This course focuses on contemporary sociological research on social movements. We will address central questions in the field such as why don’t more people protest? Why do so many people protest? What makes something a social movement? Who joins them? What do social movements do? What relationship do they have to the mass media or political parties? How do social movements win? Each week we will explore a different concept that is central to the way that scholars think about social movements, such as diffusion, framing or repression.

Rather than looking at the historical origins of each of these questions and how debates on the topics evolved over time, this class will focus on contemporary social movements scholarship and its roots. The disadvantage of this strategy is that you will have less of a sense of where the field has been, particularly for concepts that were once popular but are no longer, such as new social movements. The advantage of this approach is that by the end of the semester, you will have a thorough understanding of where the field stands, what are the major debates, open questions, movements being studied, who is doing that work, and what methods are being used.

Readings:
Each week you will have to read three articles. One contemporary article is listed on the syllabus for each week. This is work that has been recently published in a major general interest sociological journal, such as American Sociological Review or Social Problems, or a journal for social movement research, such as Mobilization. In addition to this article, you are required to read two more articles of your own choosing on the week’s topic that the contemporary article engages with. That is, after reading the contemporary article, you should look to find prior work that author(s) of the contemporary article found to important and cited. Using Google Scholar, you should then find each of those works. If they are books or book chapter, you might need to find at the library, or, if you want, buy them. If they are articles, you should be able to get find them through Google Scholar. If you are on campus, or using the library proxy, you should then be able to download the articles. When looking for articles, try and find ones that look important and interesting. It is especially good if you can find a piece that takes a different approach then contemporary one, either in method or theory. If you want to pick a book, feel you
don't need to do any additional articles. For each week, I have provided one suggested additional article. You can use this as one of your two additional articles or not. Contemporary readings will be made available in a shared Dropbox folder.

Additionally, you will be expected to follow two social movement blogs: http://mobilizingideas.wordpress.com/ and http://politicsoutdoors.com/.

Assignments:
Class attendance and participation (20%): The class will succeed or fail based on student participation. While I will occasionally provide background information on the week's topic, most of each week will be spent discussing the articles. Additionally, since you will often be the only person who read a specific article, you will be responsible for orally summarizing the article and should be able to discuss how the articles are related. Talk at least once every week. Good participation: Demonstrates excellent preparation: analyzed case exceptionally well, relating it to readings and other material (e.g., readings, course material, discussions, experiences, etc.); offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, e.g., puts together pieces of the discussion to develop new approaches that take the class further; contributes in a very significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, responds very thoughtfully to other students’ comments, contributes to the cooperative argument-building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc.; and demonstrates ongoing very active involvement.¹ You can skip one week without impacting your attendance grade.

Reading notes (30%): Each week, you should submit 200-word reading notes on each of your three articles. These should demonstrate to me that you attempted to understand the author's ideas and provide a resource for in-class discussion. Reading notes for each article should begin with the full citation, and include the main theoretical point of the article; definitions of major concepts employed or introduced; a description of what the authors did; your evaluation of the theoretical and methodological strengths and weaknesses; links between this article and others for that day or prior; and questions for discussion. These need not be written in a polished format, although the grammar/spelling should not distract the reader. Where possible, you can copy and paste from the original, making sure to include appropriate attribution, including page numbers. These are due each week on Monday by 9pm.

You should write your reading notes in a Google Document. In order to do that, create an account with Google, if you don't already have one. Go to docs.google.com and “create” a new “document”. Rename the document to “Soci 810 Notes” followed

¹ Based on: http://trc.virginia.edu/Publications/Teaching_Concerns/Spring_1996/TC_Spring_1996_Maznevski.htm
by your first and last name by clicking on “Untitled Document” and typing in the new name. Finally, share the document by clicking on the blue “Share” box. You should share it with me (neal.caren@gmail.com).

**Analytic article (50%):** On the last day of class, you should submit a 2,000-word article that uses social movement scholarship to understand a contemporary social movement. Think Malcolm Gladwell and not *Annual Review of Sociology.* Your research for this article does not need to be something that would withstand peer review, but should be based on second or primary sources, such as newspaper accounts or movement websites. The movement that you select could be large (e.g. the Tea Party) or more modest (e.g. Occupy Boston). It could taken place in the US, abroad (e.g. the Tunisia revolution), or be transnational. You should be prepared to discuss your case and sources in class by February 28th and your preliminary analysis by March 27th.

**Schedule:**

January 10    Introductions

January 17    Participation

January 24    Resources

January 31    Political Process

February 7   Threat

February 14 Organizations

February 21 Strategy

February 28 Diffusion

March 6 Abeyance
Suggested:

March 13 Framing

March 20 Countermovements
Journal of Sociology 1628–1660.

March 27
Repression

April 3
Mass Media

April 10
Identity

April 17
Cultural Processes

April 24
Outcomes