SOC485H1F – Logics of Collective Action

From Revolution to Infrapolitics
Fall 2025
Schedule: Fridays, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm
Location: See ACORN

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Office hours**:** By appointment

Please take the time to regularly consult the page of this course on Quercus, to be aware of the announcements, clarifications and potential updates on this syllabus. Beyond that, communication in-class and by other means will be delivered consistently to ensure that everyone has the needed information.

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Toronto is located on Indigenous land. For thousands of years this land has been the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca and, most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. The region is protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum, which is an agreement to share and protect the land and its resources. The colonization of Canada by European settlers was marked by deeply harmful practices toward Indigenous communities. These included the violation of treaties, the forced removal and enrollment of Indigenous children in residential schools, the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG), the coerced sterilization of Indigenous women, and the systemic marginalization of Indigenous peoples. Across Turtle Island many Indigenous peoples work toward decolonization by resisting colonial practices and building international solidarity with all colonized peoples globally. I encourage you to learn more about the past movements and initiatives and contribute positively in their present and future struggles.

Course Description

Collective action is a fundamental component of contemporary social and political dynamics. Whether formal or informal, it often serves as a powerful catalyst for social and political transformation. This course explores the diverse strategies employed by various social groups to advance their agendas, ideals, rights, and interests. While the primary focus is on social movements, we will also examine the roles played other stakeholders such as political parties, trade unions, social media, marginalized communities, etc.

In this seminar, several editorial choices have been made that warrant explanation. First, the seminar does not attempt to cover all existing approaches in social movement studies, political science, and sociology regarding collective action. Instead, we have chosen to focus on recent, innovative approaches that are often underrepresented due to their non-dominant status and that

draw on concepts from other disciplines. Second, given the diversity of collective actors, generalization is challenging, if not impossible. As a result, the selected readings emphasize partial analyses, focusing on specific aspects of collective action and placing significant emphasis on empirical analysis.

Prerequisities

The prerequisites to take SOC485H1F, is completion of 1.0 SOC credits at the 300-level. Students without this requirement will be removed at any time discovered, and without notice.

Learning Objectives

The primary goal of this course is to equip students with the theoretical and analytical tools necessary for a deeper understanding of how collective action functions. Students will be encouraged to critically examine the theoretical notions commonly used in social movement studies (such as interests, identities, commitment, trajectory, mobilization, democracy, and representation) and to assess their relevance for understanding collective mobilization phenomena. Collaborative work (discussions and debates during sessions) will help clarify academic vocabulary and foster connections between various concepts.

The seminar is structured around four specific objectives:

- **Understanding Complexity:** To grasp the complexity of the phenomena studied by considering collective action as an ongoing social construct rather than a fixed entity.
- **Acknowledging Diversity:** To consider the multiplicity of empirical situations in which collective action occurs.
- **Engaging with Reality:** To engage with the concrete realities of collective action by exploring how it is constructed through fieldwork exercises and informational capsules, complementing the abstract knowledge gained from readings.
- **Critical Analysis:** To develop skills in critically reading and discussing scientific texts, as well as making connections between multiple texts.

Assignments and Evaluation Criteria

Type	Due Date	Percentage
In class participation	Each week	16%
One Information Capsule	Week of your choice	4%
Reading Grid	Week of your choice	10%
Proposal	September 29	10%
Annotated Bibliography	October 13	10%
Interview Transcription	November 17	5%
Poster	November 28	15%

Final Paper	December 1	30%

Assignments Related to Readings (Total: 30%)

In-class participation (16%) [every class] Individual

Participating actively in class activities is the most efficient way to learn the course content. Students are expected to read all the readings before class and participate in discussions and activities, which will occupy a significant portion of each session.

Your participation will be assessed based on both your attendance and your contribution to class activities. However, you can also post your comments and questions about the reading before the start of the session in the weekly discussion available on Quercus. The grade is divided into two components:

- 6 points, simply reward **attendance** in the 12 different sessions of the course;
- 10 points will be awarded according to **class participation** in person and on Quercus for the weeks 2 to 11.

All students benefit from **one** unjustified absence ticket that they can use without consequences on the final grade. An absence declaration is required to justify all other absences. Unjustified absence from any other session results in the loss of 0.5 points related to attendance and 1 point related to participation. It is not possible to participate in the week discussion on Quercus for an absent student. If you require any special accommodations for class participation, please notify me by email as soon as possible.

