

# **THEORY AND POLITICS OF SOCIAL AND PROTEST MOVEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES**

POLS 3050 | Fall 2025

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Classroom: Brewster B-201  
Class time: Tues. & Thurs., 12:30 to 1:45 p.m.  
Office hours: Tues. & Thurs., 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.,  
and 2 p.m. to 3 p.m., or by appointment

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*“Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble.”*

– John Lewis, Chair of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

*“I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue.”*

– Barry Goldwater, U.S. Senator from Arizona

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

This course examines the origins, intellectual influences, leadership strategies, tactics, and consequences of major social and protest movements in United States history. The course begins with an overview of social movement theories and philosophical perspectives on protest, civil disobedience, and revolution. This initial theoretical foundation will address the ideas that underpinned the American Revolutionary movement as well as the influence of Mohandas Gandhi on later social and protest movements in the United States. The course then examines specific movements, including the American Revolutionary movement, the women’s suffrage movement, the civil rights movement, the counterculture and the anti–Vietnam War movements, the Reagan Revolution, and more recent protest movements from the past decade or so. Many of the leaders and participants in these movements advanced ideas, beliefs, and positions that remain controversial. The purpose of covering these movements is not to advocate for or endorse any cause or political position, but rather to use them as case studies to help understand and apply the key theories and factors that explain the successes and failures of these movements.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This is a general education course in the social sciences (GE:SO).<sup>\*</sup> Consistent with the broad learning objectives of general education courses at ECU, completion of this class should strengthen your ability to: (1) apply discipline-specific knowledge in the social sciences to explain the key factors that influence social institutions, structures, and processes affecting human behavior and social interaction; (2) explain how cultural and historical contexts shape individual behavior, society, and culture; and (3) apply discipline-specific theories and modes of inquiry in the social sciences to analyze contemporary social, behavioral, or cultural issues. More specifically, by the end of the course, you should be able to identify the conditions that give rise to social and protest movements, analyze how social and protest movements affect political and social change, and assess the effects that past social and protest movements have had in shaping society and democracy.

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<sup>\*</sup> For additional information about general education learning objectives, please see <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/fsonline/customcf/committee/as/SocialSciencesCreditSyllabusInstructions.docx>.

## COURSE STRUCTURE

Classes will begin with a lecture on the topic listed in the course outline. I expect everyone to come prepared to ask questions and to participate in discussions. Keeping up with the assigned weekly readings and attending class regularly will allow for more informed dialogue, more engaging debates, and a stronger ability to contribute to and learn from class interactions. To incorporate visual learning and encourage deeper reflection on the subjects covered, I will often show video material in class. This may include televised news footage of historical events, documentaries, and political films. On occasion, I may select documentaries or films with an R rating. Please see me if you have any moral, religious, political, or other objections to viewing such material. Finally, I will not share my partisan affiliation with anyone in the class and pledge to present opposing political arguments as fairly as possible. The goal is not to teach you what to think, but how to analyze why movements succeed or fail.

## REQUIRED READINGS

(1) Readings posted on the Canvas course page and (2) *The 60s Experience: Hard Lessons about Modern America* by Edward P. Morgan (Temple University Press, 1991).

## EVALUATION

Your final grade in the course will be based on your exam scores and your class attendance. Your fourth exam on December 16 is cumulative (covers all the course material), but also optional. It will replace your lowest exam grade. The weights assigned to your exams and class attendance are as follows:

- (1) Exam 1 on September 30 is worth 27% of your overall grade.
- (2) Exam 2 on October 30 is worth 27% of your overall grade.
- (3) Exam 3 on December 4 is worth 27% of your overall grade.
- (4) Optional: Exam 4 on December 16 (replaces your lowest exam grade).
- (5) Class attendance is worth the remaining 19% of your overall grade.

Course averages will be converted to letter grades using the scale below:

| Course Average | Grade | Course Average | Grade |
|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| 93 and above = | A     | 73 to 76 =     | C     |
| 90 to 92 =     | A-    | 70 to 72 =     | C-    |
| 87 to 89 =     | B+    | 67 to 69 =     | D+    |
| 83 to 86 =     | B     | 63 to 66 =     | D     |
| 80 to 82 =     | B-    | 60 to 62 =     | D-    |
| 77 to 79 =     | C+    | Below 60 =     | F     |

