

Environmental Movements
Yale-NUS College, YID 3208
Mondays and Thursdays, 2:30 - 4:00

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00-12:00 and 1:00-2:00 and by appointment

Course Description: In the ongoing struggle to ensure a livable planet, there are many actors with which environmental studies students are familiar: policymakers, corporations, NGOs and individual citizens. Yet one of the prime movers is one we sometimes study in the least detail: social movements, which are sustained and collective efforts by ordinary people to change some aspect of their society through extra-institutional means. In focusing on environmental activism, this course asks: What are the goals and philosophies that have guided environmental movements, and what are the strategies and tactics that have proved effective – or counterproductive – to achieving their ends? What are the roles of art, creativity, humor, social media and direct action in achieving change? How can we measure ‘success’ and ‘failure’? How can the critical study of environmental movements inform our understanding of current and future movements, especially in relation to anthropogenic climate change? This course will focus on environmental movements from a sociological and historical perspective. We will explore a wide variety of movements, such as conservationist, radical environmentalist, anti-nuclear, corporate social responsibility, environmental justice and divestment campaigns. These case studies will be supplemented by critical literature on social movement theory and strategy. Our last three weeks are open dates, for which students will suggest and collectively decide on the topics or specific readings we will pursue.

Learning Objectives

- To understand the philosophies, goals, strategies and tactics of environmental movements
- To identify the different categories of movements and campaigns
- To assess which strategies and tactics have been more or less effective in particular situations (and how we might define ‘success’ and ‘failure’)
- To imagine yourself in the position of environmental activists and other stakeholders who influence and respond to them
- To evaluate an ongoing movement and recommend particular strategies and tactics for increasing global sustainability

What to Expect

- **Expect to attend class.** Active attendance in every class is mandatory and crucial to your success in the course. Participation in class discussions forms a significant part of your final grade.
- **Expect to do a fair amount of reading.** You will need to set aside time outside of class every day and start earlier on assignments than you might think you need to. Keeping up with the reading and writing is your responsibility.
- **Expect to succeed.** If you apply yourself to doing the work in this class, you can expect to learn. On the other hand, if you don’t commit to doing the work or attending class, don't expect to learn what the course is designed to teach.
- **Expect to learn new things.** Try to bring the full weight of your academic and personal experience to bear on this subject, but also see it with fresh eyes. Expect to be surprised, confused, and hopefully even inspired.

Readings

The following books are required for this course:

- Andrew Boyd, *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution*
- Steve Lerner, *Diamond: A Struggle for Environmental Justice in Louisiana's Chemical Corridor*
- David Pellow, *Total Liberation: The Power and Promise of Animal Rights and the Radical Earth Movement*

All other readings can be found on the course's Canvas site.

Assignments

Reading Responses: Each student will write up a total of four reading responses (of 750-1000 words) over the course of the semester, where you will formulate your own questions or thoughts regarding the material and/or issues we're engaged with in this class. The responses should go into detail on course concepts or readings, or use them as a springboard to explore a subject we're covering in more detail than class time allows. Students are invited to connect our concepts and discussions to other ES (or non-ES) classes, outside readings, and/or personal experiences, but the responses should be tethered to course issues and material. Responses should be uploaded to Canvas *and* posted on the course blog.

Class Participation: You should read any assigned materials before class and be prepared to participate in class discussions. You may ask about your participation grade (which includes attendance) at any point during the semester, and you will receive a preliminary evaluation of your class participation halfway through the semester. As part of your participation grade, you are expected to make at least eight substantive comments on other students' reading responses. Each student is expected to meet one-on-one with the instructor for approximately 15 minutes outside of class during the first third of the semester.

Leading Discussion: Over the course of the semester, each student will join with another student to lead discussion once. For that day you will decide our agenda. You are welcome to assign (short) supplementary materials, send out discussion questions before class, introduce outside material, devise exercises, and prepare generative questions.

Major Project: You have two options for our major project:

- a) A group project. As a class or in smaller groups, each student will participate in a collaborative project of active learning around environmental advocacy. In groups, you will design a campaign, carry out initial steps, and write reflective self-critiques, highlighting how you've drawn on course material and discussions. We will flesh out the details of this assignment together. You will be graded based on your creativity, your effort, and your application of course material.
- b) A research paper. Students will write a research paper of 4000-5000 words that draws on course material to analyze a contemporary environmental campaign.

Evaluation Guidelines:

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|---------------------|-----|
| Participation: | 25% |
| Leading Discussion: | 6% |
| Blog posts: | 24% |
| Final Exam: | 15% |
| Major Project: | 30% |

If your performance shows significant improvement over the course of the semester, I reserve the right (but assume no obligation) to raise your final grade.

Academic Integrity

When you submit assignments via Canvas, you will be required to check a box that confirms that all of your work is your own, and that all sources, quotations, and paraphrasing are noted and cited appropriately. Be especially diligent in this regard, and feel free to approach me with any questions or concerns about how to ensure that all the work you submit is truly “your own.”