Information Capsule *(4%) [Week of your choice]* ***Individual***

To bridge theory and practice, students will present in-class a 3-minute "information capsule" on a current topic. Each student must prepare one capsule during the session of their choice. At the start of the session you've selected, you will present a recent world, Canadian, or local event that connects in some way to the content of the previous session. Your goal is to link this news item to the readings and discussions from the previous week, and to reflect on how our collective work helps you interpret or understand it differently.

Reading Grid *(10%) [Week of your choice]* ***Individual***

Weekly readings are essential for preparing each session (please refer to the detailed bibliography). To support discussion and engagement, we will use tools such as reading grids and conceptual maps. A **reading grid** is a document that summarizes the key elements of a reading.

Each student will be required to submit **one reading grid during the semester**, for the session of their choice. The reading grid must be submitted **at least 30 minutes before the start of the selected session**.

Additional guidance on how to prepare a reading grid will be provided during Week 2 of the course.

READING TEXTS IS MANDATORY

Assignments Related to the Fieldwork project (Total: 70%)

The assignments in this section follow a scaffolded approach, where each task builds upon the previous one to prepare you for the final submission.

In this seminar, you must choose one of the following practical assignments:

1. **Conduct field research on a collective action.**
   This team-based research project involves the following steps:
   - **Form your team** by selecting your collaborators.
   - **Choose a topic** and define a preliminary research question.
   - **Identify the data you need**, where to find it, and how to collect it (methods).
   - **Locate relevant references** and annotate a selection of them.
   - **Carry out data collection** and begin your analysis.
   - **Create a scientific poster** that presents the current stage of your research.
   - **Print and present the poster** to the class.
   - **Use feedback** from the presentation to refine your analysis and continue writing your final research paper ; OR
2. **Plan a collective action you would like to undertake in the future.**
   This team-based project involves several key steps:
   - **Form your team** by choosing your collaborators.
   - **Identify a problem** that requires collective action.
   - **Outline the steps** needed to build an effective and impactful initiative.
   - **Determine the data you need**, where to find it, and how to collect it (methods).
   - **Locate relevant references** and annotate a selection of them.
   - **Conduct data collection** and begin your analysis.
   - **Create a scientific poster** that presents the current stage of your project.
   - **Print and present the poster** to the class.
   - **Use feedback** from the presentation to refine your analysis and continue writing your final research paper.

The choice of topic will depend on your interests and the feasibility of the project. This project should be done in pairs.

The goal of the research project is to offer students the opportunity to study a specific movement of interests while exploring the perspectives of the actors (potentially) involved in it. This helps them to make the theoretical lessons learned in class concrete. It also helps students escape from several widespread reductive visions, particularly those conveyed by the

media, on these social movements. In addition, the assignment reinforces qualitative research skills developed in other courses by giving students the opportunity to apply and refine their ability to design, conduct, and analyze collective data.

We will dedicate part of the third session to help you choose the option that best suits you and guide you in your decision.

Proposal *(10%) (Due: September 29)* ***Teamwork***

Submit a 500 words document outlining the format you chosen for your project, the topic you wish to explore and the specific problem you wish to resolve in your fieldwork, supported by a well-reasoned argument. We want to understand why is it personally meaningful to you, why it holds relevance for others, and how your work can make a thoughtful contribution to it. This proposal should also include an estimate of the data you will need and a description of the fieldwork you plan to conduct to gather it.
Evaluation Criteria: Clarity of the topic description and the relevance of the argumentation justifying the choice.

Annotated Bibliography *(10%) (Due: October 13)* ***Teamwork***

Submit an annotated bibliography of eight relevant scientific references that address your topic. Each annotation should be two paragraphs. The first paragraph will be a summary of the article. In the second paragraph explain why the article is relevant to your research topic. You should present a list of additional 15 references (at least, 10 academic ones) that you will consult and use to analyse the data and prepare your final paper. Proper citation is required for all references.
Evaluation Criteria: Relevance of the chosen texts, quality of the analysis.

Interview Transcription *(5%) (Due: November 17)* ***Individual***

During your research, **each team member** must conduct **two interviews** with participants whose profiles are relevant to your project (each team must therefore conduct four interviews in total). You must choose **one interview** and transcribe it in full. The transcription should be preceded by a description of the interview conditions and relevant metadata to help contextualize its content (date, length, characteristics of the interviewee, location of the interview, and how the person was recruited). The transcription must be submitted **along with the corresponding audio file**.

Poster Presentation *(15%) (Due: November 28)* ***Teamwork***

Present an almost-final version of your fieldwork in the form of a **printed scientific poster**. The goal is to communicate your research progress to the class in an engaging and accessible way, receiving feedback from peers and me to refine your final paper.
Evaluation Criteria: Quality of the poster and its presentation, including the ability to clearly explain the fieldwork content and communicate it effectively to a non-expert audience. Note that a small budget should be allocated for printing your poster.

