

SOCIAL PROTEST MOVEMENTS

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Tuesdays starting September 26 through November 14 for eight sessions | 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.
VIRTUAL | LECTURE/DISCUSSION | MAXIMUM 16

Overview

The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of social protest. Native versus conqueror, enslaved person versus enslaver, worker versus master, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, carrying on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open struggle as the oppressed organize into movements to better their lives or, at minimum, prevent their lot from becoming worse, even as their oppressors use every instrument to preserve their privileges. These movements are as varied as Melanesian Cargo Cults, Medieval mystics, Italian social bandits, Starbucks baristas, English suffragists, Irish insurrectionists, Syndicalist labor unionists, Black Lives Matter, and Mexican Zapatistas. Often at the same time, other movements also arise, also motivated by senses of oppression and loss, seeking to maintain or restore ways of life seen as endangered. They wear colored shirts, military uniforms, business suits, and clerical collars. These, too, are social protest movements.

Our goal will be to examine the dynamics of some of these movements, from Left to Right, from democratic to authoritarian, and from religious to secular. We will begin by looking at how and why movements come about, then examine how they rise and fall more often than not. We see how even their failures have opened the doors to social changes for better or worse. Current events will likely provide interesting case material.

Each class will begin with a short presentation providing background on some aspect of the topic, followed by participants' questions and discussion. As we move forward, I will provide short pieces per email attachments and suggest further readings available online. There is no single overview text, but there are several "classics" that do provide insights (listed below). They are not required. Participants' suggestions will be welcome at any time. There may be some videos and at least one interview.

Suggested Reading

- Hadley Cantril, *The Psychology of Social Movements* (1941)
- E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (1959)
- Vittorio Lanternari, *The Religions of the Oppressed* (1963)
- Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements, Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (1977)