

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
STSS 6963, Spring 2008
Thursday, 10:00-12:50
Prof. Abby Kinchy
Office: Sage 5403
Office Hours: Thurs. 2-4 and by appointment
Office Phone: 276-6980
E-mail: kincha@rpi.edu

This course will review theory and research on social movements, with an empirical emphasis on recent “issue” movements such as environmental, anti-toxics, anti-dam, anti-biotechnology and health movements. The objective of the course is twofold: 1) to introduce students to social scientific theories of social movements, including the political process model, framing, cognitive praxis, transnational advocacy networks and “new social movements” theories; and 2) to examine the intersections and boundaries between social movements and technoscience. A theme throughout the course will be the politics of expertise and the roles that scientists and scientific knowledge play in movements for social change. Some of the questions addressed in the course include: How do science and technology facilitate activism across national borders? How do social movements mobilize critiques of and resistance to new technology? How do scientist-activists and transnational epistemic communities negotiate their sometimes contradictory positions in society? Do social movements transform the scientific enterprise, and if so, in what ways? In addition to U.S.-based social movements, special attention will be given to transnational advocacy networks and the characteristics of social movements in a globalizing world.

Requirements

Class participation

The class format is primarily in-class discussion. All students are expected to attend weekly class meetings and to participate actively in discussion throughout the semester.

Classroom presentations and presentation memoranda

During the semester, you are required to give three classroom presentations and to write one memo for each of your presentations (for a total of three). These memos must summarize the main points of your presentations and should be e-mailed to all participants the preceding Tuesday, no later than 5:00 pm. You are asked to distribute your memos two days in advance of the session so that the other participants have the opportunity to engage your comments and to reflect on the readings further.

Each presentation will be on one or more required readings assigned for the session. In the first session, I will distribute a sign-up sheet for these presentations.

The presenter should assume that everyone has carefully read the material. The main purpose of the presentation is not to offer a detailed summary of the reading(s), but to engage the reading(s) and to launch the discussion by evaluating the main issues and arguments under examination. Therefore, the “summary part” of your presentation should remain brief. Presentations should not exceed *fifteen* minutes. In your memos you will synthesize the main points of your presentation. These presentation memos should be no longer than *five double-spaced pages*.

Five memoranda (comments or questions) on the readings

In addition to your two presentation memos, you will need to prepare comments about the readings for five of the sessions. These comments must be brief (no more than 200 words). You will email them to the class on Wednesdays no later than noon. These memos should be aimed at stimulating class discussion, so feel free to raise questions, highlight interesting or confusing points, suggest relevant examples, or express critiques of the author's arguments.

Research proposal

You will write a 10-15 page section of a research proposal on a topic connected to the themes of this course. You are not expected to write a complete proposal, but you must identify a research question or questions and write a critical review of the relevant literature. Additional guidelines will be provided in class. A prospectus for this proposal is due in class on Thursday, February 14. The proposal is due in class on Thursday, April 10. Please note that the due date comes before the end of the semester. Late proposals will not be accepted.

You are strongly advised to use this term paper assignment to advance your work outside of this course, whether you are preparing for future research or sharpening the contours of research already in progress.

Presentation

Each student will present his or her research proposals to the rest of the class in a "mini-conference" during the final class session. Presentations should be ten to fifteen minutes in length. More details about the presentations will be discussed in class.

Grades

The grade will be based on the following break-down:

Quality of participation in class discussion = 15 points
Three classroom presentations (with memoranda) = 30 points
Five memos on the readings = 15 points
Research proposal = 25 points
Final presentation = 15 points

Readings

The required books are available at the RPI bookstore. A photocopied course packet containing all other readings will be available for purchase in the STS Department office. All participants should be prepared at class time to comment on and critique the assigned readings.

Books to purchase:

Sidney Tarrow (1998) Power in Movement, 2nd edition, Cambridge University Press

Sylvia Noble Tesh (2001) Uncertain Hazards, Cornell University Press

Kelly Moore (2008) Disrupting Science, Princeton University Press (should be available in March)

Steven Epstein (1996) Impure Science, University of California Press

Alberto Melucci (1996) Challenging Codes, Cambridge University Press

Course outline*

*Please note that this is subject to change. Any changes to the syllabus will be discussed in class.

January 17, 2008

Welcome to the course

Orientation to the course; general introduction to the study of social movements; review of syllabus; discussion of student assignments; sign-up for classroom presentations.

January 24, 2008

Contemporary theories of social movements

Reading: Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, Ch. 1-10

January 31, 2008

Framing, grievance construction, and cultural repertoires

Readings:

Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow (2000) "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 611-639.

David J. Hess (2007) "Crosscurrents: Social Movements and the Anthropology of Science and Technology," *American Anthropologist* 109(3): 463-472.

Rachel Schurman and William Munro (2004) "Ideas, Thinkers, and Social Networks: The Process of Grievance Construction in the Anti-Genetic Engineering Movement," *Theory and Society* 35: 1-38.

Hugh Gusterson (2005) "Decoding the Debate on 'Frankenfoods'," in Betsy Hartmann, Banu Subramaniam, Charles Zerme, eds., *Making Threats* (Rowman & Littlefield).