## **EXTRA CREDIT: DISCUSSION BOARD PARTICIPATION**

An additional component of the course involves *voluntary* participation in the Packback discussion board, which provides an opportunity to earn extra credit. I award points based on the quality of your responses to weekly discussion questions. A new question will be posted every Friday to reinforce and deepen your understanding of the lecture material and to encourage critical thinking. Responses are due by the following Thursday at 11:59 p.m. Packback is the discussion board platform in this course because it provides instant individual feedback to improve writing and a “curiosity score” that offers an objective measure of response quality. Extra credit, based on the curiosity score you earn, is as follows:

- 90 or higher: 3 points
- 70–89: 2 points
- Below 70: 1 point

Points will be applied to your exam, with a maximum of 10 extra credit points per exam. High-quality responses should go beyond personal opinion and include citations to supporting materials (for example, links to articles or videos from reputable sources) that justify observations and strengthen claims.

## **CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

Attendance is worth 19% of your grade because consistent presence in class is the best predictor of success in this course. Exams are built from lecture and discussion, so being here is essential. Attending also provides the opportunity to hear classmates’ questions, which can help clarify challenging concepts. This policy ensures that students who commit to showing up are rewarded, and that those who do not cannot rely solely on exam days for their grade. Attendance will be recorded using a sign-in sheet circulated at the beginning of each lecture. It is your responsibility to sign the sheet if you are present. Excessive lateness or leaving class early will result in partial credit for attendance. Your attendance grade will be calculated based on the percentage of classes you attend (for example, attending every class earns a 100, attending half of the classes earns a 50). Active participation in class discussions will result in one bonus point added to the overall course grade.

## **CLASSROOM RULES**

I expect all students to observe some basic rules of courtesy and respect, which include the following: (1) arrive to class on time and do not leave before class is dismissed; (2) do not pack up your things early; (3) silence on your cell phones before class begins; (4) no laptop use during video screenings; (5) no earbuds, air-pods, or other listening devices; and (6) please be courteous to your classmates and respectful of your fellow students’ views, comments, and questions. Classroom discussion is meant to allow us to hear a variety of viewpoints, and this can only happen if we respect each other and our differences. Not following these expectations will lower your attendance grade. For more extreme violations of classroom behavior, the ECU Faculty Manual (Part 5) states that “students who do not follow reasonable standards of behavior in the classroom or other academic setting may be removed from the course by the instructor following appropriate notice.”

## EXAM RULES AND POLICIES

Failure to be present for any of the scheduled exams will result in an automatic “0.” On all exam dates, please come prepared with an exam book and a pen. If you cannot attend the exam, you must contact me at least 30 minutes before I have administered the test (except in cases of sudden emergencies). I will grant a make-up exam only for circumstances that I deem extraordinary or for circumstances that meet university guidelines. If you miss the exam because of an illness, you are still required to contact me before the exam. You must also present me with proper verification (see below).

## EXCUSED ABSENCES AND VERIFICATION

I will excuse absences, including those on exam dates, for the following reasons: (1) participation in an authorized activity as an official representative of the university (this includes athletic events, university-sponsored performances, or academic conferences); (2) participation in other activities deemed by the Dean of Students to warrant an excused absence; (3) an extreme personal emergency; (4) the death of an immediate family member; (5) participation in a religious holiday; and (6) health reasons such as an incapacitating or contagious illness or unavoidable surgery. If your absence meets any of the criteria mentioned above, I will need you to present me with some form of verification no later than one week after the absence if you wish to have your absence excused. Some acceptable forms of verification include the following: a note from Student Health Services; a note from a doctor or medical office; an obituary; or official documentation from the athletic department indicating your travel schedule. I ask that you please not schedule non-emergency medical appointments during our class time.

## CONTINUITY OF INSTRUCTION

In the event of a health-related crisis, weather-related disruption, or campus emergency that would prevent us from meeting face-to-face, class may be moved to an online format for up to two weeks. I will provide details via e-mail and Canvas on exactly how we will proceed if something like that occurs. All necessary course materials, including my lectures (in Power Point slides), will be made available on Canvas. If you experience poor internet access, please contact me within 48 hours of the announcement to arrange an alternative plan for accessing the course materials.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

East Carolina University is committed to fostering a vibrant community of scholars. Academic integrity is a fundamental component of achieving this goal. All ECU students are expected to complete their academic work honestly. I will not tolerate acts of cheating, plagiarism, falsification, multiple submissions, or attempting or assisting with an academic integrity violation. These acts are defined as:

**Cheating:** Unauthorized aid or assistance or the giving or receiving of unfair advantage on any form of academic work.

