“What I used to say to people, when I was much more engaged myself, is that you can't be apolitical. It will come and get you. It's not that you shouldn't be neutral. It's that you won't be able to stay neutral.”
— Christopher Hitchens

Lectures: TR 3:30 - 4:50 (Tory 1 93)
Instructor: Jonathan Simmons
Office hours: By Appointment or chance
Email: jssimmon@ualberta.ca

Calendar Course Description: Empirical studies of movements for social change and the dynamics of collective mobilization in a local, national, and international context.

Prerequisite: SOC 100 or consent of instructor. A sense of humor also helps.

Course Objectives: Have you ever wondered if social media can promote social change? No? Me neither. In this dolphin safe course you will develop a critical understanding of the impact of the internet and social media on activism through journal articles, online resources, and videos. Although you will receive a good foundation in the basics of social movement scholarship, you will spend most of your time with individually wrapped case studies.

WARNING: I show a lot of documentaries/video clips in class, and I tend to mention content not discussed in readings (I ramble). It is your responsibility to ensure that you have all necessary materials in preparation for exams. Neither lecture notes nor videos will be made available outside of class. If you miss a class, you are responsible for obtaining the notes from a crossroads demon.

Controversy Disclaimer: This course deals with many controversial topics related to people’s deepest held beliefs about food, balloon animals, God and religion, science and technology, politics and economics, morality and ethics, and social attitudes and cultural assumptions.

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1 Bury a container of ritual items, including a photograph of yourself, graveyard dirt, a black cat bone, and yarrow at the center of a crossroads.

2 Sort of borrowed from Michael Shermer’s syllabus.
**Required Readings:** Required readings will be provided through the University library system or via eClass.

**Evaluation:** Your grade for the course will be based on:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Writing prompt response</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Throughout</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam #1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>October 8</td>
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<td>Response to Op-ed</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>October 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam #2</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>November 5</td>
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<td>Op-ed Assignment</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>November 19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field Research Paper</td>
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<td>December 3</td>
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**Exams:** Exams will consist of any combination of multiple choice, true and false, matching, and short answer questions on any readings or lecture material, including videos, discussions, and impromptu puppet shows. Students will be provided with representative questions during class in advance of the exam. Exams are **not** cumulative. This means that topics that have been previously tested on one exam will not appear on a future exam.

Neither absence from class nor travel plans will be accepted as legitimate reasons for failure to attend an exam. An unexcused absence will result in a grade of zero for that exam. Should a student miss a mid-term, he or she must contact the Instructor via e-mail within two working days of the originally scheduled exam or term work (or as soon as the student is able to in regards to the circumstance) to apply for an excused absence. Students with an excused absence from a term exam must write the exam rather than shift the weight of that exam to other course requirements.

**Assignments:** A detailed description of each assignment and my expectations will be posted on eClass. Except for the blog post, assignments may be submitted either in class (hardcopy), or included as an e-mail attachment. If you e-mail me any of your assignments and you do not get a read receipt within 24 hours you can assume that I did not receive your assignment. Late assignments will have **10% deducted** per day beyond the due date (including weekends and illegal holidays) and assignments more than one week late will not be accepted. In such instances, a grade of zero will be given.

**Writing Prompt Response** (due in class the day of the prompt)

Periodically throughout the term I will give you an opportunity to write short pieces in response to a question or claim. You get credit for doing these assignments individually, in pairs, or in groups. If you choose to work in pairs or groups, you will need to provide the names of each participant and reveal their deepest secrets. I will not be marking you
for grammar or writing quality, but you should make your responses legible (any artwork/ doodles are also appreciated). Consider this your participation grade.

**Response to Op-ed or article (11:59PM, Thursday Oct. 22)**

You will write a blog post responding to an activist op-ed or article in a newspaper or magazine. I suggest using a free service like Wordpress to start a blog if you don’t already have one. No private blog posts allowed because I may share a selection of your posts with the class. I will grade for clarity of writing and strength of argument. You must e-mail me a link to the PUBLIC post by midnight of the deadline day.

**Op-ed (11:59PM, Thursday Nov. 19)**

Pretend I am an editor of the *New York Times* or another paper accepting op-ed submissions. Write a 2-3 page op-ed on an issue related to the course. Read op-eds in the *New York Times* or *Guardian* for examples. I will grade for clarity of writing and strength of argument. You must e-mail me your op-ed as an attachment in Microsoft Word (or compatible format) by midnight of the deadline day.

