Protests is an important form of voice for citizens in all kinds of countries. Protest movements can pressure political leaders to enact policy change, bring previously under-heard information or viewpoints to light, and develop into the kind of people-power movements that upend regimes. This class grapples with two related questions about protests in the modern world. First, what does it mean for a protest to succeed or fail? Is the occurrence of a protest enough or should we also consider its magnitude and longevity, the attitudinal and policy changes that occur in response, or whether it develops into a full-scale revolution? Second, why do some protests achieve their goals, while others do not? How much depends on the political opportunity structure that characterizes a particular time and place, and how much depends on the strategies and tools purposefully employed by activists and responding regimes?

In addition to introducing students to the academic literature on this topic, the course aims to incorporate insights from real-world experience with protest. Students will engage in a semester-long project that uses interviews with protest organizers and/or participants to inspire their final research review essays.
Course Policies

In recognition of the unique challenges and unexpected events that students may face during this semester, the course has been designed with flexibility in mind. Students have a 72-hour bank of extension time for assignments that they can use at their own discretion and may miss one class session without penalty. Students are strongly encouraged to reach out if they anticipate needing extra accommodations.

The 72-hour bank of extension time can be used on any assignment, except the in-class presentations, and does not require any communication with the instructor. Students can use all of your extension time on any written component. University-approved extensions are not subtracted from the student’s time bank. If a student has used up their bank of extension time and does not receive an additional extension from the instructor, there will be a penalty of one full letter grade if the assignment is turned in within 24 of the due date/time, and two full letter grades if the assignment is between 24 and 48 hours late. Late work will not be accepted after 48 hours of the due date.

To ensure that disability-related concerns are properly addressed from the beginning, students with disabilities who require assistance to participate in this class are asked to contact the instructor as soon as possible.

Finally, all writing should be the student’s own work. Students are encouraged to discuss ideas and share drafts of their work with their peers, the course instructor, and/or writing tutors. They need not acknowledge these general discussions or advice. However, specific facts or arguments should be cited appropriately.

Course Requirements

In the first half of the course, students will interview at least 2 protest organizers or 6 protest participants. They will be graded on preparation for the interviews (questions, background on protest/interview subjects), a written report summarizing the main insights, and a related presentation. Based on these interviews, students will then identify a research question of interest to them. At the end of the semester, they will submit a comprehensive review of what the academic literature says about this research question and propose directions for future study.

- Class attendance and participation - 30%
Course Readings

Week 1: Introduction

- There are no assigned readings for the first class. However, please familiarize yourselves with one protest movement of your choice. Be prepared to present the class with background details of the protest movement, identify the tactics used by protesters and the way the government (or other target) responded, and discuss the consequences or results.

I. Starting a Protest

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step” - Lao Tzu

Week 2: Opportunity Structures


Week 3: First Movers


II. Boosting Turnout

“Success is a numbers game” - Jim Rohn

Week 4: Framing and Grievance


Week 4: Networks and Social Pressure


**Week 6: Organizational Capacity**


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### III. Altering Opinions

“There are two kinds of fools: those who can’t change their opinions and those who won’t” -

*Josh Billings*

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**Week 7: Information Transmission**


**Week 8: Changing Viewpoints**


**Week 9: Presentations**

• There are no readings for this week. Students will present an overview of their interviews and a research question inspired by these interviews.

**IV. Winning Concessions**

“Concession comes with better grace and more salutary effect from superior power.” - William Pitt, 1st Earl of Chatham

**Week 10: Getting Policy Change**


**Week 11: Concessions as a Control Mechanism**


**V. Revolutionary Change**

“You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete” - Buckminster Fuller

**Week 12: Momentum and Cascades**


**Week 13: Regime Responses and Revolution**