Final Paper *(30%) (Due: December 1)* ***Teamwork***

The final assignment is a paper based on your fieldwork and should follow one of the formats outlined below. The structure of the paper will depend on the nature of your project:

- **Traditional Research Project**
  This format involves conducting field investigations. The paper should be between **4,500 and 5,500 words** and must include: a clear problem statement; a literature

review; a presentation of the methods and data; and an analysis of the data that integrates theoretical concepts from the course and the literature. Practical tools will be provided to support your work.
Evaluation emphasis: the quality of the data and the depth of its analysis using relevant theoretical frameworks.

- **Planning a Collective Action**
  This format involves designing a future collective initiative. The paper should be between **4,500 and 5,500 words** and must include: a presentation of the problem (what is going wrong?); a description of the proposed action; a justification of the action (why do you believe it is a realistic and effective solution?); a literature review of similar initiatives; a discussion of methods and data; a detailed outline of the steps required for successful implementation; potential challenges and strategies to overcome them. Theoretical concepts covered in class should be applied throughout.
  Evaluation emphasis: the quality of the problem diagnosis, the precision and feasibility of the action plan, and the coherence between the proposed solution, the identified problem, and the supporting data.

General Evaluation Criteria:
Adherence to the required format, relevance and originality of the topic, and meaningful connections to course themes and discussions.

In addition to the final paper, **each team must submit the transcripts and audio files of all four interviews.** If, at the time of submission, one team member has not completed their share of interviews (i.e., two interviews), their teammate will not be penalized directly, but the overall quality of the analysis may be affected due to the reduced data. The student who fails to complete their interviews will have **8 points deducted from their final grade for each missing interview**. No interviews will be accepted after submission of the final paper.

A dedicated session will address methodological issues, including a **workshop on conducting qualitative interviews**. Further details about the expectations for the final paper will be provided during that session.

Course Policies

Deadlines

The assignments are due online **via Quercus by 17:59 (11:59 p.m. EST)** for the stated date.

Missed tests and assignments

Students who miss a paper deadline or a test will receive a mark of zero for that paper or test unless the reason is a circumstance beyond their control. **Within three days** of missing a paper deadline or test, students must send the instructor a request for consideration. Students must document their request with **one of the following:**

- Absence declaration via ACORN (can only be used once during the semester)
- U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form
- College Registrar's letter (e.g., in case of personal/family crisis or emergency)
- Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services

Students who miss the test or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

Accessibility

If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility as soon as possible. Please inform me of the situation as soon as possible so that I can arrange the necessary accommodations in time.

Email policy

Please use your utoronto email when corresponding. Your emails will receive an answer within two working days. My general advice is to keep email exchanges short and to the point. Keep exchanges that require more in-depth discussion (if you need help with course material) to office hours.

Use always your University of Toronto email and please, add the course code in the title.

Generative Artificial Intelligence

Students are encouraged to make use of technology, including generative artificial intelligence tools, to contribute to their understanding of course materials. Students may use artificial intelligence tools, including generative AI, to enhance their learning or assist with assignments in this course, **except** for the **annotated bibliography** and the **final paper**. In all cases, please be aware that you are responsible for the work submitted.

If you decide to use artificial intelligence tools, know that you must properly cite it in the appendix. This documentation should include the appellations of the used tools, how you used them (ex. what questions you asked) and in what form they were incorporated in you work (ex. copying identical paragraphs or sentences, paraphrased paragraphs or sentences, etc.).

To cite properly content created by artificial intelligence, you can consult resources provided by the library of the University of Toronto (https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/c.php?g=251103&p=5296636) or those published by many other institutions, available online.

Course Schedule and Assignments

Week 1 – September 5 - Introduction

Week 2 – September 12 – Fighting for the climate: communality and contradictions
In-class activity: choose your teammate

Week 3 – September 19 – Foundations Revisited: Early Approaches and Their Legacy
In-class activity: choose the type of project and start thinking of the topic

Week 4 – September 26 – Methods: how to study collective action?
In-class activity: choose the topic and the movement (or the action) to study (to organize)

Week 5 – October 3 – Commitment to racist activism

In-class activity: prepare your research methods

Week 6 – October 10 – Bringing Capitalism Back into Social Movement Analysis
In-class activity: conduct a qualitative interview

Week 7 – October 17 – Revolutions and protests in Times of Crisis
In-class activity: research ethics and reflexivity