**Plagiarism:** Copying the language, structure, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and adopting the same as one’s own original work.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (continued)

**Falsification/Fabrication:** The statement of any untruth, either spoken or written, regarding any circumstances related to academic work. This includes any untrue statements made regarding a suspected Academic Integrity Violation.

**Multiple Submission:** The submission of substantial portions of the same academic work for credit more than once without authorization from the faculty member who receives the later submission.

**Violation Assistance:** Knowingly helping or attempting to help someone else in an act that constitutes an Academic Integrity Violation.

**Violation Attempts:** Attempting any act that, if completed, would constitute an Academic Integrity Violation as defined herein.

If I become aware of a potential academic integrity violation, I will meet with you following the procedures outlined in the Academic Integrity policy. Should I determine that an academic integrity violation has taken place, I reserve the right to assign a grade penalty up to and including an F for the course. For additional information about ECU's Academic Integrity Policy, please see: <https://facultysenate.ecu.edu/manual/part6-section2/>.

## USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

You may use artificial intelligence or machine learning tools (such as ChatGPT or Gemini) on assignments only with my prior approval. Acceptable uses (with approval) may include generating study questions, drafting outlines, summarizing course material for study purposes, or editing your writing. Unacceptable uses include producing full essays or assignments without your own contribution. If I grant approval, you must: (1) document and credit any AI use following the appropriate citation style (MLA, APA, etc.) and (2) include a brief (2–3 sentence) description explaining how you used the tool. If you do not receive approval, all assignments must be completed independently, without substantive assistance from others or automated tools.

## E-MAIL

I use e-mail to communicate announcements and information to the entire class. Please check your ECU e-mail regularly. E-mail is also the best way to contact me. You may use it to schedule a one-on-one meeting if my office hours conflict with your schedule. If you have specific questions about the course material, I will answer them by e-mail. If you are having broader difficulty understanding the course, I encourage you to schedule a one-on-one meeting instead. Please do not use e-mail to request information already listed in the syllabus, such as exam dates or grade weights.

## OFFICE HOURS AND APPOINTMENTS

My office hours are 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday (in Brewster A-101). You do not need an appointment during this time. Please feel free simply to come by to discuss the course material or anything else that is on your mind. If you cannot meet during office hours, contact me after class, by telephone, or by e-mail to schedule an appointment. I also welcome students to join me for coffee after class. Please ask if you are interested.

## INFORMATION ABOUT UNIVERSITY CLOSINGS

If you have questions about a possible school closing due to severe weather or other reasons, please call the University Emergency Telephone Number at 252-328-0062 or visit the ECU emergency alert website (<http://www.ecu.edu/alert>). In the event the university has not canceled classes, but you commute to campus from a considerable distance and believe driving conditions may be hazardous, please contact me and I will consider excusing your absence.

## DISABILITY SERVICES

East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must be registered with the Department for Disability Support Services located in Mendenhall 109. For additional information, please review ECU's policy on accommodation requests (<https://accessibility.ecu.edu/students/request-accommodations> or call 252-737-1016). Additional DSS information and processes can be found at <https://accessibility.ecu.edu/students/dss-guidelines>.

## COURSE SCHEDULE AND OUTLINE

### **Week 1 (Aug. 26 and Aug. 28). Overview of Social Movements**

August 26. Overview of the course

August 28. Social movements and protest: Theories and perspectives

- Reading for Week 1: Canvas, "Interest Groups and Social Movements" (Strolovitch and Forrest) / "Of the Dissolution of Government" (Locke) / "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" (Thoreau)

### **Week 2 (Sep. 2 and Sep. 4). The Sons of Liberty and the American Revolution**

September 2. Conditions in colonial America and early protest activity

September 4. From protest to revolution

- Reading for Week 2: Canvas, "The Intercolonial Sons of Liberty" (Maier) / "American Resistance" (Wood) / "Revolution" (Wood)

### **Week 3 (Sep. 9 and Sep. 11). The Woman Suffrage Movement**

September 9. Founding generation of the woman suffrage movement

September 11. Winning generation of the woman suffrage movement

- Reading for Week 3: Canvas, "The Seneca Falls Convention" (Wheeler) / "Women's Suffrage" (Keyssar) / "Carrie Chapman Catt, Strategist" (Fowler) / "Armageddon in Tennessee" (Sims)

