STPEC 291SJ
Making Change: An Introduction to Social Justice and Activism

Wednesdays, 6:00 – 8:30
Location: Machmer Hall, Room W – 11
Student Facilitators: Jishava Patel, Alli Langley
Instructor of Record: Sigrid Schmalzer
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Course Description:
This class is designed to serve as an introduction to social movements and political histories. Through a combination of theory, historical examples, and practice students will consider questions such as: What does activism look like? What about social movements? Who engages in activism and why? What do different models for organizing look like? How do they differ? Why? We will learn about a variety of histories through readings and regular guest lecturers—including activists, organizers, and academics—and will use these histories in conjunction with own experiences to consider various elements of activism and organizing. In the tradition of popular education, this course is discussion-based and will be facilitated by two student facilitators. This class is a collaborative effort between the American Friends Service Committee, the Center for Education Policy and Advocacy, the Social Thought and Political Economy program, and the UMass Alliance for Community Transformation (an organization within the Department of Anthropology).

Course Assignments:
- Readings: You will be assigned weekly readings. You are expected to complete the readings on time and in depth. On occasion, we will ask you to do in-class work related to the readings that we will then collect, including free writes and discussion questions.
- Real-World Experience: There is only so much you can learn about organizing in a class room. So, throughout the course of the semester, we will ask you to attend at least six meetings of an organization on campus or in the community. Your midterm and final project are both dependent on this experience, so it is essential that you begin attending meetings as soon as you can. A list of student and community organizations you can get involved with will be provided in the first class.
  - Midterm: The midterm will be a brief profile (3 – 5 pages) of the organization you've become involved with in the past semester. A more detailed prompt will be handed out in class.
    Due: October 15th
  - Final: The final will be a 5 – 7 page analysis of the organization you've become involved with and reflection of your own experience. A more detailed prompt will be handed out in class.
    Due: December 3rd

Your work will be evaluated on a pass/fail basis by the facilitators and the instructor of record.
Course Structure:
This is a peer-facilitated course that is based on the ideas and methodologies of critical, engaged pedagogy. Basically, that's a fancy way of saying that we hope this class will become a space where, through dialogue with your peers, you will be able to explore new ideas and think seriously and critically about your life and the world around you.

Both Jishava and Alli have been trained in facilitation by the UMass Alliance for Community Transformation (UACT), and we will continue to learn and get support from UACT throughout the semester. We are working very hard to make this class a possibility, and to create a mutually-accountable and critical educational community. But that won't be possible without you! Just like you, we are still learning—so this process will require patience, risk-taking, curiosity, and good faith on your part. We appreciate your patience, and will be asking for your thoughts and feedback throughout the course; we hope this experience—of being engaged with your learning and education—will be as instructive and enlightening for you as it will be for us!

Attendance Policy:
Because we are hoping to create an alternative and engaged educational space, the success of this course is dependent on your full and active participation. Class participation, and therefore class attendance, is mandatory. However, we aren't interested in policing your class attendance; we assume that if you aren't here, you have a good reason for it. You can miss one class, no questions asked; if you miss any other classes, you must write a three page paper on the readings assigned. If you miss four or more classes, you will fail the class.

LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE
Class One, September 3rd –
What brought us to this class? What are we hoping to learn and discover? To answer these questions, we'll begin considering what resistance is and the many different forms social movements and activism can take, both historically and in our own lives.

Readings for next week:
“Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection” - Patricia Hill Collins
Prologue and p. 1 – 19 of “A Brief History of Neoliberalism” - David Harvey

UNIT ONE: The Logic of Capitalism
Class Two, September 10th – GUEST LECTURE: Prof. Vijay Prashad, "Letter to a Wound: The World We Live in Today"

Readings for next week:
“Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing” - Andrea Smith
“Coalition Politics: Turning the Century” - Bernice Johnson Reagon

Class Three, September 17th –
This week we will consider how global capitalism works, paying particular attention to the structures through which it operates. In other words, this class will be a crash course in race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. In addition to considering the role of these society-wide oppressions, we will
consider how they impact our own lives and how we will navigate these dynamics in the classroom.

Readings for next week:
Chapter One, “Coming of Age: The Shock of the Shops and the Dawning of Political Consciousness” from Common Sense and a Little Fire, p. 31 - 52

UNIT TWO: Labor and Trade Unionism
Class Four, September 24th –
In this unit, we will learn about labor organizing in the early 20th century, with a particular focus on the International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and the young immigrant women who were instrumental in its success. We will use this history to begin thinking about how and why people get engaged in activism and resistance, the different ideologies that structure forms of activism, and how we choose what form of organizing to engage in.

Readings for next week:

Class Five, October 1st – GUEST LECTURE: Caitlin DuBois, organizer with UNITE HERE, and Prof. Bruce Laurie

Readings for next week:
Prologue, Chapter Two from At the Dark End of the Street, Danielle L. McGuire
“Black Power Address at UC Berkely,” Kwame Ture (given name Stokely Carmichael)

UNIT THREE: The Civil Rights Movement
Class Six, October 8th –
In the next two weeks, we will challenge traditional narratives of the Civil Rights Movement, moving beyond reductive ideas of “single-issue” movements. In particular, we will consider the often ignored role of Black women in the Civil Rights movement and the intersection of gender and race that shaped their participation in the movement and how they have—and haven't—been canonized in main stream history. Additionally, we will use these histories to begin thinking about the role, responsibility, and experience of individuals in organizing and how our different identities impact how we can participate and be present in movements.

Readings for next week:
TBA

Class Seven, October 15th – GUEST LECTURE: Adele Smith-Penniman, participant in CORE, SCLC, SNCC and member of the Black Feminist Movement and the Third World Women's Alliance.

Readings for next week:
“American Student Activism: The Post-Sixties Transformation” - Philip Altback and Robert Cohen
“Student Activism in the 1970s: Transformation Not Decline” - Arthur Levine and Keith R. Wilson
UNIT FOUR: Student organizing, power, and institutional responses
Class Eight, October 22nd -
We will begin this unit by doing a survey of student activism from 1960 onwards. We will critique the common assumption that student organizing peaked in the 1960s and has been in decline ever since; we will do this by considering a number of potential factors for this assumption, including thinking about what issues post-1960 student movements organize around, who the movements are made up of, and what institutions they seek to change.

Readings for next week:
“Nonperformativity of Anti-Racism” - Sara Ahmed
Archival documents from Concerned Students of All Colors

Class Nine, October 29th - GUEST LECTURE: Ginetta Candelario, Smith alum and former member of CSAC, and Edward McClure

Readings for next week:
How to Survive a Plague (documentary)

UNIT FIVE: ACT UP and the AIDS epidemic
Class Ten, November 5th -
In the next two weeks, we will learn about the AIDS epidemic and the people and organizations that directly challenged the homophobia, racism, and classism, that created it. In particular, we will focus on ACT UP/NY, with an eye towards the role emotion had in both sustaining the movement and impacting tactics and strategy.

Readings for next week:
“Queers Read This” - Queer Nation Manifesto
Chapter 4 “The Emotion Work of Movements” from Moving Politics, Deborah Gould

Class Eleven, November 19th – GUEST LECTURE: Jim Eigo, member of ACT UP/NY
November 26th – Thanksgiving – No Class

Class Twelve, December 3rd
Today we will present our final projects while revisiting the questions we opened the semester with: what is resistance? What do social movements look like? We will consider how the answers to these questions will impact our lives beyond the end of this course.