**Field Research Paper (11:59PM, Thursday Dec. 3)**

You will complete a short (6-8 page) writing assignment based on your own fieldwork and connect your research to a social movement or other form of activism. I will provide you with a writing checklist, which you must complete and hand in with your paper. You may only choose one of the following:

A. Conduct a non-intrusive breaching experiment.

B. Create a petition via change.org. You must promote your petition and track its progress.

C. Write about your participation in a social activist or protest organization for the term.

You may either give me a hardcopy of your field research paper in class or e-mail me an attachment in Microsoft Word (or compatible format) by midnight of the deadline day.

**Request for re-evaluation**

I will not accept requests for re-evaluation, offers to submit extra work, or tests of physical skill. There will be no grade adjustments made in this course.

**Grading:** Final grades are not curved or scaled. Your grades will be added together and calculated as a percentage. Your percentage grade will then be converted to the four-point scale as shown below.
Lecture Schedule & Assigned Readings: Lectures may change in response to the needs and pace of the course. Changes will be announced in class and on eClass throughout the term. It is the student’s responsibility to make themselves aware of these changes.

Policy About Course Outlines: Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) of the University Calendar.

DO NOT read near fire or flame.

Academic Integrity
The University of Alberta is committed to the highest levels of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provision of the Code of Student Behaviour (www.governance.ualberta.ca/ CodesofConductandResidenceCommunityStandards/CodeofStudentBehaviour.aspx) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

Learning and Working Environment
The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring that all students faculty and staff are able to work and study in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The sociology department urges anyone who feels that this policy is being violated to:
• Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or

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<td>Fail</td>
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• If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department. For additional assistance regarding this policy, contact the student ombudservice: http://www.ombudservice.ualberta.ca/.

If DROWSINESS occurs at this point, it shouldn't be surprising.

**Recording of Lectures**
Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor as part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and it not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the instructor.
Schedule for the term

Sept. 1. **Course overview**

No readings, but the possibility of electrical shock does exist if you do not come to the first class.

Sept. 3 **Introduction to social movements**

Read:


Watch:


Sept. 8-10 **Social media and digital activism**

Read:


Watch:


Sept. 15-17  **Slacktivism**

Read:

Christensen, H. S. (2011). Political activities on the Internet: Slacktivism or political participation by other means?. *First Monday*, 16(2).


Watch:


Sept. 22-24  **The Arab Spring**

Read:


Watch:


Browse:

https://twitter.com/hashtag/arabspring
Sept. 29-Oct. 1  **Occupy Wallstreet**

Read:


Watch:


Browse:

https://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/occupywallstreet.html
https://twitter.com/hashtag/ows
Oct 6. **The Tea Party**

Read:


Watch:


Browse:

http://www.teaparty.org/
https://twitter.com/hashtag/teaparty

Oct. 8 **Exam 1**

Hard hat and safety goggles are required.
Oct. 13-15  **Terrorism and radicalization**

**Read:**


**Watch:**

Feminisms and men's movements

October 22: Response to Op-ed due

Read:


Watch:


Browse:

https://twitter.com/hashtag/yesallwomen
https://twitter.com/hashtag/killallmen
https://twitter.com/hashtag/WomenAgainstFeminism
Oct. 27-29

**Hacktivism and Anonymous**

Read:


Watch:


Browse:

[https://twitter.com/youranonnews](https://twitter.com/youranonnews)
[https://wikileaks.org/](https://wikileaks.org/)

October 31

![Happy Halloween](image)
Nov. 3

**Guerrilla enlightenment**

Read:


Browse:

[https://twitter.com/hashtag/singhbca](https://twitter.com/hashtag/singhbca)
[https://twitter.com/senseaboutsci](https://twitter.com/senseaboutsci)
[https://twitter.com/hashtag/AskforEvidence](https://twitter.com/hashtag/AskforEvidence)

Nov. 5

**Exam 2**

Quantities are limited while supplies last

Nov. 10-12

Fall Term Reading week. Classes withdrawn for a full week.

*They stole it from us. Sneaky little hobbitses. Wicked, tricksy, false!*
Nov. 17-19  **Fans and consumer activism**

**November 19: Op-ed due**

Read:


Watch:


Browse:

http://nerdfighters.ning.com/
https://twitter.com/hashtag/nerdfighter

Nov. 24-26  **Atheist Activism**

Read:


Watch:


Browse:

https://twitter.com/hashtag/atheist
http://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Atheism
Dec. 1-3

**Transhumanism**

December 3: Field Research Paper due

Read:


Watch:


Browse:

[http://www.transhumanistparty.ca/](http://www.transhumanistparty.ca/)
[https://twitter.com/hashtag/transhumanism](https://twitter.com/hashtag/transhumanism)