Social Movements have been from the start a central object of the social sciences: how do people behave collectively? How do they coordinate? What are the costs of a mobilization? What are the tools used (gatherings, voice, violence and so on) Who gets involved, and who does not? What triggers a movement, what makes it fail? How are movements remembered and replicated in other settings? The first attempts to understand collective behavior developed in the area of crowd psychology, at the beginning of the 20th century: explaining the protesting behavior of the dominated classes was the goal of a rather conservative discourse that aimed to avoid disruptive attitudes. Gustave Lebon's rather pseudo-scientific attempts were a case in point: collective action was identified as a form of panic or of madness. Later on, more sympathetic approaches appeared, since social movements were considered as an excellent illustration of a democratic state. Recently, globalization has brought about new objects of contention but also the internationalization of protests. Mobilizations in the post-socialist countries and the "Arab Springs" are characterized by new forms of claims and new forms of action. For many social scientists, their study demands a new theoretical and methodological equipment.
The field of social movements has been an innovative place for new concepts and new methods: "resource mobilization theory", "repertoire of action" and "eventful sociology" are good examples. Right now, this area of study hosts the most intense, and perhaps the most exciting debates in the social sciences. Ideas are cross-fertilized by the interdisciplinary dialogue between, sociology, psychology, political science and history.

This course has two aims: 1) providing the student with precise accounts of social movements, associating an ethnographic eye with formal reasoning and 2) reassessing the theoretical efforts to come up with a unified view of social movements. The historical and theoretical dimension of the issue will be central, but the active participation of the students will allow to analyze case studies with precision: in some cases, the examples will be brought in by the students.

We live in a "movement society" as David Meyer and Sidney Tarrow once said. The new social media and the electronic age have changed the ways of association and communication dramatically. The course is also an exercise in democratic thinking.

**Learning outcomes**

A transdisciplinary assessment of a central question in the social sciences
Combining history, political science and sociology to build an integrative explanatory frame
Comparing traditional social movements with new forms of mobilization and association
Identifying the emerging forms of social protest and the consequences of the use of social media
Writing a research paper based on fresh material and student's initiative
Contributing to the education of an active citizen in a participatory democracy
Working load and evaluation

40 hours in class and about 60 hours in reading and writing papers. Active participation required in class (every absence must be justified)

Evaluation:

1. Oral presentation of one of the texts in the reading list 12,5%
2. Written account of the oral presentation (cc. 300 words) or powerpoint 12,5%
3. Mid-term exam, take home, Week 6 (two questions out of three proposed, 1000 words total) 25%
4. Final paper: research paper, take home (due one week after the end of class, 3000 words) 50%

Course outline:

Week 1
Introduction

1. Social Movements, Collective Action and Mobilization: An Introduction
(Instructor)

Week 2
Theoretical perspectives

1. Collective action and strategic action fields


2. Public sphere revisited
Habermas, Jürgen. 1964 The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article.


**Week 3**

Contention

1. **Cycles of Contention**


2. **Contentious Politics**

   Mc Adam, D., S. Tarrow and C. *Tilly Dynamics of contention*, Cambridge (UK), Cambridge University Press, 2001, parts 1 and 2

**Week 4**

Historical Perspectives

1 **Moral economy**


2 **Movements and events**

Week 5  
Reertoirees of action

1. Political performances


2. Contention and performance

Tilly, Charles Contentious Performances, Cambridge (UK), Cambridge University Press, 2008, ch 1 an 2

Week 7  
From Class to New Social Movements

1. New social Movements

Mason David Solidarity as a New Social Movement, Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 104, No. 1 (Spring, 1989), pp. 41-58


2. Structure and Opportunity


Week 8
Mobilization

1. Theory


2. Mobilization and civic action


Week 9
Transnational Protest

1. New forms of activism

Tarrow, Sidney The new Transnational Activism, Cambridge (UK), Cambridge UniversityPress, Part 1, 2, 3

2. Contagion and diffusion


**Week 10**

**1. Economic consequences: Institutional Change in Markets**


**2. Social Movements and Corporations**


**3. From social movements to academic studies**


**Week 11**

New media, new protests


**Week 12**

**Occupy /Conclusion**

1. **Occupy**


2. **Conclusion**

**What is new in the recent forms of protest?** (Lecture)