CMS.361 Networked Social Movements

Time: Fall 2022 - Wed 2-5pm
Location: MIT 56-162
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Office hours: by appointment (email me!)

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Course Description

This course provides an overview of online social movement studies as a body of theoretical and empirical work, with an emphasis on understanding the relationship between activism and the internet. Looking at examples from some of the largest activist movements from the past decade, we will unpack the role memes, music, video, and feelings play in organizing online. We will explore multiple methods of social movement investigation, including textual and media analysis, surveys, interviews, participant observation, and co-research. The readings will cover recent innovations in social movement research, as well as new data sources and tools for research and analysis. Assignments include short papers, a literature review, and a final research project. Students taking this as a graduate course complete additional assignments.

Student Learning Outcomes

In this course, students will:
- Develop critical thinking around issues related to media and social movements;
- Examine global examples of networked social movements;
- Demonstrate, through oral presentations, discussions, and written work, an understanding of how to research social movements;
- Practice research skills research like collecting information, analysis, and writing;
- Propose ways to participate in online organizing in ways that minimize harm;
- Listen, engage, and participate in collective learning.

Assignments and Assessments

Presence and Participation (10%)
This class demands participation from all of us. Students are strongly encouraged to attend all the sessions if possible. This is the best way to engage with the course and keep up to date with class activities and assignments. Your participation grade is based on: attendance, communicating ahead of time if unable to attend, contribution and engagement in discussions and class activities, reading the required material, setting up one office-hour meeting with the instructor, checking emails regularly, not using your technology for

distraction from the class. Moreover, being present and engaged means being just as willing to listen to others as you are to speak. We will discuss how to give feedback and have generative discussions. Differences and disagreements are embraced in this classroom, but disrespect, hostility, discrimination, and other forms of violence will not be tolerated.

Weekly Reading Response (15%)
By Tuesday 7 PM each week, you will post on Canvas a response to the readings. This will include: (1) 1-3 sentence summary of each reading (2) 2-5 discussion questions (3) keywords regarding the larger debates/issues that these readings relate to. The total length of the reading response will be around 150-300 words (that's about one page).
If you are a grad student, I would advise adding a few more sentences about how the readings speak to each other or to prior readings to help trace concepts and arguments across the field.

Reading Opening/Facilitation (10%)
You will sign up for one reading opening for the semester. This will include opening the reading and facilitating a discussion with the class and bringing an example. A successful opening: (-) presents the author briefly (-) explains clearly the arguments of the reading (-) and how they can be better understood through examples. It can be in any format (meme, video, GIF, tweet, etc). Please note, videos must not exceed 7 minutes. (-) bonus, especially if you are a grad student: connect the reading to other readings from class/from the field.

Networked Social Movement Sample Case Study (10%)
Write 500-700 words-long report about a specific networked social movement or activist organization that you feel is making innovative use of media for their efforts. In your report, give background about the movement and its history, how it operates, and explain what it is that you find innovative in its use of media. You will submit the report through Canvas and then talk about it in a class activity.

Research Paper/Project (50%)
The final paper is an original analytical essay that is open topic but engages with the texts, ideas, and concepts presented in class. Your final paper should include a clear thesis statement, supporting evidence, original ideas, and a critical, content or design analysis of class material or other related texts. You should use proper citation as well (refer to policy on plagiarism below). The final paper is due two weeks before the end of class, for this purpose it is divided into smaller goals:

        Due session 3 - Topic (or two): a few sentences description
        Due session 6 - Research Proposal (1-2 page, incl. RQs, thesis, and bibliography)
        Due session 7 - Paper outline (bullet points with 2-3 sentence elaboration)
        Due session 10 - Paper Draft + Peer Review
        Due session 14 - Final paper due (10 pages double spaced)

For a project, you will create or design a project of your choosing and submit a five page *context paper* (1200-1450 words) that includes the intellectual and research impulses that

are driving your project and the decisions you had to make along the way. In this context paper, you will also tell us about the project, what you did, why it matters, what you are trying to communicate or interpret from a case or idea in networked social movements, and what you learned from it. Note that the options for what a project can be are broad. It can be a design proposal for an app, it can be an artistic performance, a musical piece, a series of tweets or videos, an online activism campaign (or outline for one),.. The options are endless, so you can think of a medium you like to use or one that you are eager to experiment with.

