

**Course Syllabus**  
**American Studies 474: Social Movements and Culture in the United States**  
WSUV Spring 2006  
MMC 1, T, Th 12-1:15

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We can, sometimes at least, hear (borrowing Abraham Lincoln's phrase) 'our better angels' speaking to us in the words of the dissenters, protesters, and revolutionaries in the American past.

Daniel Pope, *American Radicalism*

Unfortunately, too often our standards for evaluating social movements pivot around whether or not they "succeeded" in realizing their visions rather than on the merits or powers of the visions themselves. By such a measure, virtually every radical movement failed because the basic power relations they sought to change remain pretty much intact. And yet it is precisely these alternative visions and dreams that inspire new generations to continue to struggle for change.

Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*

The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Montgomery, 1965

### **Course Description**

This course will examine the cultural, political, and social impact of selected United States social justice movements from the Revolutionary War period to the present. We will pay particular attention to the ways in which these movements challenged, reshaped, and created alternatives to the dominant forms of US culture, and to how ordinary people participated in and shaped social movements. Rather than study at length various theories about social movements, we will look at a series of episodes, movements, and activists from the past and ask the following questions:

Why and how did this movement emerge?

What were its goals and did it accomplish them? Did these change over time?

In what ways did it express itself (politically, culturally)? What were some of the cultural texts (literature, painting, music, film, etc.) produced?

What were the goals and influences of people who participated in the movement?

What propelled individuals to make personal sacrifices to struggle for a larger cause?

In what ways did individual leaders shape the movement?

What were divisions within the movement?

What obstacles hindered the expansion of the movement?

How did the movement alter or affect American history and culture?

From our inquiries, analyses, and discussions, we will arrive at our own theories of how and why movements have mobilized to realize the promise of American democracy.

### Required Texts

Daniel Pope, *American Radicalism*

Sandy Polishuk, *Sticking to the Union: An Oral History of the Life and Times of Julia Ruuttila*

Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake: the Life of Fannie Lou Hamer*

Melvin Small, *Antiwarriors: the Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds*

Guadalupe San Miguel, *Brown, not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston*

### Course Requirements and Evaluation

**1) Class Participation (25%):** It is absolutely essential to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings, especially since this is primarily a discussion rather than lecture class. Class attendance is also critical. You should come to each class ready to evaluate the material, pose questions and challenges, listen to and challenge the ideas of your classmates, and actively engage with the material as a group. The class will be divided into four discussion groups, and at least once during the semester each student will be responsible for preparing discussion questions for the group, facilitating a group discussion, and summarizing the group discussion. Occasional in-class quizzes and writing exercises will also help measure preparation.

**2) Biography of Activist (25%):** Select a social movement activist, find out as much about him/her as you can to reconstruct his/her history, and present your findings to the class by way of an in-character "interview." That is, you will become the activist and the class will query you about your background, why you became involved in your particular movement, what were your accomplishments and disappointments, etc. Suggestions for possible people to study are included at the end of the syllabus. The presentation will be oral, but you will submit a 3-page annotated bibliography that describes 3-5 sources that you used in your research, including a scholarly book, journal article, and web site. We will schedule the presentations to coincide with the chronological period that we are studying.

**3) Comparative Paper (25%):** Develop a 5-page paper (doublespaced, wordprocessed) that carefully analyzes and compares the activism of Julia Ruuttila and Fannie Lou Hamer. What motivated these women to devote their lives to struggles for social and economic justice? How did their gender, race, and class affect their history of activism? What were their accomplishments, and what were their failures? How did they play leadership roles in various movements? This will be an analytical paper based on our reading of the two books, *For Freedom's Sake* and *Sticking to the Union*, so you will not need to do any additional research. (More details for the paper forthcoming.)

**4) Take-home final exam (25%):** At the end of the course you will have the opportunity to pull together all the materials we have used in the course (readings, films, guest speakers, lectures, discussions) to provide a 5-6 page response to 2 general essay questions about course themes. The exam questions will be distributed a week in advance of the due date. You will not need to do additional research.

### Course Schedule

#### Part I: The Promise of the American Revolution, 1770s-1860s

- T Jan 10** Course Introduction: What is a social movement? What is the significance of American radicalism in American history?
- Th Jan 12** Crowds, Food Riots, and Revolutionary Ideals  
(discuss Pope, *American Radicalism*, pp 1-49)
- T Jan 17** The Long Struggle Against Slavery  
(discuss Pope, 88-122)
- Th Jan 19** All Men and Women Are Created Equal: Abolition and Women's Rights  
(discuss Pope, 50-87)
- T Jan 24** To Perfect a Nation: Early Reform Movements

#### Part II: What Have We Become? Struggles against Capitalism, 1870s-1950s

- Th Jan 26** Anarchists  
(discuss Pope, 123-169)
- T Jan 31** The Populist Moment  
(discuss Pope, 170-199)
- Th Feb 2** Women's work and radical labor  
(discuss Pope, 200-231)
- T Feb 7** Ethnic tensions and cooperation in the labor movement: mining wars  
Film: *Matewan*
- Th Feb 9** The Great Depression and Industrial and Agricultural Movements: Non Partisan League, STFU, Black Communists, and Textile Workers  
Film: *Uprising of '34*  
(discuss Pope, 232-267)
- T Feb 14** Panel presentations; Solidarity Forever  
(discuss Polishuk, 1-121)

