explain why it is unjust, relevant and important. Drawing on and referring to course lectures and at least five readings/videos, students will describe a strategy that would be effective in developing a campaign or movement to contest that injustice. A strong essay will include a compelling analysis of relevant factors such as, for example, an analysis of a relevant political opportunity (or how to overcome its absence), favorable mobilizing structures, and effective collective action frames and framing processes, will provide specific evidence in support of the analysis, and make explicit comparisons to other campaigns or movements. Students are welcome to brainstorm with colleagues but the essay should be written alone.
Students should consult the Writing Center as needed, and are responsible for avoiding plagiarizing ([http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/what-plagiarism](http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/what-plagiarism)) of sources or peers.

Principal texts (Yale Bookstore):


Other materials will be available on the classesv2 server.

Among other films, we will watch

*Bringing Down a Dictator*

*La Marcha*, a film on the living wage campaign in Santa Fe, New Mexico

Selections from *A Force More Powerful* on South Africa, the US, and Chile

**Course Outline**

January 14. Introduction

Film on *La Marcha* on the living wage campaign in Santa Fe, New Mexico

January 16. Concepts and paradigmatic cases

Sharon Nepstad. 2011. Chapter 1 of *Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late Twentieth Century*.

January 21 and 23. Nonviolent revolutions

Sharon Nepstad. 2011. Chapters 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8 of *Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late Twentieth Century*.

January 28. Selections from *A Force More Powerful*

January 30. Concepts: political process model; movement outcomes

February 4. Games people play

February 6. Why do people mobilize?


February 11 and 13. Revolutionary mobilization


Film: Bringing Down a Dictator, written, directed and produced by Steve York (York Zimmerman Inc.)

February 18 and 20. The cultural work of social movements

Lectures by Teaching Fellows Christine Slaughter and Michael Weaver


Paper #1 due for students on writing track: post in dropbox and bring hardcopy to section
February 25. Mobilization of Militia in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Lecture by Teaching Fellow Jason Stearn

Reading TBD

February 27. When and how mobilization fails


March 4. Review

March 6. In-class exam

Spring break

March 25 and 27. Community organizing in the US


April 1 and 3. Organizing in New Haven

Lecture by Teaching Fellow Tommaso Bardelli and local organizer (TBD)

Reading TBD

April 8 and 9. Social Movement Unionism and the Living Wage Movement


April 15. Transnational networks and mobilization


April 17. Conditions for movement success revisited


Paper #2 due for students on writing track: post in dropbox and bring hardcopy to section

April 24. In-class exam

May 5: For students not on the writing track: Final essay due at noon in dropbox and hard copy to your teaching fellow