Week 8 – October 24 – Edge Cases: Resistance, Disguised, Individualized Collective Actions
READING WEEK (October 27- October 31)

Week 9 – November 7 – Outcomes of collective action
In-class activity: 3-minutes presentation on the current progress of your team's project

Week 10 – November 14 – Biographical consequences of activism
In-class activity: work on your poster

Week 11 – November 21 – Collective action in colonial settings

Week 12 – November 28 – Mini-Colloquium
Assignment: Presentation of students' scientific posters

Bibliography

Week 2 – September 12 – Fighting for the climate: communality and contradictions

- Staggenborg, S. (2022). « Studying a movement up close: grassroots environmentalism», *Mobilization*, vol.27, 2: 1-12.
- Claeys, P., & Delgado Pugley, D. (2017). Peasant and indigenous transnational social movements engaging with climate justice. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, *38*(3), 325–340. https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2016.1235018
- Ikporukpo, C. (2022). Climate Justice: Whose Justice?. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, *9*(4), 113–148. https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.94.12051

Week 3 – September 19 – Foundations Revisited: Early Approaches and Their Legacy

- McAdam, D., Tarrow, S. (2021). Strands of Classical Theory in the Study of Social Movements. In: Abrutyn, S., Lizardo, O. (eds) Handbook of Classical Sociological Theory. Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research. Springer, Cham. https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1007/978-3-030-78205-4_21
- David Snow, Robert Benford, Holly McCammon, Lyndi Hewitt, Scott Fitzgerald; The Emergence, Development, and Future of the Framing Perspective: 25+ Years Since "Frame Alignment". *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 1 February 2014; 19 (1): 23–46. https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.17813/maiq.19.1.x74278226830m69l
- Armstrong, Elizabeth and Mary Bernstein. 2008. « Culture, Power and Institutions; A Multi-Institutional Politics Approach to Social Movements», *Sociological Theory*, 26, 1: 74-99.

Week 4 – September 26 – Methods: how to study collective action?

- Geoffrey Pleyers. 2024. « For a global sociology of social movements. Beyond methodological globalism and extractivism», *Globalizations* 21 (1): 183-195.

- Balsiger, Philip, and Alexandre Lambelet, 'Participant Observation', in Donatella della Porta (ed.), *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research* (Oxford, 2014; online edn, Oxford Academic, 23 Oct. 2014), https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198719571.003.0007
- Donatella della Porta, 'In-Depth Interviews', in Donatella della Porta (ed.), *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research* (Oxford, 2014; online edn, Oxford Academic, 23 Oct. 2014), https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198719571.003.0010

Week 5 – October 3 –Commitment to Far right activism

- Asahina, Y. (2019). Becoming right-wing citizens in contemporary Japan. *Contemporary Japan*, *31*(2), 122–140. https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1080/18692729.2019.1655618
- Malaena J. Taylor and Mary Bernstein. 2019. «Denial, Deflection, and Distraction: Neutralizing Charges of Racism by the Tea Party Movement», *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 24(20): 137-156.
- McCristall, P., Hofmann, D.C., Perry, S. (2022). The Nexus of Right-Wing Extremism and the Canadian Armed Forces. In: Perry, B., Gruenewald, J., Scrivens, R. (eds) Right-Wing Extremism in Canada and the United States . Palgrave Hate Studies. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1007/978-3-030-99804-2_16

Optional reading:

- Blee, Kathleen and Annette Linden. 2012. "Women in Extremist Right Parties and Movements: A Comparison of the Netherlands and the U.S." Pp. 98–114 in *Women of the Right: Comparisons and Interplay across Borders*, edited by Kathleen Blee and Sandra Deutsch. University Park: Penn State University Press,

Week 6 – October 10 – Bringing Capitalism Back into Social Movement Analysis

- Gabriel Hetland et Jeff Goodwin et. 2012. «The Strange Disappearance of Capitalism from Social Movement Studies», in *Marxism and Social Movements*, edited by Colin Barker, Laurence Cox, John Krinsky, and Alf Gunvald Nilsen, Boston: Brill, pp. 83-102.
- Donatella della Porta. 2017. «Political Economy and Social Movement Studies: The Class-Basis of Anti-Austerity Protest», *Anthropological Theory*, 17(4): 453-473.
- Loris Caruso et Lorenzo Cini. 2020. «Rethinking the Link Between Structure and Collective Action. Capitalism, Politics, and the Theory of Social Movements», *Critical Sociology*: 1-19.

