

Module Overview

Module Description: From #YesAllWomen to #BlackLivesMatter, from the People’s Climate March to the Women’s March on Washington, a new generation of activists has taken the world by storm, with global media networks as their megaphones. The goal of this course is to explore, from the perspectives of multiple disciplines and fields of study, how contemporary activists harness a diverse range of media tools and platforms for social change. We will define “media” broadly, and consider not only the relationship between movements and mainstream news media, but also social media, street protests, DIY print media projects, and more. While digital media have altered the face of activism, we will trace important historical continuities between today’s social movements and the movements of the past. Most importantly, we will keep in mind that while new media have brought greater reach to today’s movements, these new platforms have also created new risks and challenges for activists. Ultimately, through independent readings and in-class activities, we will explore how social change emerges from the resilience and creativity of activist media-makers.

Learning Outcomes: Upon completing this module, students will be able to:

- Compare different movements’ communication strategies
- Assess the possibilities and limitations of different activist media tactics
- Identify how social conditions, political opportunities, and media resources shape what types of activism are possible in a particular time and place
- Consider when and how media-making can be a political act in and of itself
- Have a foundational understanding of different methods for researching social movements and the ethical concerns they raise

Module Assignment – Movement Media Profile: Students will choose a contemporary social movement, social cause, or activist campaign, describe trends in media coverage of the movement, describe the movement’s media tactics, and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of its media strategies and practices. Students will complete a media profile worksheet, outlining the different elements of their chosen case study’s communicative strategies, and will present their movement media profile in class during our final session. Professor Clark-Parsons is available to advise students one-on-one as they complete their profile worksheet. There will be opportunities throughout the module for students to receive feedback on the progress of their projects.

How to Prepare for Class: Complete each reading to the best of your ability. For each reading, complete each of the following stem sentences. Jot your answers down directly on your printed readings, or in a notebook:

- *Something new I learned from this reading is* _____ .
- *Something I don’t understand is* _____ .
- *Something I want to challenge or change is* _____ .

What to Bring to Class: Students should always bring their readings, their name tents, a notebook, and a pen/pencil to class. If possible, students should also bring a laptop or tablet for in-class activities. Students are only permitted to use laptops, tablets, and phones in class when directed to by Prof. Clark-Parsons.

Module Session Topics and Readings

Session 1: Defining our Terms -- What is Activism? What is a Social Movement? What are Media?

- Jeff Goodwin and James Jasper. (2015). "Editors' Introduction," *The Social Movement Reader: Cases and Concepts*.

Session 2: Changing the World -- How Can Activist Media Create Change?

- David Meyer. (2015). "How Social Movements Matter," *The Social Movement Reader: Cases and Concepts*.
- Alicia Garza. (2014). "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement," *The Feminist Wire*.

Session 3: Studying Media and Social Movements -- Research Questions, Methods, and Ethics

- Russell K. Schutt. (2012). "Qualitative Methods: Observing, Participating, Listening," *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*.
- Alan McKee. (2001). "A Beginner's Guide to Textual Analysis," *Metro Magazine*.

Session 4: Making the News -- Social Movements and Mainstream Media

- Ruud Koopmans. (2004). "Movements and Media: Selection Processes and Evolutionary Dynamics in the Public Sphere," *Theory and Society*.

Session 5: Protesting in Print -- From the 1960s Underground Press to Zines

- John McMillian. (2011). "Introduction," *Smoking Typewriters*.
- Stephen Duncombe. (2008). "Zines," *Notes from the Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture*.

Session 6: Going Viral -- Organizing for Social Change Online

- Malcolm Gladwell. (2010). "Small Change," *The New Yorker*.
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/small-change-malcolm-gladwell>
- Zeynep Tufekci. (2014). "Online Social Change: Easy to Organize, Hard to Win" (Video),
https://www.ted.com/talks/zeynep_tufekci_how_the_internet_has_made_social_change_easy_to_organize_hard_to_win
- Samantha C. Thrift. (2014). "#YesAllWomen as Feminist Meme Event," *Feminist Media Studies*.

Session 7: Building Coalitions -- Media and Movement Structures

- Barbara Ransby. (2015). "Ella Taught Me: Shattering the Myth of the Leaderless Movement," *Color Lines*.
- Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg. (2012). "The Logic of Connective Action," *Information, Communication and Society*.

Session 8: Facing Surveillance -- Media and the Policing of Protest

- William Lafi Youmans and Jillian C. York. (2012). "Social Media and the Activist Toolkit: User Agreements, Corporate Interests, and the Information Infrastructure of Modern Social Movements," *Journal of Communication*.
- Lauren C. Williams. (2016). "Police Surveillance of Black Protesters Won't Stop the Movement," *ThinkProgress*.

Session 9: Wrapping Up and Marching Forward -- Student Presentations of Movement Media Profiles

Class Policies

Throughout our two weeks together, we will tackle some difficult subjects. We all come from different backgrounds and bring diverse experiences, perspectives, and opinions. As a group, we must all work together to create a productive, respectful, and empowering classroom space where everyone has the opportunity to express their views and ask important questions. By entering this classroom together, we agree to adhere to the following policies:

1. Respect others' rights to hold opinions and beliefs that differ from your own. Challenge or criticize the idea, not the person.
2. Listen actively and respond directly to each other. Process what has been said before you respond. Refer to each other by name.
3. Come to class prepared to discuss the assigned material. If you felt passionately about the readings, that means coming to class ready to share your viewpoint. If you struggled with the readings, that means coming to class ready to ask questions. We are here to work together and learn from each other.
4. **[come up with more policies together as a class]**
- 5.
- 6.