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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 2002
Meets: TR
Office hours in LA 355: TR 2:10 - 3:30 (and by appointment)

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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 seminar 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. I also assume a willingness on the part of students to participate in seminar discussions.

Grading:

Gaventa/Piven and Cloward paper 1/3
Presentation 1/3
Class attendance, homework 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 scrutiny in class and in their written statements. I look favorably on efforts by students who make efforts to support arguments with outside materials and perspectives.

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 5

Reread Gaventa, pp. 1-44 for September 10

Gaventa, pp. 47-83 for September 12 (Give special attention to the conceptual issues raised pp. 47-53, 61-76, 80-83)

Gaventa, pp. 84-121 for September 17 (Give special attention to the conceptual issues raised on pp. 84-96, 109-116.)

Gaventa, pp. 125-201 for September 19 (Give special attention to the conceptual issues raised on 141-145, 161-169, 192-195, 199-201.)

Gaventa, pp. 205-261 for September 24

Part II: Four Case Studies and a Theory

Piven and Cloward, pp. ix-37 for September 26

Piven and Cloward, pp. 41-92 for October 1

Piven and Cloward, pp. 96-131 for October 3

Piven and Cloward, pp. 131-180 for October 8

Piven and Cloward, pp. 181-211 for October 10

Piven and Cloward, pp. 211-258 for October 15

Piven and Cloward, pp. 264-301 for October 17

Piven and Cloward, pp. 301-359 for October 22

Paper Writing Workshop on October 24 Bring written outlines or drafts and come prepared for discussion.

Paper #1 due October 29

Part III: Second Wave Feminist Movement

Rosen, Preface and Chapters 1 and 2 for October 31

Rosen, Chapters 3 and 4 for November 7

Rosen, Chapters 5 and 6 for November 12

Rosen, Chapters 7 and 8 for November 14

Rosen, Chapter 9 and Epilogue for November 19

Part IV: Presentations

Students will conduct research on a past or present social movement of their choice and present their findings to the class. The presentations and discussions will take approximately half a class period. Students may require the class to read in preparation to class discussion. Research can combine field work and library/document research. Presentations should draw connections between history and theory as in the case of the written paper described below.

November 21

November 26

December 3

December 5

December 10

December 13

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.

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 me with an alternative assignment. Any paper that veers from the above, however, must be approved by me 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. Do not 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.

Social Movements Defined

Social movements can be, and have been, defined in a variety of ways. One of the most crucial distinctions made by many analysts is between movement and interest group. Here are two definitions for your consideration. I would encourage you throughout the class to look for other definitions and/or to develop one of your own.

The defining characteristic of social movements is that they always disrupt. Social movements attempt to disrupt not only public policy, but also the way in which that policy is made. What differentiates social movements from public interest lobbies (Common Cause) or formal interest groups (Sierra Club) is not the "radicalness" of their demands but rather their ability and willingness to utilize noninstitutional forms of political participation. Social movements, by definition, are excluded groups who question the legitimacy of existing decision-making processes and demand that civil society and its representatives (the social movements) be given a greater voice. They often not only want a greater voice within the present system, but insist that the system change fundamentally. By so doing, they threaten existing norms and myths of who makes policy and the hierarchy of that participation. The more prominent the state is in affecting the quality of life, the more likely that it will be the primary focus of critique and confrontation. While private sector representatives (slumlords, polluting factories) may be the target of specific movement actions, the focus of most contemporary social movements in most countries is to reform or revolutionize the state so that it better promotes and defends social movement interests in the dispute (housing policy, environmental regulation). -Paul Haber

"A social movement differs from an interest group in that its members knowingly pursue goals whose benefits are not limited exclusively to those same members. In other words, social movements, as opposed to interest groups, pursue some form of public good. In general terms, the aim of a social movement is to transform society in some way on the basis of the value commitments and ideals of its members, but in a way that also would transform the ideals and commitments of everyone in that society" (Oxhorn 1995:20).