

**SOCI 3430B**  
**Collective Action and Social Movements**

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<b>Term</b>	Winter 2025
<b>Course Delivery</b>	Online
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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is a course in the sociology of social movements, activism and protest, one of the most interesting, and sometimes inspiring, areas of sociology. You will learn sociological theories of movements and apply them to help understand some important recent movements that we will study in depth. One of the recurring themes of the course is the cyclical nature of movements and activism and a comparison between earlier generations of activists and those of today. How can the history of the “movement cycle” of the 60s and 70s help us understand contemporary activism? You will learn about many social movements, such as civil rights and anti-racism movements, student activism, environmentalism, feminism, the peace movement, and the movement for LGBTQ+ rights, and movements for prison justice/prison abolition and to defund police. We will also draw on many examples from various other movements in different times and places.

By the end of the course you should be able to provide detailed answers to questions such as: Why and how do movements emerge? Are they simply a product of social problems and stresses and of the breakdown of social order? We will examine the importance for movements of organization, resources, leadership, political opportunities, and effective tactics. We will explore the argument of “new social movement theory” that movements of the last 50 years reflect a broader cultural shift, and mark a new and different style of politics. By the end of the course you should be able to understand and critically evaluate five kinds of movement theory: strain theories, resource mobilization theory, political opportunity or political process theory, framing theory and new social movement theory.

We will also explore how and why students have often been involved in social movements; how the news media, the Internet, and social media help and hinder movements; what happens when movement opponents try to repress them; and how and why movements succeed or fail over the long term; why individual people join, stay in or drop out of movements; and what consequences activism has for the lives of activists. Welcome. I look forward to an interesting class!