Presentation (15%)
A 10-minute presentation about your final project on the last day of class. Sensory aid (such as slides, props, sounds) are encouraged but not mandatory.

Policies & FAQs

Syllabus Change Policy
This syllabus may be subject to change based on news events, guest speaker availability, or to adapt to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
Note: If you are a **graduate student** taking this class, the "recommended" readings are required, and assignment requirements may differ slightly in order to fulfill the graduate level.

Tech Policy
Please feel free (but not obliged) to use your laptop in class. Laptops will be used in this class for engagement, participation, note-taking, research, or other purposes related to class activities. This class requires students' participation and presence, therefore please refrain from using technology as a distraction during class time. Same goes for phones!
Tl;dr: use devices for class engagement, but keep them silenced.

Mask Policy
Please wear one. (unless you have a health issue that makes wearing a mask more dangerous for you than not wearing it).

Grading Policy
Each assignment, other than the reading responses, is graded out of 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score, depending upon the weight assigned to it above. All graded assignments will be returned to you individually in a timely manner (usually within 14 days of the assignment). You will receive detailed and *thoughtful* feedback on each assignment, please **read it thoroughly** and incorporate it into your next assignments (I keep track of that too!).
If you have concerns regarding a grade on a specific assignment, you can **appeal the grade in writing within one (1) week** of receiving your grade. Your appeal must state why/how

you feel your grade is inaccurate, providing specific examples. No appeals will be accepted for assignments submitted late, or after the one-week appeal deadline.

Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments are due on the deadlines specified in the corresponding prompt (all will be discussed in class, and will also be posted on Canvas under "Assignments"). Extensions on assignments must be approved by the instructor **in advance** of the assignment deadline. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, **late assignments** will receive a one-third (1/3) grade reduction for each day late (including weekends), and any missing assignments will automatically be given a grade of 0%.

Assignments must be submitted via Canvas unless otherwise stated by the instructor. All written assignments must be typed in 12-point font, double-spaced, and have 1-inch margins. Please make sure to spell-check and proofread all papers for spelling and grammar. If you are using/citing someone else's work, please include a "works cited" section and follow a consistent style guide (APA is recommended). Please save and submit all assignments in .doc or .docx format, so that I may return your graded papers to you with feedback and comments.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's ideas or language without acknowledging that we did not create them. This is considered a form of fraud. Policy of the CMS/W faculty requires that students who plagiarize receive an F in the subject, and that the instructor forward the case to the MIT Committee on Discipline. You can read more here:
https://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/avoiding-plagiarism/
tl;dr: Don't do it, it's not worth it.

What if I can't attend class?

First of all, email me to let me know. Missing 1-2 sessions will not impact your grade.
Second, get in touch with your classmates to figure out how to stay on track. If you have to miss more than 2 sessions, please let me know so we can figure out the best course of action.
tl;dr: communicate!

What if I need help with writing? #ResourceAlert

MIT Writing and Communication Center offers free one-on-one professional advice from communication specialists with advanced degrees and publishing experience. The WCC can help you learn about all types of academic and professional writing and further develop your oral communication skills. You can learn more about WCC consultations at http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center and register with the online scheduler to make appointments through

https://mit.mywconline.com. Please note that WCC hours are offered Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m., and fill up fast.

Course Schedule

This course has 15 sessions. Apart from a couple of "housekeeping" sessions, each class session will focus on one aspect of online activism, roughly organized by the question: what moves social movements? The schedule of classes below includes session numbers, class dates, and a list of material to read, watch, or listen to.

