



The University of Western Ontario

SOCIOLOGY 4426F-001
Protest and Contentious Action

Fall 2024

In-person

Instructor: Professor Edward Bell

Department of Sociology

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This is a DRAFT only. Please see the course site for the final version.

I have made a ceaseless effort not to ridicule, not to bewail, not to scorn human actions, but to understand them. Baruch Spinoza, circa 1677

Course Description:

Calendar description: This course will focus on the study of contemporary protest, contentious action and mobilization in pursuit of social change. Students will be introduced to theoretical perspectives and critically examine actual current and historical forms of protest or contentious action.

Prerequisite(s): Registration in third year or above in any Department of Sociology module, or fourth year in any module.

Unless you have either the prerequisites or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in the course, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Anti-requisite(s): None

Note: Departmental grade guidelines require that a 4000-level course have a mean for the final grades that is between 78% and 82%.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:*

- To understand key concepts and theories related to protest, political movements, and other forms of contentious political action.
- To analyze historical and contemporary case studies of contentious political action.
- To explore the causes, tactics, and outcomes of political protest and political movements.
- To develop critical thinking and research skills in the study of political contention.

*To achieve these goals, you will be required to read 40 – 60 pages of course materials per week, actively participate in class discussions and presentations, take part in in-class exercises, and complete written assignments.

Course Materials:

1) Sidney Tarrow (2022). *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics. Fourth Edition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

This book provides a “big picture” overview of the historical origins and development of contentious political behaviour, and how it has been interpreted and analyzed by scholars over the years.

2) Vincenzo Ruggiero and Nicola Montagna, eds. (2008). *Social Movements: A Reader*. London and New York: Routledge.

This book allows you to familiarize yourself with some of the most impactful research in the field of contentious political behaviour. It contains book and article excerpts that are taken from writings that shaped how we understand protest and political movements.

3) Additional material posted on OWL Brightspace or publicly available online.

Communication:

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL Brightspace site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/login>) on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

To contact the instructor: eabell@uwo.ca

Method of Evaluation:

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

Evaluation breakdown:

Note: the page lengths given below assume a 12-point font, double-spacing, and standard margins, and **do not** include the bibliography.

You will produce, by completing four separate assignments, a case study of a contemporary or historical instance of a protest, strike, social movement, or some other form of contentious political action.

Assignment 1

A) Select a specific contentious political action or a related set of contentious actions (e.g., Paris Commune of 1871, Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, Black Lives Matter movement, movement for truth and reconciliation for Canadian Indigenous peoples, etc.).

B) Present a specific research question or questions pertaining to your topic.

C) Explain why your topic is important.

Length: no more than three pages.

Due on September 25, in class, hard copy. Each student will lead a 10-minute class discussion on what they have prepared for this assignment.

Weight: 10% of the final grade (based on the written part only).

Assignment 2

A) Define and discuss the key concepts that will be used in your case study.

B) Discuss the analytic framework or theoretical perspective that will be used to analyze your topic (e.g., Marxism, resource mobilization perspective, rational choice theory, etc.).

C) Explain why your key concepts and analytic framework/theoretical perspective are needed to understand your topic.

Length: no more than three pages.

Due on October 9, in class, hard copy. Each student will lead a 10-minute class discussion on what they have prepared for this assignment.

Weight: 25% of the final grade (based on the written part only).

Assignment 3

A) Provide a thesis statement that summarizes what you anticipate the main point or argument of your paper will be. The thesis statement guides the direction of the research and writing, and is closely related to the purpose of the paper. It foreshadows the presentation of evidence and the analysis that will form the final step of your research (Assignment 4).

B) Write a literature review that outlines for the reader the research that already exists on your topic. It must discuss at least six peer-reviewed journal articles or book chapters.

Length: no more than four pages.

Due on November 6, in class, hard copy. Each student will lead a 10-minute class discussion on what they have prepared for Part A for this assignment.

Weight: 30% of the final grade (based on the written part only).

Assignment 4

Full paper, including final analysis. Re-present what you have produced for Assignments 1, 2, and 3 above, revised as needed. Then add a section "Analysis" where key information relevant to the thesis statement is presented. Follow up with a "Conclusions" section, and a final section, "Implications for Further Research." The full paper must incorporate some concepts and/or theories discussed in class or in the readings.

Length: no more than ten pages (which includes the re-presentation of what you produced for Assignments 1, 2, and 3).

Due on November 27, in class, hard copy.

Weight: 33% of the final grade (based on the written part only).

Final assessment: Every student will share their work on their full paper by offering a 10-minute verbal summary of their paper to the class, which will be followed by a 5-minute question/answer and comment session. **You will receive a grade of 2/2 upon completion of this requirement. Weight:** 2% of the final grade.

Note:

- 1) You are expected to submit each assignment by the deadline listed. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit their assignments up to 72 hours past the deadline without academic penalty. Should students submit an assignment more than 72 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 10% of the value of the assignment per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade.

Because the submission deadline for the assignments already includes flexibility in the form of a 72-hour submission window, the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for assignments that are submitted after the end of the 72-hour period.

- 2) Instructors are permitted to designate one assessment per course per term as requiring supporting documentation to receive academic consideration. *For this course, Assignment 4 has been designated as requiring supporting documentation for academic consideration.*

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In this course, students are permitted to use AI tools only for information gathering and preliminary research purposes. These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. However, it is essential that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments and perspectives. Students must produce original written contributions, i.e., **they must write their assignments in their own words**. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploring a topic, but students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources of information and avoiding plagiarism. Materials submitted for assessment must reflect the student's own thoughts and independent written work. Students should also generate their own figures (e.g., graphs, diagrams) rather than using AI generated ones. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and effective learning environment that

promotes critical thinking and independent inquiry. The same principles also apply to the use of translation software to support the writing of essays and other written assessments.

For each of the four assignments, students will be required to complete a form in which they describe the manner and the extent to which they used AI for the assignment.

Student Absences:

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

University policy on academic considerations is described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic consideration must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration request may be found at the previous link. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

Students must familiarize themselves with the [Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#). Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is always required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g., December and April exams). Students should also note that the instructor may designate one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation (for this course it is Assignment 4). Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the [Student Medical Certificate](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.

Course Schedule and Readings: TBA

Academic Policies:

Please review the Department of Sociology [“Important Academic Policies”](#) document (https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf) for additional information regarding:

- Scholastic Offences
- Plagiarism
- Copyright
- Course Selection
- Absence from Course Commitments
- Missed Tests and Exams
- Religious Accommodations
- Accessibility Options
- Mental Health
- Gender-Based and Sexual Violence statement