HIST 382: U.S. Social Movements in Transnational Context

Paul Adler
Pka5@hoyamail.georgetown.edu
Class: St. Marys 124/Wednesdays: 12:30-3:00
Office: ICC 628/Office Hours: Tuesdays: 1:00-3:00

Course Description
This seminar explores the histories of five U.S. social movements with two main goals. First, the class aims to provide a solid grounding in the histories of these movements, from how they first emerged to measuring their ultimate successes and failures. Second, the course will allow students to examine how each of these movements was both affected by and had effects upon politics and social movements in other nations. How was the rhetoric and tactics of U.S. movements influenced by activism in other nations? In what ways did U.S. groups and movements build ties globally? How did these interactions impact the ability of U.S. movements to create change at home and abroad?

The first two weeks of the course will introduce students to conceptual material about social movements to help structure the rest of the course. The bulk of the course is divided into five two-week sections, each devoted to a different U.S. social movement. The first week of each section centers on the movement’s history in a national context. The second week zeroes in on specifically transnational aspects of that movement.

Course Goals
(1) Create a better understanding of social movements: what they are, how they rise and fall (or if that is an overly simplistic way to conceptualize them), and how to measure their relative successes and failures.

(2) Develop an appreciation of the often profound connections U.S. history has to the histories of other nations, while also focusing on what makes the United States distinct.

(3) Explore the various ways that social movements in the U.S. have interrelated with movements and events in the rest of the world. This includes understanding when such transnational linkages have empowered movements for social change and when they have hindered or undermined them.

(4) Build a solid knowledge base in the history presented; in addition develop a greater capacity for critically thinking about history.

(5) Sharpen reading, writing, and oral presentation skills.
Assigned Readings*
Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*.
Elliott J. Gorn, *Mother Jones: The Most Dangerous Woman in America*.

*Other assigned readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Course Assignments

Class Discussions
Students will form small groups at the beginning of the semester. Each group will choose one week to serve as discussion leaders. For the week chosen, that group will prepare a short summary of the readings to be presented at the beginning of class, as well as a list of 5-10 discussion questions to help guide the conversation for that week.

Primary Source Analysis
Due Date: By the end of the semester
Students will turn in a short 3-5 page primary source analysis. The document should relate to some aspect of internationalism in a U.S. social movement, either from one we are studying or not.

Theory and Practice Paper: Due Date: 10/31/12
Students will write a 5-7 page paper which employs one of the key concepts from Sidney Tarrow’s social movement theory to analyze an aspect of a U.S. social movement. For example, one might look at how the U.S. abolitionists’ repertoire of tactics shifted from the 1830s to the 1860s. Students may choose to focus on either a time period or a movement not covered in the course. For this paper, while students may look at specifically transnational aspects of the movement, that is not a requirement.

Primary Source Research Paper: Due Date 12/11/12
Students will write a 20 page research paper examining a transnational aspect of a particular U.S. social movement, employing at least four primary sources. While students may examine one of the movements we have covered, you are encouraged to branch out – either by exploring one of these movements during a time period not included in the class (for example, feminism in the 1960s or U.S. labor during the Cold War) or by looking at a U.S. social movement we have not studied. For example, a student might write a paper on the global protest movement that emerged demanding the release of Sacco and Vanzetti. Students will meet with the instructor in order to discuss their proposed topics.
Grading
Discussion Participation: 30%
Primary Source Analysis: 15%
Theory and Practice Paper (8-10 pages): 20%
Final paper (20 pages): 35%

Attendance is mandatory. However, this is obviously not always possible. Students should endeavor to inform the professor at least a week in advance (though more time is preferable) via e-mail about any absences, understanding that emergencies do occur.

As this is a seminar course, active and thoughtful participation is essential. Some days it is easier than others. Accordingly, each student will be allotted one day of minimal or no participation. After this, non-participation will result in a D for that day’s discussion.

Late Papers: No extensions will be granted, except in the case of illness or family emergency. If such unfortunate circumstances exist, you must notify me before the paper is due. Late papers will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade each day, including weekends and holidays.

Plagiarism: If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, or have any other ethical questions about your work, just ask, or consult the University’s honor code: https://www11.georgetown.edu/programs/gervase/hc/honor_system.html

Part I: Theorizing History and Movements

9/5/12: Introduction to the Course
- Introduction to the themes, structure and expectations for the class

9/12/12: Social Movement Theory

Part II: The Abolitionists

9/19/12: The Abolitionists in the U.S.
- Richard S. Newman, “‘Lucky to be Born in Pennsylvania’: Free Soil, Fugitive Slaves and the Making of Pennsylvania’s Anti-Slavery Borderland,” *Slavery &


- Shirley J. Yee, Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 12-40; 60-86.


9/26/12: “My Countrymen All Mankind”
- David Brion Davis, Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 231-249


Part III: “First Wave” Feminism

10/3/12: “Her Inalienable Rights”


• Kathryn Kish Sklar, ed., Women’s Rights Emerges within the Antislavery Movement, 1830-1870: A Brief History with Documents (Boston: St. Martin’s, 2000), 172-184.

10/10/12: An International Women’s Rights Movement


Part IV: Organized Labor

10/17/12: “Come Join in the Great Industrial Band”


• “The Triangle Factory Fire,” Cornell University website (explore the various primary texts on there, specifically concerning the “Uprising of the 20,000”). http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire

10/24/12: Workers of All Nations, Unite!!


Part V: The Black Freedom Struggle

10/31/12: Marching to the Promised Land


11/7/12: “Not Just an American Problem”


Part VI: The Rise of the Nonprofit Advocates

11/14/12: The Rise of the Professional Activist


11/28/12: NGOs Go Global


12/5/12: Transnational Activism in the 21st Century

We will use this session of class to explore recent episodes of protest and social movement activity and think through how our historical studies lend insight and perspective.


- “Youth Climate: Dispatches from the International Youth Climate Movement.” (Explore this website which brings together youth groups from across the world working on climate change). http://youthclimate.org/