By a vote of the faculty of Yale-NUS College, professors must refer any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Integrity Committee for assessment and adjudication. In this regard, I reproduce here a passage on Academic Integrity from the Yale-NUS website:

Yale-NUS College expects its students to abide by the highest standards of academic integrity as a matter of personal honesty and communal responsibility. Acting with academic integrity requires that (a) students do their own work, (b) students not interfere with the work of others, (c) students accurately and honestly represent the content of their work, and (d) students properly attribute others’ work. Violations of the College’s academic integrity standards undermine both the community and the individual growth of students. Accordingly, they will be addressed with the utmost seriousness and sanctions ranging from grade penalties to expulsion. Examples of violations of academic integrity include plagiarism, copying or sharing homework answers, submitting work completed for one course as ‘new’ work for another course, or fabricating or falsifying research data. Professors are obligated to refer suspected lapses in academic integrity to the Academic Integrity Committee, which follows a set of policies and procedures approved by the faculty when investigating and adjudicating cases.

Class Participation

A significant portion of your overall course grade flows from your contributions to seminar discussion. I will provide guidelines for the successful completion of writing assignments as part of each essay or research assignment, but here I offer guidelines and criteria for the successful completion of the discussion component of the course:

A: An A grade class participation is awarded when students regularly initiate discussion. This means coming to class thoroughly familiar with the assigned reading and, therefore, prepared to raise questions, to open discussion, to identify topics of interest in the reading, and to engage other students in the discussion. (This does not mean monopolizing a discussion, shutting others out, or talking for its own sake rather than to make a point about the topic under discussion.)

B: A B grade for class participation is awarded to students who participate regularly and productively in class discussion, who are prepared, and who are willing to engage. B discussants differ from A students in that the latter are self-starters who do not rely on the instructor's questions to set the agenda for discussion.

C: A C grade for class participation is awarded to those who participate on a regular basis, though less frequently than the B student. C discussants will be prepared for class, but their contributions will indicate that less thought has been given to assigned materials.

D: A D grade for class participation is given to those who contribute only infrequently to the discussion and whose contributions do not appear to arise from thoughtful consideration of the assignments.

F: An F grade results from non-participation in class discussion or any pattern of behavior that interferes with responsible and mature group discussion. Of course, participation is impossible if the putative participant is not in class. Frequent absences mandate F grades.

Discussion Tips

1. *Come to class with things to say* – this implies careful reading and reflection beforehand.
2. Another version of #1: *Make notes as you read, and as you reflect on discussion. Draw on these notes while in class.*
3. Aim to contribute to discussion at least once a class meeting.
4. Don't go more than two class meetings without saying something.
5. The name of the game is quality, not quantity. *Too many less-than-useful contributions are worse than saying too little.*
6. *Listen carefully to what others are saying. Don't dominate.* Forget this, and you won't do well. Good discussion is like a free-flowing conversation with friends that you value and respect. It is not "sequential opinion expression." It's characterized by building on what others have said and drawing your colleagues out with your comments.
7. Therefore, *a promising contribution might begin with "I want to second what Lin said, but also add the following..." or "I see Bing's point, but another way to look at it is..." or "to build on Matt's ideas a bit more..."*
8. *Try not to focus on the professor when you're talking. Address the entire class.*
9. Questions for the group are often a provocative way of framing discussion. For example, "it seems to me that Plato is obsessed with caves, and here's why – did others read him the same way?" Indeed, *asking good questions is usually more valuable than offering good answers.*
10. As others are talking, resist the urge to rehearse in your own mind what you're going to say next. You'll miss nuances that you'll need for discussion, and for your papers.
11. *Tolerate Silence. People need time to think. Tolerate Silence.*
12. *Try to organize your thoughts before speaking. Sometimes jotting a few notes down helps.* Thinking aloud is occasionally OK, but too much of it detracts from your ability to communicate your ideas. Resist saying the first thing that pops into your mind.
13. *Be cognizant of gender and racial dynamics.*
14. Don't be excessively polite. I won't be. It's not personal. If someone says something with which you disagree, or that makes you uncomfortable (personally or intellectually), you owe it to them to say so. You'd expect nothing less.
15. Nevertheless, don't confuse effective seminar discussion with knock-down, drag-out debating. *Your aim isn't to score points. It's to help the entire group explore the material and respectively identify areas of agreement and disagreement, and domains of "truth" and "ambiguity."*
16. *Wherever possible, draw from and refer to course material. Demonstrate your command of the material.*

Late Work

- Exceptions to the deadline policies may (rarely) be made at the instructor's discretion, but only when there are extenuating circumstances such as a personal emergency or an illness requiring professional medical attention. These circumstances must be documented and brought to my attention before the deadline for a paper arrives.
- You are advised to start assignments early so that if an issue arises which cannot be documented to our satisfaction but which still prevents you from finishing on time, you will still have at least some work to turn in by the deadline and thus avoid receiving no credit at all.

