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:

- Kelly Moore (2008) Disrupting Science, Princeton University Press (should be available in March)
- Steven Epstein (1996) Impure Science, University of California 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:

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:
February 21, 2008
Transnational activism and epistemic communities
Required Reading:

February 28, 2008
Activism, media and the internet
Choose Any Three:

SPRING BREAK

March 13, 2008
Repression of protest and silencing of dissent
Required Readings:
Choose One:
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:
Choose at least one:
Tesh, Chapter 6 “Experiential Knowledge”

April 3, 2008
Battling the technologies of the state – the case of big dams
Required readings:
Supplemental reading (optional):

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

April 24, 2008
Presentations