

# Social Movements and Community Activism

INTS304, Spring 2017

When: Fridays, 10:30am-1:10pm

Where: Fairfax Campus, Aquia 213

Who: Derek Sweetman, Graduate Lecturer

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@ProfSweetman (I'm really going to try and tweet more)

Office hours: by appointment

This course is intended to introduce you to social movements, their history and contemporary forms as well as individual forms of community activism. People have always tried to make positive changes in their communities and societies, but they have only been organizing into recognizable social movements for about three-hundred years. During that time, there have been many innovations in tactics, as well as the development of a significant body of scholarly work about social movements and activism. *This course earns 1 credit of experiential learning and students must successfully complete the experiential learning component to pass the course.*

## Learning Objectives

- To understand the relationship of community organizing, social movement activism, and nonviolent revolution.
- Begin to understand and critically evaluate the objectives, values, and actions of these movements
- To develop the skills necessary to be a contributor within movements
- Develop a group of theoretical approaches useful for analyzing social movements
- Understand the methods available for cooperative social action to address grievances
- To develop a critical understanding of the potential for and methods of achieving social change
- Demonstrate college-level oral and written communication skills.
- Apply skills that will facilitate collaborative learning.

## Inclusive Learning

Your success in this class is important to me. We all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.

I encourage you to visit the Office of Disability Services to determine how you could improve your learning as well. If you need official accommodations, you have a right to have these met. There are also a range of resources on campus, including the Writing Center, Tutoring Center, and Academic Advising Center.

Similarly, I see our class as an *intentionally* inclusive community where we will work together and respect each other in order to create the best learning environment. This respect extends to refraining from plagiarism and other behavior that is prohibited by the GMU Honor Code. If you have any questions about whether something constitutes plagiarism or another violation, reach out to me before you turn in the assignment.

## Writing Intensive

The Faculty Senate Writing Across the Curriculum Committee has approved this course to fulfill all/in part of the Writing Intensive ("WI") requirement for the Integrative Studies major. It does this through weekly writing assignments as well as one major paper written in two parts with major revisions.

## Texts and Resources

There are four required texts for this class:

- Lewis, John, Andrew Aydin, and Powell, Nate. *March: Book One*. Top Shelf Productions, 2013.
- ———. *March: Book Three*. Top Shelf Productions, 2016.
- ———. *March: Book Two*. Top Shelf Productions, 2015.
- Meckfessel, Shon. *Nonviolence Ain't What It Used to Be: Unarmed Insurrection and the Rhetoric of Resistance*. AK Press, 2016.

And one recommended text that is available online:

- Boyd, Andrew, and David Oswald Mitchell, eds. *Beautiful Trouble*. OR Books, 2012. This content is available at [www.beautifultrouble.org](http://www.beautifultrouble.org)

## Course Assessment

Your grade will be calculated out of 100 points, with the following grade divisions:

930-1000 A  
 900-929 A-  
 870-899 B+  
 830-869 B  
 800-829 B-  
 770-799 C+  
 730-769 C  
 700-729 C-  
 600-699 D  
 0-599 F

## Assignments

- **Experiential Learning #1: Protest Observation** (200 points, due 5/12). Observe two protests, write one, 1,500-word reflection. Protest must be pre-approved by either appearing on the course calendar in Blackboard or by contacting me in advance. You must watch two separate protests, although you do not need to participate in them.
- **Experiential Learning #2: Movement Simulation** (300 points).
  - **Group Presentation** (100 points, in-class 5/5)
  - **Group Participation** (100 points, due 5/5)
  - **Project Reflection** (100 points, due 5/12)
- **Film Responses** (50 points each, 200 total, due one week after we watch each film). We will watch four films in class. Write a 1,000-word reflection essay on each film, due before the next class session).
- **Reading Responses** (15 points each, 8 total). Turn in a 500-word response to the readings based on a prompt posted on Blackboard. Full credit for this assignment would be 120 points, but only 100 are required for 100%, so the extra 20 will count as extra credit.
- **March Reflection** ( 100 points, due 4/14). In addition to the reading response prompts, write a single, 1,500-word reflection essay on the three volumes of March.
- **Class Reflection** (100 points, due 5/12). Write a 1,500-word reflection essay on your work in the class.

## Assignment Policies

All assignments, unless otherwise noted, should be turned in on Blackboard. Late work will be accepted, but the grade for the assignment will be reduced by 10% each day it is late. After five days, work will only be accepted if approved and then for a maximum of 50% credit. If you have a problem meeting a deadline, contact me **before the assignment is due**. Arrangements made after the due date are subject to the grade penalty.

## Types of Writing Assignments

**Reflective writing assignments** give you a chance to work with ideas and concepts from class in the context of another experience. In general, it is best to follow a What?, So What?, Now What? Format for these papers:

- What? Describe your experience. This may include some summary, but should be focused more on your experience as a viewer/reader/actor/participant. Do not simply summarize a text.
- So What? Incorporate the concepts and ideas from class into your experience. Did you see examples of these? Did the experience encourage you to think differently about them? What can these ideas and concepts tell us about the subject of your experience? What connections do you see?
- Now What? Contextualize the experience. How does it relate to your other work in the class, your other classes, or your future plans? Where are you going to take this knowledge?

Reflective writing should always be in an I voice, since you are writing about yourself. You can introduce the text or film you are discussing, but do not simply summarize it. The reflection is about you and your learning experience.

**Informal writing assignments** are just for the class. These could include discussion posts or in-class writing. You are writing so that your fellow students will be able to understand, but without formal requirements. This is not an excuse to avoid proofreading or citing your sources.

**Professional/policy writing assignments** give you a chance to practice writing for a professional audience, such as in a company or governmental organization. Although the requirements for these assignments can vary,

- Develop a good thesis statement.
- Develop your thesis through an argument.
- Use evidence that supports your argument, and explain how it does.
- Persuade your reader that your argument is sound and considers alternatives.
- Write in a formal style, avoiding contractions and slang. Be precise.

In most cases, an “I” voice will be appropriate, but think about this before starting.

## Schedule

The course and reading schedule will be posted on Blackboard