Session 1 -
Introduction | Pedagogy | What is activism?
Reading:
- hooks, b. (2010). Engaged Pedagogy. In *Teaching Critical Thinking* (pp. 19-23). Routledge.
- Miriam Sweeney "How to read for grad school" https://miriamsweeney.net/2012/06/20/readforgradschool/
- Earl, Jennifer, and Katrina Kimport. 2011. Introduction to Digitally Enabled Social Change: Activism in the Internet Age, 3–20. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Visit:
- See where you are! https://native-land.ca/

Session 2 -
The Activism vs. Slacktivism Debate: the Risks of Spreadable Media
Reading:
- Hearn, A. (2012). 1. Brand Me "Activist". In *Commodity Activism* (pp. 19-38). New York University Press.
- Shresthova, S. (2016). "Watch 30 Minute Video on Internet, Become Social Activist?" Kony 2012, Invisible Children, and the Paradoxes of Participatory Politics. In H. Jenkins, S. Shresthova, L. Gamber-Thompson, N. Kliger-Vilenchik, & A. M. Zimmerman (Eds.), *By any media necessary: The new youth activism* (pp. 61-101). New York: New York University Press. doi:http://hdl.handle.net/2333.1/brv15j8p
- Vie, S. (2014). In defense of "slacktivism": The Human Rights Campaign Facebook logo as digital activism. *First Monday*, 19(4).

Recommended:
- The difference between spreadable and viral https://www.niemanlab.org/2010/11/why-spreadable-doesnt-equal-viral-a-conversation-with-henry-jenkins/
- Jenkins, H., Ford, S., & Green, J. (2018). Introduction. In *Spreadable media: Creating value and meaning in a networked culture*. NYU press.
- Zuckerman, E. (2012, March 8). Unpacking Kony 2012 http://www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/2012/03/08/unpacking-kony-2012/

Session 3 -
Can Taking a Video on a Phone Count as Politics?
Reading:
- Jenkins, H. & Shresthova, S. (2016). "It's Called Giving a Shit!": What Counts as "Politics"?. In H. Jenkins, S. Shresthova, L. Gamber-Thompson, N. Kliger-Vilenchik, & A. M. Zimmerman (Eds.), *By any media necessary: The new youth activism* (pp. 253-289). New York: New York University Press. doi: http://hdl.handle.net/2333.1/brv15j8p
- Allissa V. Richardson (2020). Bearing Witness While Black: African Americans, Smartphones, & the New Protest #Journalism. (Chapter 6)

Watch:
- Writing with Fire - on Kanopy

Session 4 -
Memes & Narratives
- Kate Miltner. Internet Memes (book chapter). https://static1.squarespace.com/static/593b1c3a03596e06e97407b7/t/5daf401ba50ae018ef6f6b99/1571766305082/Miltner+-+Internet+Memes.pdf
- Bratich, J. (2017). Memes, Movements, and Meteorology. *Culture Jamming: Activism and the Art of Cultural Resistance*, 322.

Listen:
- PRX interview with Sulafa Zidani about global memes by Nancy Guan https://beta.prx.org/stories/327860

Recommended:
- Mina, A. X. (2019). *Memes to movements: How the world's most viral media is changing social protest and power*. Beacon Press. (chapter 4)
- Limor Shifman (2014). *Memes in Digital Culture*. MIT Press, (book intro)
- Jenkins, H., & Dery's, M. (2017). From culture jamming to cultural acupuncture. *Culture jamming: Activism and the art of cultural resistance*, 133-160.

Session 5 -
Transnational Fan Activism
Reading:
- Cho, M. (2022). BTS for BLM: K-pop, Race, and Transcultural Fandom. *Celebrity Studies*, *13*(2), 270-279.
- Carville, O., 2020. No one fights QAnon like the global army of K-pop superfans. Bloomberg. 28 October 2020. Available from: https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2020-10-28/bts-k-pop-stans-are-fighting-qanon-and-maga-on-social-media
- Chatman, D., 2020. In solidarity (?): a critique of the K-pop industry's support for black lives matter. *Flow: a critical forum on media and culture*, 27 (2). Available from: https://www.flowjournal.org/2020/

Session 6 -

#All_the_Feels: Affect Theory and the Network Society

Reading:

- Castells, M. (2015). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the Internet age*. John Wiley & Sons. "Opening" pp.1-19.
- Papacharissi, Z. (2016). Affective publics and structures of storytelling: Sentiment, events and mediality. *Information, communication & society*, *19*(3), 307-324.

