

**SOC\*6520 Social Movements and Collective Action**  
**Fall Semester 2021**  
**University of Guelph, Department of Sociology and Anthropology**

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**Dr. L. Kowalchuk**

**Class Location: MacKinnon 034a**

**Class Time: Tuesday 2:30 to 5:20 pm**

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**Office: MacKinnon 645**

**Office Hours: by appointment via Zoom or MS-Teams**

**Course Content and Objectives**

A social movement is “a loose collectivity acting with some degree of organization, temporal continuity, and reliance on noninstitutional forms of action to promote or resist change in the group, society, or world order of which it is a part.”<sup>1</sup> Movements are major vehicles of social change throughout the world. Even when they dissolve without attaining their initial objectives, social movements still have an impact on the participants, their communities and societies. Stories about one or another type of social movement are ubiquitous in print, broadcast, and internet-based news media, and most people have taken part in, observed, or read about some form of collective action aimed at social, political, economic or other kind of change. Given that movements are so prevalent and have been the drivers of much social transformation, why do most people understand so little about them, starting with the very term itself? This seminar course addresses this deficit in understanding and analysis.

A few examples of questions about social movements that we will take up include: What explains the timing and location of particular movements’ emergence? What impacts do movements have on societal attitudes and values? on state policy? How are movements affected by repression by states and other powerful actors? What is the role of movement participants’ shared identities, resources, ideology, and social networks in stimulating the formation of movements? How do emotions and passions propel or demotivate participation? What goes into activist strategizing? Scholars of movements have developed theories, and entire theoretical perspectives, as tools for answering those questions. One main objective of the course is to advance students’ understandings of various theoretical perspectives on social movements, and your ability to assess their strengths and shortcomings.

The course readings and seminars will focus on movements pursuing several different types of demands. These include movements that are carried out by, or on behalf of, sectors of society that have been marginalized or oppressed, such as indigenous people, migrant workers, the homeless and unemployed, women, Central American *campesinos*, and African Americans. We also look at movements that respond to broad threats to societal and human welfare, such as movements to halt climate chaos. While

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<sup>1</sup> McAdam, Doug and David A. Snow. 2010. *Readings on Social Movements: Origins, Dynamics, and Outcomes*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 1.

the course focus is international, Canada and the US will feature somewhat more prominently in the assigned weekly readings.

**Format of delivery**

The weekly seminar will be held in person on campus.

**Required Readings**

- A set of articles and book chapters available online through ARES or directly through the library’s electronic holdings
- Jones, Martha S. 2020. *Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All*. New York: Basic Books. Available as an e-book.

**Evaluation Scheme**

Seminar participation	(20%)
Bi-weekly written responses to readings	(15%)
Class presentation on a set of weekly readings	(10%)
Research paper proposal	(10%)
Presentation on research in progress	(10%)
<u>Research paper</u>	<u>(35%)</u>
Total	100