ENVST-UA 485  
Environmental Activism: From the Local to the Global  
Prof. Jessica Green

Overview  
This course examines how activists try to change the world. We examine popular movements, social movements, NGOs and networks to understand why they choose the issues they do, how they seek to effect change, and whether and why they are successful at doing so. The inquiry is grounded in several approaches to activism: international relations theories of non-state actors, sociological study of social movements, and various more radical approaches. We begin with a survey of these theoretical approaches, so that students can be conversant in the basic theory and vocabulary of activism. We then examine the growing role of activism in local and global politics amidst the broader trend of globalization. The course will examine four “big questions” with respect to environmental activism: 1) When do activists mobilize? 2) What tactics do they use? 3) What explains success and failure in advocacy? 4) What are the broader political implications of a global class of elite advocates?

Textbooks  

Course Requirements  
The course will be largely discussion-based, with short lectures as needed to give the necessary background. Students will be responsible for presenting the readings on the syllabus and leading the discussion twice per semester (depending on the number of students in the class). Readings to be presented by students are indicated by SP on the syllabus. On the days you present, you are responsible for circulating 2-4 discussion questions via NYU Classes by 5PM the day before class.

In addition to presenting the readings (which will count toward your participation grade), there will be three additional assignments:

1) NGO / Social movement report. This will be a report on the NGO or social movement of your choice. The paper should be approximately 3000 words and answer the following questions. 1) What does the activist organization do? 2) How is it structured and governed? 3) What are the main issues it works on? 4) What is their most successful work (in your estimation) and why? 5) What factors do you think contributed to this success and why? Students will give preliminary presentations midway through the semester to both present cases of advocacy to the class, and to help refine the answers to the questions posted above. There will be three interim assignments to
keep you on track. Those are described in a separate document on NYU Classes, but due dates are noted below.

2) Summaries of readings. For the two readings that you present in class, you are also responsible for writing a 1-2 page summary of the reading. This is due to me by email before class starts.

3) Midterm exam

4) Final exam

Attendance & Participation
You are expected to participate in discussions, and this will be significant part of your final grade (see below). Simply sitting in the class sessions will not earn you full marks on participation; coming to class with questions and comments will. I will take attendance on an unannounced basis. You will be granted one “freebie”—a class you may miss without penalty. Thereafter, each absence will result in a reduction in your participation grade. If for some reason, you have to come late to class or leave early, it is courteous to let me know beforehand.

Grading
Participation: 10%
Presentations of readings (includes leading discussion): 10%
NGO report: 30%
Summaries of readings: 20%
Midterm: 15%
Final: 15%

Legal

1. All deadlines are final. For each day an assignment is late, a half grade will be deducted. This means if an A- paper is one day late, it will be a B+. If a B paper is two days late, it will be a C. THE ONLY exception to this rule is if you have a note from the Dean. Unless you have a note from the Dean, no extensions will be granted.

2. Please read the policy on academic honesty and plagiarism. More detail can be found at http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity. Plagiarism results in failure in the class and referral to your academic dean. It includes: copying sentences or fragments from any source without quotes and references; not citing a source used in your papers; citing internet information without proper citation; presenting someone else’s work as your own; or inadvertently copying verbatim from any source. NYU offers academic support and tutoring at the University Learning Center: www.nyu.edu/cas/ulc, (212) 998-8085.

3. I reserve the right to consider extraordinary or unforeseen circumstances on a case-by-case basis.
4. Re-grade requests for exams will be honored only if accompanied by a comprehensive written explanation of why you deserve a higher grade. Note that if accepted, a request for re-grading may result in the raising or lowering of your grade.

**Other Class Policies**

1. No laptops. Please bring hard copies of the readings to class. The only exception is if you have permission from ESS. Here’s why:

   “Experimental tests of immediate retention of class material have also found that Internet browsing impairs performance. Moreover, recent research suggests that even when laptops are used solely to take notes, they may still be impairing learning because their use results in shallower processing.”


2. No texting. If I see you texting, you will be asked to leave class and will be marked absent for the day. Please turn off your cell phones.

3. During the semester I am prepared to meet by appointment with any and all students enrolled in this course. I would like especially to meet with students with disabilities who are registered with the Moses Center who may need individual arrangements.

    *****

**Week 1: Origins (6 Sept)**

- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*
- Lenin, V.I. *What is to be done?*
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks.* “State and Civil Society”

**Week 2: Competing views of power (13 Sept)**


**Week 3: Politics in the polis (20 Sept)**

**Week 3: Early movements (27 Sept)**


**Week 4: Radical ecophilosophy & environmentalism (4 Oct)**


Project assignment #1 due: What organization / social movement do you plan to work on? What resources are available to find out more about its activities?

**Week 5: Local activism (11 Oct)**


**Week 6: The birth of the NGO (18 Oct)**


**Week 7: Environmentalism in the US (25 Oct)**


**Week 8: Going global (1 Nov)**


Project Assignment #2 due: Please provide a research journal. Describe the research that you have done to date, listing 5 scholarly sources. You should also describe 2 questions that you plan to answer and provide 3 bullet points for next steps.

**Week 9: Going global and staying local (8 Nov)**


*Tactics*

**Week 10: Insiders' success (15 Nov)**


**Week 11: Discourse (22 Nov)**


**Week 12: Direct Action (6 Dec)**


*Project Assignment #3: Rough drafts due.*

**Week 13: Final Presentation (13 Dec)**

• Each student will give a 15-20 minute presentation on the NGO / social movement that is the topic of their paper. This will include an overview of the organization, highlights of their successful work and recommendations to their hypothetical board of directors / stakeholders.