**Th Feb 16** The life of a labor activist: Julia Ruuttila and her Times  
Guest speaker: Sandy Polishuk  
(discuss Polishuk, 123-235)

**Part III: Takin' It to the Streets: Civil Rights, Anti-War, Feminist Movements, 1940s-60s**

**T Feb 21** Seeds of the Civil Rights Movement  
Film: *Eyes on the Prize: Montgomery and Little Rock*

**Th Feb 23** Black Freedom Struggle  
(discuss Lee, 1-102)

**T Feb 28** Film: *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin*

**Th Mar 2** Movement at the Crossroads  
(discuss Lee, 103-181)

**T Mar 7** Rise of Black Power  
**(comparative paper due)**

**Th Mar 9** Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left  
(discuss Pope, 268-303)

**Mar 13-17** Spring break, no class

**T Mar 21** Hell No, We/They Won't Go!: The Anti-War Movement  
(discuss Small, all)

**Th Mar 23** Feminisms

**T Mar 28** Poor People's Movements

**Part IV: New Movements for Change, 1970s-present**

**Th Mar 30** Ordinary People, Extraordinary Activists  
Film: *Struggles in Steel*

**T Apr 4** Brown Power, Farmworkers, and the Grape Boycott  
(discuss San Miguel, 1-95)

**Th Apr 6** Community activists: guest speakers

- T Apr 11** Chicano Movements of the 1970s  
(discuss San Miguel, 97-210)
- Th Apr 13** Environmentalisms
- T Apr 18** The New Right, Gay Liberation and Aids Activism  
(discuss Pope, 304-344)
- Th Apr 20** The WTO, Anti-Globalization, and Students Against Sweatshops  
Film: *Bread and Roses*
- T Apr 25** Cyberactivism
- Th Apr 27** Social Movements and Music: guest folksinger Anne Feeney
- May 2** **Final exam due**

### Suggestions for Biography Projects

Jane addams	Susan B. Anthony
Ella Baker	Daniel Berrigan
Roy Bourgeois	Harry Bridges
David Brower	
Stokely Carmichael	Cesar Chavez
Shirley Chisholm	Eldridge Cleaver
Angela Davis	
Dorothy Day	Eugene Debs
Frederick Douglass	Abigail Scott Duniway
Steve Earle	Louis Farrakan
Elizabeth Gurley Flynn	William Lloyd Garrison
Lois Gibbs	Angelina and Sarah Grimke
Rae Gutierrez	
Casey Hayden	Julia Butterfly Hill
Dolores Huerta	Jesse Jackson
Malcolm X	Mother Jones
Martin Luther King, Jr.	Winona Laduke
Ann Lee	Russell Means
John Muir	
Ralph Nader	Thomas Paine
Rosa Parks	Leonard Peltier
Bayard Rustin	Julia Ruutla
Margaret Sanger	Mario Savio
Pete Seeger	Ruby Doris Smith
Gloria Steinem	Sojourner Truth
Harriet Tubman	

**Amer Studies 474 American Social Movements**  
**Revised Syllabus 2-2-06**

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- T Feb 21** Seeds of the Civil Rights Movement  
Film: *Eyes on the Prize: Montgomery and Little Rock*
- Th Feb 23** Black Freedom Struggle  
(discuss Lee, 1-102)  
**Panel:** Abigail Adams (Amy H), Grimke sisters (Neena), Ann Lee (Jeremy T), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (Laura), Margaret Sanger (Sarah H)
- T Feb 28** Film: *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin*
- Th Mar 2** Movement at the Crossroads  
(discuss Lee, 103-181)  
**panel:** Norman Thomas (Kelsey W), Karl Marx (Michael), Dorothy Day (Rose H)
- T Mar 7** Rise of Black Power  
**(comparative paper due)**  
**panel:** Malcolm X (Rose G), Martin Luther King Jr (Hunter), Huey Newton (Roland), Ruby Doris Smith Robinson (Christina J), Rosa Parks (Lindsay)
- Th Mar 9** Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left  
(discuss Pope, 268-303)
- Mar 13-17** Spring break, no class
- T Mar 21** Hell No, We/They Won't Go!: The Anti-War Movement  
(discuss Small, all)
- Th Mar 23** Feminisms  
**Panel:** bell hooks (Linda F), gay liberation (Jenny), Gloria Steinem (Rachel H), Alice Paul (Rebecca)
- T Mar 28** Poor People's Movements  
**Panel:** Louis Farrakan (Dylan), Jesse Jackson (Aaron), Che Guevara (Mario), Pete Seeger (Anthony)

**Part IV: New Movements for Change, 1970s-present**

- Th Mar 30** Ordinary People, Extraordinary Activists  
Film: *Struggles in Steel*

- T Apr 4** Brown Power, Farmworkers, and the Grape Boycott  
(discuss San Miguel, 1-95)  
**panel:** Dolores Huerta (Laura I.), Cesar Chavez (Brandon)
- Th Apr 6** Community activists: guest speakers
- T Apr 11** Chican@ Movements of the 1970s  
(discuss San Miguel, 97-210)
- Th Apr 13** Environmentalisms  
**Panel:** Ralph Nader (Rebecca), Rachel Carson (Lacri), Julia Butterfly Hill  
(Crystal)
- T Apr 18** The New Right, Gay Liberation and Aids Activism  
(discuss Pope, 304-344)
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