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PSC 343.01: Politics of Social Movements

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POLITICS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Instructor: Professor Paul Haber
Political Science Department, course #343
Autumn 2000
Meets: TR 11:10 - 12:30 in LA 337
office hours in LA 355: TR 3:40 - 5:00 (and by appointment)

office phone: 243-4862

Books available for purchase in UC Bookstore:

1. John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (University of Illinois Press, 1980).
2. Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why they Succeed, How they Fail* (Vintage Books, 1979).
3. Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Day Women's Movement Changed America*. (Viking Press, 2000).

This is a course on 20th century social movements in the United States. What role have social movements had in shaping the politics of power, as reflected in public policy, electoral politics, relations of class, race, and gender, and people's understanding of the world and their place in it? We will repeatedly ask the question, why have particular movements and movement organizations succeeded to the degree they have, and why have they failed to accomplish more?

No assumptions are made regarding students' familiarity with U.S. history, social movements, or social movement theory. I do, however, assume a willingness to work hard to understand the histories of various social movements and the complexity of competing theoretical approaches.

Grading:

Gaventa/Piven and Cloward paper 1/3
Paper #2 1/3
Class attendance, periodic assignments, and contributions to class discussions 1/3

Students are required to read all assigned readings on time, and to come to class prepared to discuss them. All assigned readings must be read carefully and analytically before the class listed below for discussion. Students are required to come to class with a written question or statement regarding that day's reading. I may sometimes ask students to hand these in. Students may miss three classes without explanation. After that, students must bring a typed statement explaining their absence. (Verbal notification, on the phone or in person, is not sufficient.) Make a serious effort to get to class on time. If you have a good reason for being late, convey it to me after class.

Students will discover that this course material is controversial, and open to differing interpretations. Students are encouraged to think critically about the material, and to subject the material to rigorous interrogation in class and in their written statements. Students who make efforts to support arguments with outside materials and perspectives will be rewarded.

It may well be necessary, from time to time, to rearrange assignments or alter the schedule. Any changes in scheduling will be announced in class. When you miss class, it is your responsibility to contact either the professor or another student to see what has been missed - and then to work hard to make it up by the next class.

READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Part I: Why are Social Movements so Difficult to Form: the Powers of Prevention

Gaventa, Preface and pp. 1-44 for September 7

Reread Gaventa, pp. 1-44 for September 12

Gaventa, pp. 47-83 for September 14 (Give special attention to the conceptual issues raised pp. 47-53, 61-76, 80-83)

Gaventa, pp. 84-121 for September 19 (Give special attention to the conceptual issues raised on pp. 84-96, 109-116.)

Gaventa, pp. 125-201 for September 21 (Give special attention to the conceptual issues raised on 141-145, 161-169, 192-195, 199-201.)

Gaventa, pp. 205-261 for September 26

Part II: Four Case Studies and a Theory

Piven and Cloward, pp. ix-37 for September 28

Piven and Cloward, pp. 41-92 for October 3

Piven and Cloward, pp. 96-131 for October 5

Piven and Cloward, pp. 131-180 for October 10

Piven and Cloward, pp. 181-211 for October 12

Piven and Cloward, pp. 211-258 for October 17

Professor is out of town on October 19

Piven and Cloward, pp. 264-301 for October 24

Piven and Cloward, pp. 301-359 for October 26

Paper Writing Workshop on October 31 no reading
bring written outlines or drafts and come prepared for discussion

Paper #1 due November 2 no reading

November 7th is national voting day. Do it.

Part III: Modern Day Women's Movement Contrasted with the Contemporary Religious Right

In the third and final section of the class, we will read a recent history of second wave feminism and watch a PBS series on the religious right. We will study each movement on its own, and we will also undertake comparative observations of what are two of the most important living social movements.

With God on Our Side, Video, Part 1 on November 9

Rosen, Part 1, November 14

With God on Our Side, Video, Part 2 on November 16

Rosen, Part 2, on November 21

With God on Our Side, Video, Part 3 on November 28

With God on Our Side, Video, Part 4 on November 30

Rosen, Part 3, on December 5

With God on Our Side, Video, Part 5 on December 7

With God on Our Side, Video, Part 5 on December 12

Rosen, Part 4, on December 14

Paper #2 due December 19 (my office, by 5:00pm)

Politics of Social Movements
Gaventa/Piven and Cloward Paper

Begin your essay with an introductory section that outlines the way in which you have approached the assignment. You are required to make an argument in your paper. Begin by informing the reader of your conclusions and how you have supported your claims in the paper. Then

FIRST, restate Gaventa's theoretical model (be sure to define the first, second, and third dimensions of power, why Gaventa's model is interactive, and the accumulation of both power and powerlessness). Then summarize, briefly, the way in which he tested the model in an Appalachian Valley. From your perspective, what are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach?

SECOND, restate Piven and Cloward's theoretical model. Then summarize, briefly, the way in which they tested the model. From your perspective, what are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach?

The summaries should address theory, methodology, and empirical findings. Neither summary need be more than a couple of pages long.

THIRD, take one of the three positions listed below and defend it:

- a. I find one of the two approaches (Gaventa or P&C) to be more useful and/or persuasive for understanding the politics of lower income Americans. (You could argue this from a number of perspectives, including political historian and/or political actor.)
- b. I find neither of the frameworks to be particularly useful or persuasive (or if you prefer, adequate) for understanding the politics of collective action by low income Americans.
- c. I find that both volumes make important, if different, contributions to our knowledge of American history and politics.

If you do not like this framework, you have the option of presenting to me an alternative assignment. Any paper that veers from the above, however, must be approved by the professor in advance.

Writing the Essay:

There is no absolute minimum length requirement for this essay. It seems unlikely, however, that it would be possible to write an essay of quality in less than seven or eight pages. The paper should not go much over ten pages. I will stop reading at the end of page twelve. (I mean it!) All essays must be typed, and double-spaced. I do not like papers that use a small font, tiny margins, or 1.5 spacing. All pages must be numbered, and all papers must be stapled together. Do not bother with fancy covers.

Remember to make an argument. For example, a paper that does a good job of analyzing how the empirical findings support - or fail to persuasively support - the theoretical claims laid out in the first chapters of both books, is a stronger paper than one that relies more on description (i.e., first the author did this, then she did that, and she concluded with the following arguments). Be careful not to make unsubstantiated assertions. All claims need to be supported, through some combination of reasoning and evidence. This is as true for laudatory comments as it is for critical ones.

Your essay will be graded both in terms of the quality of the ideas presented and in terms of how well the essay is written. Because both form and content matter, be sure to edit your essay carefully. Students are welcome to discuss ideas or paper writing strategies with me during office hours or by appointment. I encourage you to read each other's drafts, helping with both style and content. You are welcome to cite outside readings. If you do so, provide bibliographic references.