Recommended:

- Papacharissi, Z. (2015). *Affective publics: Sentiment, technology, and politics*. Oxford University Press. (chapter 1)
- Brock Jr, A. (2020). Distributed blackness. In *Distributed Blackness*. New York University Press. (introduction, esp. Page 10-11 about libidinal economy)

Session 7 -

Hashtags Come and Go, but Networks are Forever

Reading:

- Latif, R. (2022). *Tahrir's Youth: Leaders of a Leaderless Revolution*. American University in Cairo Press. (Chapter 7)
- Castells, M. (2015). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the Internet age*. John Wiley & Sons. "Beyond Outrage, Hope: The Life and Death of Networked Social Movements" (pp.244-247)

Suggested Listen/Read

- NPR interview with Rusha Latif https://www.npr.org/2022/06/30/1108843809/tahrirs-youth-follows-the-trajectories-of-some-young-revolutionaries-in-egypt
- Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest*. Yale University Press. (Chapter 1)

Session 8 -

Storytelling & Networked Activism - Online event with guest speakers from ELIS App

Reading:

- TBD (awaiting guest speaker assignment)

Session 9 -

Workshop Day - discussing final projects

Session 10 -

Sounds as Bridges to Politics

Reading:

- Punathambekar, A., & Mohan, S. (2017). A sound bridge: Listening for the political in a digital age. *International Journal of Communication*, *11*, 20.
- Punathambekar, A. (2012). On the ordinariness of participatory culture. *Transformative Works and Cultures*, *10*.

- Lacey, K. (2013). *Listening publics: The politics and experience of listening in the media age*. John Wiley & Sons. (Chapter 8 or 9)

Recommended:
- The difference between spreadable and viral
  https://www.niemanlab.org/2010/11/why-spreadable-doesnt-equal-viral-a-conversation-with-henry-jenkins/

Session 11 -
Convergence Culture: Celebrity Activism & #MeToo
Guest Speaker: Lauren Sowa
Reading:
- Jenkins, H., & Deuze, M. (2008). Convergence culture. Convergence, 14(1), 5-12.
- Mukherjee, R., & Banet-Weiser, S. (Eds.). (2012). *Commodity activism: Cultural resistance in neoliberal times*. NYU Press. (Chapter 7 or 8)
- Optional - if you have Hulu watch episodes from *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit (especially season 18)*

Watch:
- Kimberlé Crenshaw, The Urgency of Intersectionality TED Talk
  https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality?language=en

Session 12 -
Researching Networked Social Movements
Reading:
- Youmans, William Lafi, 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* 62 (2): 315–329.
- Case Study as Method
  https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/assignments/casestudy
- Suay M. Özkula, How to Research Activism Online. SAGE

Include in your reading response:
- Pick two articles from this semester and review their method for conducting research
- Prepare 2-5 sentences about your own research method if you're writing a paper

Session 13 -
Presentations of Work in Progress

Session 14 -
Design as/for Justice
Reading:
- Costanza-Chock, S. (2018). Design justice: Towards an intersectional feminist framework for design theory and practice. *Proceedings of the Design Research Society*.

- D'Ignazio, Catherine. "Four Tensions Between HCI Research, Social Justice Aspirations, and Grassroots Politics." In *CSCW '19 Workshop on Design and the Politics of Collaboration*. Austin, TX, USA: ACM, 2019.
- Xiao, S., Cheshire, C., & Salehi, N. (2022, April). Sensemaking, Support, Safety, Retribution, Transformation: A Restorative Justice Approach to Understanding Adolescents' Needs for Addressing Online Harm. In *CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 1-15). https://dl.acm.org/doi/abs/10.1145/3491102.3517614

Recommended
- Nasrin, S. (2021). New ways of activism: design justice and data feminism. *Social Movement Studies*, 1-5.
- Review your own notes and outline core questions and keywords from the class