February 7, 2008

New Social Movements

Reading: Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes*

February 14, 2008

Movements as sites of knowledge production

Required Reading:

Sylvia Noble Tesh, *Uncertain Hazards* (This is a short book with short chapters. Read ch. 1, 4 and 7 closely and skim the other chapters)

Choose One:

Neva Hassanein and Jack Kloppenburg (1995) "Where the Grass Grows Again: Knowledge Exchange in the Sustainable Agriculture Movement," *Rural Sociology* 60 (4): 721-740.

Andrew Jamison (2006) "Social Movements and Science: Cultural Appropriations of Cognitive Praxis," *Science as Culture* 15(1): 45-59.

February 21, 2008

Transnational activism and epistemic communities

Required Reading:

Sidney Tarrow (2005) "Chapter 11: Transnational Activism and Internationalization," in *The New Transnational Activism* (Cambridge University Press).

Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1999) "Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics," *International Social Science Journal* 51(159): 89-101.

Peter M. Haas (1992) "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 1, Knowledge, Power, and International Policy Coordination. pp. 1-35.

Claire Gough and Simon Shackley (2001) "The Respectable Politics of Climate Change: The Epistemic Communities and NGOs," *International Affairs* 77(2): 329-346.

February 28, 2008

Activism, media and the internet

Choose Any Three:

Oliver Froehling (1997) "The Cyberspace 'War of Ink and Internet' in Chiapas, Mexico," *Geographical Review* 87(2): 291-307.

Ann Capling and Kim Richard Nossal (2001) "Death of Distance or Tyranny of Distance? The Internet, Deterritorialization, and the Anti-Globalization Movement in Australia," *The Pacific Review* 14(3): 443-465.

Peter Brinson (2006) "Liberation Frequency: The Free Radio Movement and Alternative Strategies of Media Relations," *The Sociological Quarterly* 47: 543-568

Victor W. Pickard (2006) "Assessing the Radical Democracy of Indymedia: Discursive, Technical, and Institutional Constructions," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23(1): 19-38.

SPRING BREAK

March 13, 2008

Repression of protest and silencing of dissent

Required Readings:

Donatella Della Porta and Herbert Reiter (1998) "Introduction," in Della Porta and Reiter, eds., *Policing Protest: The Control of Mass Demonstrations in Western Democracies*. University of Minnesota Press.

Brian Martin (1999) "Suppression of dissent in science," Published in *Research in Social Problems and Public Policy*, Volume 7, edited by William R. Freudenburg and Ted I. K. Youn (Stamford, CT: JAI Press, 1999), pp. 105-135. Online at:

<http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/bmartin/pubs/99rsppp.html>

Choose One:

Steven Barkan (1984) "Legal Control of the Southern Civil Rights Movement," *American Sociological Review* 49: 552-565. [An important early article on methods of repression of social movements].

Jason Delborne (2008) "Transgenes and Transgressions: Scientific Dissent as Heterogeneous Practice," *Social Studies of Science* [An interesting new take on the suppression of scientific dissent]

March 20, 2008

Counter-expertise and participatory science

Reading: Steven Epstein, *Impure Science*

March 27, 2008

Activism in the risk society – anti-toxics, environmental justice, embodied health movements

Required readings:

Steven Yearley (1992) “Green Ambivalence about Science: Legal-Rational Authority and Scientific Legitimation,” *British Journal of Sociology* 43: 511-532

Phil Brown et al (2004) “Embodied Health Movements: New Approaches to Social Movements in Health” *Sociology of Health and Illness* 26(1): 50-80.

Choose at least one:

Jason Corburn (2002) “Environmental Justice, Local Knowledge, and Risk: The Discourse of a Community-Based Cumulative Exposure Assessment,” *Environmental Management* 29(4): 452-466.

Stephen R. Crouch and Steve Kroll-Smith (2000) “Environmental Movements and Expert Knowledge: Evidence for a New Populism,” in Steve Kroll-Smith, ed., *Illness and the Environment: A Reader in Contested Medicine*

Tesh, Chapter 6 “Experiential Knowledge”

April 3, 2008

Battling the technologies of the state – the case of big dams

Required readings:

Sabrina McCormick (2006) “The Brazilian Anti-Dam Movement: Knowledge Contestation as Communicative Action,” *Organization & Environment* 19(3): 321-346.

Sanjeev Khagram (2002) “Restructuring the Global Politics of Development: The Case of India’s Narmada Valley Dams” in Khagram, Riker and Sikkink, eds., *Restructuring World Politics* (University of Minnesota Press).

Franklin Daniel Rothman and Pamela E. Oliver (2002) “From local to global: the anti-dam movement in southern Brazil, 1979-1992,” in Jackie Smith and Hank Johnston, eds, *Globalization and Resistance* (Rowman & Littlefield).

Supplemental reading (optional):

Arundhati Roy (2002) “The Greater Common Good,” in *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (London: Flamingo).

April 10, 2008

Scientists as activists

Reading: Kelly Moore, *Disrupting Science*

[Note: Alternative readings will be assigned if this book is not released in time]

April 17, 2008

Activism and innovation

Edward J. Woodhouse and Steve Breyman (2005) “Green Chemistry as Social Movement?” *Science, Technology & Human Values* 30(2): 199-222.

Scott Frickel (2005) "When Convention Becomes Contentious: Organizing Science Activism in Genetic Toxicology," in Moore and Frickel, eds. *The New Political Sociology of Science* (UW Press).
David J. Hess (1998) "Technology- and Product-Oriented Movements: Approximating Social Movement Studies and Science and Technology Studies," *Science, Technology & Human Values* 30: 515-535.

April 24, 2008

Presentations