

BLOG: <https://blog.richmond.edu/grassroots>

University of Richmond

Department of Political Science

PLSC 400: Senior Seminar: Grassroots Politics and Social Movements

204 Weinstein Hall, Wednesday, 1:30-4:10

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**Course Description**

Political scientists think of grassroots politics as the kind of political activity that is “on the ground” of changes in political policies and processes. Social movements may have grassroots leaders as part of the movement, but a movement must move toward a specific goal or narrowly defined sociopolitical outcomes. How has technology changed the face of the “grassroots”? What is different about grassroots politics and social movements today? What does it take for grassroots mobilization to grow into a movement? We will grapple with these questions and more in a seminar designed for students of politics curious about how people exercise political power from the margins.

**Textbook and Course Materials**

Required Texts

*Power and Powerlessness*, John Gaventa

*Poor People’s Movements*, Piven and Cloward

*Grassroots Social Action*, Charles V. Willie, Steven P. Ridini, and David A. Willard, editors.

*The Social Movements Reader: Cases and Concepts*, Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper, editors.

\*\*\*There are tools for writing your research paper on the blog site. Please use them.

**Assignments and Grading**

Participation 25%- In-class curation and discussion- 15%

Blog Posts-10%

Midterm 25%

Paper 30%- This is a 15-20 page research paper including the bibliography

Presentation 20%

Writing Expectations

My standards for writing are rigorous. I will assess your writing based on clarity, organization, word usage, and sentence construction. You should have a clear understanding of baseline standards in these areas. I plan to edit carefully each assignment, including in-class writing assignments, for spelling, punctuation, and grammatical mistakes. I strongly you recommend a good writing book. My favorite tools are *On Writing Well*, by William Zinsser and *Woe Is I* by Patricia T. O’Connor. Other excellent writing tools are: *Eats, Shoots, and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* by Lynn Truss and *Elements of Style* by William Strunk, Jr.

Remember that running a “spell check” through your Word program is not the same as proofreading your work. Some students find it helpful to read their papers aloud to find errors. Please seek help from the Writing Center and other resources listed on the blog. I am available for consultation via email, during office hours, and by appointment.

* Your topic should be narrow enough to write a concise and convincing piece of research
* Anyone who reads your paper should understand it. You are writing for anyone who is interested; therefore, you must define your terms and organize your paper. Topic headings are a good way to lead the reader through your argument.
* Personal experiences and observations do not carry as much weight as an academic publication. Anecdotes and stories can illuminate, but they are no substitute for hard research, whether it is qualitative or quantitative.
* Avoid the temptation to write something you think I will agree with—you cannot be sure of my opinion in this class. During many classes, I will play “devil’s advocate” to spark discussion and to help you to think more critically. Integrity in writing includes writing about something that you believe in, not something that you believe can yield extra points from the professor.
* *Your citation format must be correct. A guide is on the blog, and I expect you to consult it. Major points will be deducted for failure to correctly cite your sources.*
* *Please do not wait until the end of the semester to consult with me about your paper.*

**In-Class Exercises**

In-class exercises/quizzes and homework cannot be made up for any reason. No assignments will be accepted after class on the due date except by prior arrangement or in the case of authentic, verifiable emergency. If a student does not turn in an assignment on the due date and has not made arrangements with the instructor beforehand, the student will receive a “0” (zero) on that assignment. Late assignments are docked one letter grade for each class day late. After four late days, a late assignment will automatically be given a zero. *After a grade is submitted, students have one week to resolve questions about the grade with the instructor. Questions about a grade must be submitted first in writing. After one week, the grade is final.*

**Late Work**

Turning in late work reflects poorly on you. Please avoid it at all costs.

**Attendance**

Students are responsible for all information in the class, regardless of their personal attendance. If a student is absent, it is his or her responsibility to inquire about what they have missed. Absences due to university activities (e.g., sports, mock trial, etc.) must be discussed with the instructor before the relevant class period(s). An official notice must be shown to the instructor. Arrangements concerning absences are entirely at the instructor's discretion.

Please be on time for class to avoid unnecessary disruptions of speeches, lectures, and discussions.

We live in a digital age and you may need your laptop, tablet, or other device to take notes or to do in-class research. We will also do a lot of class discussion, so please be ready for us to ask you to put your screens away.

Course Guidelines and Standards

“A” for class participation is awarded when students regularly initiate discussion. This means coming to class thoroughly familiar with the assigned reading and, therefore, prepared to raise questions, to open discussion, to identify topics of interest in the reading, and actively engage other students in the discussion. We also factor in your performance on the assigned presentations made on weekly viewing assignments. (This does not mean monopolizing a discussion, or shutting others out, or talking for its own sake rather than to make a point about the topic). [90-100 points]

“B” for class participation is awarded to students who participate regularly and productively in class discussion, who are prepared, and who are willing to engage. Students who earn “Bs” differ from “A” students in that the latter are self-starters who do not rely on the instructor's questions to set the agenda for discussion. [80-89 points]

“C” for class participation is awarded to those who participate on a regular, but less frequent basis than the B student. Students who earn “Cs” arrive prepared for class, but their contributions will indicate that less thought has been given to assigned materials. [70-79 points]

“D” for class participation is given to those who contribute infrequently to the discussion and whose contributions do not appear to arise from thoughtful consideration of the assignments. [60-69 points]

“F” for non-participation in class discussion. Of course, participation is impossible if you donʼt attend class. Frequent absences mandate F grades. [0-60 points]

**Grievance Procedures**

Occasionally, students are unsatisfied with some dimension of the course. In such cases, you should first provide a written argument in support of your position to the instructors and request a meeting. All grade appeals on specific assignments must be made within one week of the return of the assignment.

\*\**Any students who need accommodations for learning or who have particular needs are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructors as soon as possible.*

**Academic Honesty: Pledging**

Students are expected to pledge the following statement on all assignments turned in for credit, including exams, papers and laboratory reports: "I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work." Academic honesty is—defined broadly and simply—the performance of all academic work without cheating, lying, stealing, or receiving assistance from any other person or using any source of information not appropriately authorized or attributed. The University of Richmond and your professors take academic honesty very seriously.

All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance is not an acceptable defense.

For more information visit:

<http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/the-honor-code.html>

Class Schedule:

January 11 Readings: Chapters 8 and 9, *Grassroots Social Action*

Film: “Freedom on My Mind”

January 18 Gaventa, Parts I and II

January 25 Gaventa, Part III and IV

February 1 Readings: *Poor People’s Movements*, Chapters 1-3

***Discussant: Robert Morelli***

**FEBRUARY 1: Assignment Due: Paper Title, Summary, Tentative Bibliography**

February 15 Readings: *Poor People’s Movements*, Chapters 4-5

***Discussant: Connor Warren***

February 22 Review for Midterm Exam

March 1 Midterm Exam

**MARCH 1:PAPER OUTLINE AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**

Spring Break: March 3-10

March 15 Readings: Parts V and VI, *The Social Movements Reader*

***Discussants: Kelly Quinn and Adriana Toledo***

March 22 Readings: Parts I and II, *Grassroots Social Action*

***Discussants: Samuel Blakely and Harry Hoke***

March 29 Readings: Chapters 10, 11, and 12, *Grassroots Social Action*

***Discussants: Adriana Toledo and Connor Warren***

**MARCH 29: Draft of Paper Due**

April 5 Readings: Parts III, IV, VIII, and IX, *The Social Movements* *Reader*

***Discussants: Robert Morelli, Parts III and IV; ProfSi Parts VIII and IX***

April 12 Presentations

April 19 Presentations-**Final Paper Due**