Week 7 – October 17 – Revolutions and protests in Times of Crisis

- Goodwin, J. 2003. State-centered approaches to social revolutions: Strengths and limitations of a theoretical tradition. In *Theorizing Revolutions* (pp. 9-35). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203206638

- Hanspeter Kriesi. 2020. «Overall Trends of Protest in the Great Recession», in *Contention in Times of Crisis. Recession and Political Protest in Thirty European Countries*, edited by Hanspeter Kriesi, Jasmine Lorenzini, Bruno Wüest, and Silja Hausermann, pp.77-103.
- El Chazli, Youssef. 2018. "It takes two (or more) to tango." *Microfoundations of the Arab uprisings: Mapping interactions between regimes and protesters,* pp.135-158.

Week 8 – October 24 – Edge Cases: Resistance, Disguised, Individualized Collective Actions

- James C. Scott. 1990. « The Infrapolitics of Subordinate Groups», in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, Yale: Yale University Press, Chapter 7, pp. 183-201.
- Fu, D. 2017. Disguised Collective Action in China. *Comparative Political Studies*, *50*(4), 499-527. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414015626437
- Latte Abdallah, S. 2022. The Resistance Economy: A Holistic Engagement Against the Occupation in Palestine?. In: Barozet, E., Sainsaulieu, I., Cortesero, R., Mélo, D. (eds) Where Has Social Justice Gone?. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-93123-0_19

READING WEEK (October 28- November 1)

Week 9 – November 7 –Outcomes of collective action

- Useem, B. and Goldstone, J.A., 2022. The paradox of victory: social movement fields, adverse outcomes, and social movement success. *Theory and Society*, *51*(1), pp.31-60
- Ayoub, P.M., Page, D. and Whitt, S., 2024. Theorizing Potential Downstream Cultural Consequences of LGBT+ Activism. *Social Forces*, *102*(3), pp.1180-1199
- Kunz, L. N. (2025). Strategic and prefigurative deliberation in Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement. *Social Movement Studies*, 1–19. https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1080/14742837.2025.2461502

Optional reading:

- Amenta, E., Andrews, K.T. and Caren, N., 2018. The political institutions, processes, and outcomes movements seek to influence. *The Wiley Blackwell companion to social movements*, pp.447-465
- Lee, C. K., & Zhang, Y. (2013). The power of instability: Unraveling the microfoundations of bargained authoritarianism in China. *American journal of sociology*, *118*(6), 1475-1508.

Week 10 – November 14 – Biographical consequences of activism

- Doug McAdam. 1989. "The Biographical Consequences of Activism." *American Sociological Review*, vol. 54, no. 5, pp. 744–60. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/2117751

- Kathleen M. Blee. 2016. Personal effects from far-right activism. In: Bosi L, Giugni M, Uba K, eds. *The Consequences of Social Movements*. Cambridge University Press, pp.66-84
- Lorenzo Bosi. 2019. Contextualizing the Biographical Outcomes of Provisional IRA Former Activists: A Structure-Agency Dynamic. In: Fillieule O, ed. *Activists Forever?: Long-Term Impacts of Political Activism*. Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics. Cambridge University Press pp. 202-220.

Week 11 – November 21 –Collective action in colonial settings

- In-class Movie: Invasion, by Michael Toledano, Sam Vinal & Franklin López
- Pauline Wakeham. "Reconciling 'Terror': Managing Indigenous Resistance in the Age of Apology." *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1–33.
- Desai, C. (2021). Disrupting Settler-Colonial Capitalism: Indigenous Intifadas and Resurgent Solidarity from Turtle Island to Palestine. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, *50*(2), 43–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/0377919X.2021.1909376

Week 12 – November 28 – Research Symposium

Presentation of students' scientific posters

Marcos Ancelovici. 2021. «Conceptualizing the Context of Collective Action: Field, Arena, and Space», *Social Movement Studies*, 20 (2): 155-173.

Soule, Sarah A., and Conny Roggeband. "Diffusion Processes within and across Movements." *The Wiley Blackwell companion to social movements* (2018): 236-251. https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1002/9781119168577.ch13

Optional readings:

Deeb, L., & Winegar, J. (2024). Resistance to Repression and Back Again: The Movement for Palestinian Liberation in US Academia. *Middle East Critique*, 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2024.2375669

Jehad Abusalim; The Great March of Return: An Organizer's Perspective. *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1 August 2018; 47 (4): 90–100. doi: https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2018.47.4.90

Alashqar, Y. (2018). The politics of social structures in the Palestinian case: From national resistance to depoliticization and liberalization. *Social Sciences*, *7*(4), 69