Additional Information

- **Nondiscriminatory Language and Conduct:** This course has a policy of non-discriminatory language and conduct. Students should not use racist, sexist or other discriminatory language in class discussions or written work.
- **Learning Disabilities:** Students with learning disabilities should contact the Vice Rector's office for support and guidance.

Schedule

The State of Environmentalism Today

January 9

- No class

January 12

- Paul Hawken, *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Social Movement in History is Restoring Grace, Justice, and Beauty to the World*, "The Beginning," "Immunity," and "Restoration" (59)

January 16

- Mark Dowie, "American Environmentalism: A Movement Courting Irrelevance" (25)
 - *Optional:* Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus, "The Death of Environmentalism: Global Warming Politics in a Post-Environmental World" (28)

Sociology of Social Movements

January 19

- Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, "Introduction," "Political Opportunities and Constraints," "Acting Contentiously," "Framing Contention" and "Mobilizing Structures and Contentious Politics" (75)

Broader Histories

January 23

- Ramachandra Guha and Juan Martinez-Alier, *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South*, "The Environmentalism of the Poor" (18)
 - Chad Montrie, *A People's History of Environmentalism in the United States*, "To Stir Up Dissent and Create Turmoil: Inventing Environmental Justice," "Conclusion: Rethinking Environmentalism, Past and Present" (30)

Tactics

January 26

- Jesse Singhal, "Why Some Protests Succeed While Others Fail"
 - Andrew Boyd, *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution*. Read "Bidder 70," "Tar Sands Action," and a third Case Study of your choosing, along with *all* of the related Theories, Tactics and Principles.

Case Study: Environmental Justice

January 30

- Steve Lerner, *Diamond: A Struggle for Environmental Justice in Louisiana's Chemical Corridor*, 1-149

February 2

- *Diamond*, 153-286

Case Study: Climate Justice and Divestment

February 6

- Wen Stephenson, *What We're Fighting for Now is Each Other: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Climate Justice*, "The New Abolitionists," "Organizing for Survival" and "We Have to Shut It Down" (76)

February 9

- Per Espen Stoknes, *What We Think About When We Try Not to Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action*, "The Roots of Denial: The Psychology of Identity," "From Barriers to Solutions," "The Power of Social Networks," "Reframing the Climate Messages," "Make It Simple to Choose Right," "Using the Power of Stories to Re-story Climate" (73)

February 13

- Laurence Delina and Mark Diesendorf, "Strengthening the Climate Action Movement: Strategies from Contemporary Social Action Campaigns" (17)
- 350.org, "How to Run a Divestment Campaign"

Tactics

February 16

- L.M. Bogard, *Tactical Performance: The Theory and Practice of Serious Play*, "A Red Carpet on the Picket Line" (1-65)

Spring Break

Makeup meeting, date and time TBD

- Jo Clarke, Mel Evans, Hayley Newman, Kevin Smith, Glen Tarman, *Not If But When: Culture Beyond Oil*
- Skype discussion with Mel Evans (of Liberate Tate)

Case Study: The Yes Men

February 27

- *Tactical Performance*, "Critical Simulacra and Tricknology: Oil Enforcement Agents, Yes Men, and Survivaballs" (20)
- Watch *The Yes Men Fix the World* (film)

Case Study: Activism in China

March 2

- Lei Xie, *Environmental Activism in China*, "Environmental Governance and NGOs: An Introduction to China," "Analyzing Chinese Environmental Movement Networks," and "Environmental Activism in Beijing" (75)

March 6

- Jonathan Ansfield, *China and the Environment: The Green Revolution*, "Alchemy of a Protest: The Case of Xiamen PX"
- *The Warriors of Qiugang: A Chinese Village Fights Back* (film)

Case Study: Singapore

March 9

- Maria Francesch-Huidobro, *Governance, Politics and the Environment: A Singapore Study*, "The Power of Persuasion: Conserving Sungei Buloh" (56)
- Conversation with Dr. Hua Chew Ho (of the Singapore Nature Society)

March 13

- *Governance, Politics and the Environment*, "The Power of Protestation: Degazetting the Lower Peirce Reservoir Catchment Area" (24)

Tactics

March 16

- Micah White, *The End of Protest: A New Playbook for Revolution*, selections

Case Study: Animal Rights and Radical Environmentalism

March 20

- David Naguib Pellow, *Total Liberation: The Power and Promise of Animal Rights and the Radical Earth Movement*, 1-122

March 23

- *Total Liberation*, 127-258

Open Dates

March 27

- Open date

March 30

- Open date

April 3

- Open date

April 6

- Open date

April 10

- Open date

April 13

- Open date