#### **Week 4 (Sep. 16 and Sep. 18). The Civil Rights Movement: From Ending Segregation to the Push for Voting Rights**

September 16. From Montgomery to the Civil Rights Act of 1964

September 18. From Freedom Summer to the Voting Rights Act of 1965

- Reading for Week 4: *The 60s Experience*, Chapter 2; Canvas, “The Power of Nonviolence” (King) / “Nonviolence Spreads in the South, 1957-61” (Colaiaco) / “Selma and the Voting Rights Act: Crisis and Denouement” (Garrow)

#### **Week 5 (Sep. 23 and Sep. 25). The Black Power Movement**

September 23. Black nationalism and the influence of Malcolm X

September 25. Stokely Carmichael’s leadership and the Black Panther Party

- Reading for Week 5: “Black Nationalism Revisited” (Sales) / “The Political Thought of Malcolm X in Transition” (Sales) / “The Ballot or the Bullet” (Malcolm X) / “Internal Conflicts in SNCC” (Carson) / The Black Panthers’ “Ten Point Platform”

#### **Week 6 (Sep. 30 and Oct. 2). The New Student Left**

September 30. **Exam #1**

October 2. Port Huron and the battle at Berkeley

- Reading for Week 6: *The 60s Experience*, Chapter 3; Canvas, “The Port Huron Statement”

#### **Week 7 (Oct. 7 and Oct. 9). The Rise of the Anti-War Movement**

October 7. Background of the Vietnam War and early anti-war protests

October 9. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS): growth and evolution

- Reading for Week 7: *The 60s Experience*, Chapter 4

#### **Week 8 (Oct. 14 and Oct. 16). Anti-War Protest through Guerilla Theater**

October 14. **No class.** Fall Break.

October 16. Abbie Hoffman and the Yippies

- Reading for Week 8: Canvas, “A Yippie Manifesto” (Rubin)

#### **Week 9 (Oct. 21 and Oct. 23). Beyond the War: The Counterculture Movement**

October 21. Explaining the counterculture movement

October 23. Film: The Summer of Love

- Reading for Week 9: *The 60s Experience*, Chapter 5; Canvas, “The Digger Papers” and “Turning on the World” (Leary)

## **Week 10 (Oct. 28 and Oct. 30). The Weathermen and the End of the 60s**

October 28. From protest to underground

October 30. **Exam #2**

- Reading for Week 10: *The 60s Experience*, Chapter 7; Canvas, “The Importance of Being Militant: The Days of Rage and Their Critics” (Varon)

## **Week 11 (Nov. 4 and Nov. 6). The Feminist Movement**

Nov. 4. Background, conditions, and rise of Second Wave Feminism

Nov. 6. The defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment

- Reading for Week 11: *The 60s Experience*, Chapter 6; Canvas, “Why the ERA Lost” (Davis)

## **Week 12 (Nov. 11 and Nov. 13). The Conservative Resurgence: Foundations**

November 11. Conservative intellectual thought and the aftermath of the Goldwater campaign

November 13. The Religious Right and the pro-life movement

- Reading for Week 12: Canvas, “God and Man at Yale” (Buckley) / “The Conscience of a Conservative” (Goldwater) / “The Tax Revolt Turns 20” (Hayward) / “Revivals and Revolution: The Christian Right in Context” (Wilcox and Larson)

## **Week 13 (Nov. 18 and Nov. 20). The Reagan Revolution and the Republican Party**

November 18. The leadership of Ronald Reagan

November 20. Heir to the Reagan Revolution? The leadership of Newt Gingrich

- Reading for Week 13: Canvas, “The Ideology of the Reagan Revolution” (Kymlicka and Matthews) / “The Reagan Counterrevolution” (Polenberg) / “Gingrich Lost and Found: His ‘Revolution’ and Legacy” (Linberg)

## **Week 14 (Nov. 25 and Nov. 27). The Tea Party Protests**

November 25. The Tea Party: A movement or a party faction?

November 27. **No class.** Thanksgiving

- Reading for Week 14: Canvas, “Prologue: Boiling Mad” (Zernike) / “Get Off Our Backs, Damn It!” (Zernike)

## **Week 15 (Dec. 2 and Dec. 4). Assessing Today’s Protest Movements**

December 2. Applying what we have learned to the present

December 4. **Exam #3**

- Reading for Week 15: Canvas, “Rules for Radicals: Summary” (Alinsky)

## **Weeks 16 and 17 (Dec. 9 and Dec. 16). READING DAY AND EXAM WEEK**

December 9. Reading Day

December 16. **Exam #4.** This is an optional final exam that you can use to replace your lowest exam grade. It is scheduled from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.