Sociology 405: Social Movements and Social Change – ORAL INTENSIVE COURSE

PROFESSOR: Dr. Kara Dillard

This class will review the history and theoretical study of contemporary social movements. We will start with the contention that the current generation of citizens, including students, has grown into political cynics. That cynicism has influenced the contemporary definition of activism. Young adults are more likely to register their political preferences via facebook or twitter than they are by engaging local communities in social change. As a result, the repertoires of contention and strategic discourses that movements use to persuade members and outsiders has changed.

In this course, we will use historical examples of social movements to explain when and why social movements occur, who joins movements, movement organization, what movements do, and why they decline. We will also put these arguments in context of social activism in the age of a neoliberal and post-Citizens United world. At the end of the course, students will be able to argue and defend a variety of explanations for why social movements succeed or fail as well as synthesize competing theoretical positions. *

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

• Define what a social movement is.
• Explain, with historical examples, when and why social movements occur, who joins movements, movement organization, what movements do, and why they decline.
• Define and apply resource mobilization theory, political opportunity theory, and new social movement theory to explaining the history of various movements and resulting social change.
• Understand how social change and social movements relate.
• Develop independent theories explaining why college students are less active in social movements than they were thirty years ago. In short, how has society changed what effects has it had on movement organization, stability, and membership.
• Defend an explanation for why social movements succeed using either political opportunity or resource mobilization in a debate format oral presentation.

*Description from Summer 2013 course syllabus. Subject to change in future semesters.