

Contentious Politics: Course Number

This course evaluates and analyzes contentious politics using examples from American history to understand the potential and limits of social change. We will survey social movement literature from social science and historical sources for crucial cases and applicable theories which explain the causes and consequences of collective action. We will focus on several examples drawn mainly from the last 65 years. This course requires in-depth discourse on intersections of oppression that shape U.S. politics with attention to dynamics of race, gender, sexuality, and other social locations. Graduate students interested in enrolling should contact the instructor to tailor their learning objectives.

Contact Details

Jamie Morgan

Email: morgan@brandeis.edu

Office location: Building/Room/URL

Communication

Email is the fastest way to reach me, and I will typically respond within 24 hours during the week. Students may book a time to meet individually using this booking link <insert link>.

Continuity

Any changes to readings or assignments, or logistical rearrangements in case of weather or illness, will be communicated through Latte announcements (<http://latte.brandeis.edu>). All lectures, in-person and online, will be recorded to provide continuity of instruction for students. Expect information about guest lectures as schedules are coordinated and confirmed.

Learning During COVID

Adapting to COVID-19 requires that we be deliberative, creative, and agile. We will do our best within the situation we find ourselves in to learn and care for ourselves. Your safety and well-being are at the foremost of course planning. This class is a place for you to learn and grow; I have taken steps to ensure your time with us is a stimulating and invigorating experience.

It is vital that you spend the necessary time working on this course to achieve your expected outcomes. If you face challenges in fully participating at any time, please let me know, and we will work together to identify resources and accommodations.

Content Warning

This section provides a content and trigger warning for the entire semester. Students should be aware that we will engage with topics such as repression, political and police violence, and social inequality. We will not engage with violent content without a purpose and will discuss how violent means influenced the outcomes of movement goals. There may be moments where you will find topics or discussions emotionally challenging or uncomfortable - this is normal, and discomfort can be a part of intellectual growth. That said, we acknowledge that everyone has different limits, and sometimes we don't always know exactly where those limits lie. Students who anticipate discomfort during any lecture should sit near an exit so that, if necessary, they may step out of the room. If you have any concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Meeting Times and Locations

Class Format

This class is designed for in-person instruction.

Class Schedule

Days, Times

<Building/Room/URL>

Student Hours

Students can book appointments for one-on-one meetings through the scheduling link <insert booking link from Doodle>.

Accommodations

Brandeis seeks to create a welcoming and inclusive learning environment for all students, and I want to support you in your learning. We all come to class with different learning styles and skill levels. Everyone sometimes feels challenged by the learning environment, course concepts, or balancing school with life. I'm here to help you reach your educational goals and navigate this class to meet our expectations. Please reach out by email or visit my office hours for support, and we can plan together to maximize your success.

If you think you may require disability accommodations, you will need to work with Student Accessibility Support (SAS) (781-736-3470, access@brandeis.edu). You can find helpful student FAQs and other resources on the [SAS website](#), including guidance on how to know whether you might be eligible for support from SAS. If you already have an accommodation letter from SAS, please provide me with a copy as soon as possible so I can ensure the effective implementation of accommodations for this class.

Course Description

Course Prerequisite(s):

This course does not have any formal prerequisites. Students must be willing to conduct an original research project that demonstrates fact finding using scholarly resources, effective persuasive communication, and clear advocacy goals. Prior coursework in American politics is encouraged.

Teaching Philosophy

I teach using a progressive education philosophy that focuses on active thinking skills rather than relying on memorization. Students are expected to exercise their critical thinking and analytic skills while exercising creativity. I consider our course materials as tools, not authorities, and students will reflect on the curriculum. I am also a critical theorist, and we will examine multiple perspectives in our inquiry process. Our work will focus on social justice, action, and change.

Learning Goals:

Throughout this course, you will develop the following core skills as part of your university learning goals:

- Communication: clearly express facts, ideas, opinions, and beliefs
- Critical Thinking: analyze, interpret and synthesize information and ideas from diverse sources; evaluate the relevance and validity of information, solve challenging problems and arrive at reasoned conclusions
- Knowledge Production: use knowledge to raise and explore new questions; apply different analytic lenses to understand complex issues
- Social Justice: engage in self-reflection; act as socially and ethically responsible members of the class community, understand the interdependence of people; follow the example of Justice Brandeis by contributing to the creation of a just society

How the course will impact you and your career:



- The course will make you a better civic participant and researcher, enabling you to understand problems from various perspectives and evaluate potential solutions with context.
- The degree of inherent commitment to the status-quo in the political system and how collective action is limited by institutional repression.
- This knowledge will put you in a better position to be an agent for change.

Credit Hours:

Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of nine hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, assignments, etc.).

Commitment to an inclusive learning environment:

Each of us enters the classroom from diverse backgrounds and perspectives that strengthen our intellectual community. This class is designed to present materials and activities to enrich and enhance our understanding of the world across numerous factors, including but not limited to race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class, and religion. To help us set expectations for standards of behavior for discourse and critique, we will work together on the first day of class to create a social contract that holds us accountable to an inclusive learning environment.

Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. Please let me know if our class meetings conflict with your religious events.

We will practice civility and inclusion, which includes respecting students' names and pronouns. All students will be referred to by the names and pronouns they use. You are welcome to update your name and pronouns at any point during our time together.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation: Engagement

Your education requires active engagement, and attending class should not be a passive experience. We learn from each other, and your contribution to class is essential. All students are expected to attend every class session and actively engage in this course. If you need to miss a class, please notify me before the class session using the form on Latte.

Engagement can take various forms, including asking questions or offering a comment to the full class, guiding small group discussions and activities, and sharing resources with your colleagues. Active engagement in this course is about more than simply how many times you speak up in class. Part of the learning that happens in a university setting comes from engaging with your peers and challenging your previously held assumptions. As instructors, we also learn from the students' diverse perspectives in this course. I hope this course provides an opportunity for you to engage thoughtfully and critically in an inclusive and constructive environment.

The grade for class session engagement represents 10 percent overall, and you will be provided a rubric. Before our last class, you will be asked to provide a self-assessment of your engagement this semester.

Readings

Students are expected to complete weekly readings before class. Weekly readings provide context to understand the lecture and participate in class. All readings will be provided on Latte.

Assignments

All assignments must be submitted through the links provided on Latte. This syllabus outlines the course assignments. This course consists of three types of assignments: 1) Précis Memos, 2) Team Presentation, 3) and a five-step Case Study. Every assignment will be discussed in class, and I will provide you with a rubric.

All written assignments must be submitted electronically through Latte as a Microsoft Word document or PDF. File names should follow the following convention, lastname_assignment_date; for example, morgan_precis_10-3-23. We will follow [APA writing style conventions](#).

Précis

Over the course, you will choose when to submit five précis memos ahead of class that analyze the assigned readings. A rhetorical précis is a brief summary of the key takeaways and your critiques of a reading. The ability to analyze and synthesize the main points of a large volume of information can serve you well in many contexts, especially as a political scientist. A précis is an active reading tool to situate readings in relation to one another and understand the interdisciplinary scope of the field. As you build your own bibliographies as a researcher, the habit of writing précis for every new piece you read will help you catalog, compare, and reflect on where a new piece fits within your personal library of relevant literature. These summaries are not neutral, and as you analyze what the text says and does in its contribution to the discourse. The practice of writing a précis as the last step of your active reading will help you gauge how the piece fits into your persuasive arguments. A précis is a highly structured way of condensed writing. Follow the provided guidelines for detailed instructions on writing a précis: [precis.pdf](#)

Team Presentation

I will lead an introduction to contentious politics and five themes essential to our course that broadly cover movement theories across topics of race, class, gender, sexuality, and intersectionality. Students will vote to select four student teams-led themes. Each student team will focus on one topic from the list that the class has developed. Your team will have an entire class session to present and lead a discussion. I will prepare and lead a companion session to yours the following class.

We will use a consensus practice to build out our student-lead themes as a class. In an online survey, you will indicate your top choices for topics that we have not addressed directly in class or that warrant further exploration. Possible themes include backlash and repression, occupy movements, social media as a strategy, learning from action in authoritarian regimes, or a deeper dive into a contentious case such as the disability movement's role in the ADA. Teams of students will be assigned on a random basis.

Your team will present a short (15-20 minute) PowerPoint and lead the class discussion. Each team will meet with the instructor to focus on what readings they will select. Readings must be approved at least two weeks before your class session. Additional meetings with the instructor are strongly encouraged to prepare your class presentation. Teams will debrief with the instructor after the presentation, ideally directly after class.

Case Study

Each student will write a 10–12-page independent research paper that allows you to interpret and analyze one historical case using our course readings and other scholarship. You may choose any topic; however, your case must be an episode of U.S. collective action from 1955 to the present. The paper aims to marshal facts and evidence to make valid claims concerning the political processes that characterize these interactions. This semester, we have explored scholarship that uses a case study to make theoretical claims. For example, McAdam developed the political process model from his analysis of the Civil Rights

Movement. Your paper must discuss how your results might inform social movement strategies and tactics to address a real-world problem.

We will practice a multi-step writing process to develop your final paper over the semester. These writing steps include your idea, proposal, annotated bibliography, peer-review, and final paper.

Idea: Each student will submit a summary of your topic choice. Aim for 2-3 sentences that name your main movement and institutional actors, provide dates that limit the study's time period, and identify one or more concept(s) (theoretical frameworks found in our readings) that you will explore in your analysis of the episode. I will provide quick comments to structure your work. You may consult the materials posted on Latte to help you think about choosing your topic, including the section at the top of the site labeled "Additional Resources" and the case materials at the bottom, e.g., "Stonewall riot."

Proposal: Each student will write a 3–4-page proposal for the final paper. The proposal will expand your idea to 1) an appropriately detailed description of the episode, including the organizations involved, the setting and historical context, and the eventual outcome of this struggle; 2) uses one or more concept(s) to analyze the episode. Your proposal must draw on and cite at least two scholarly books or articles outside our course readings. Quality contents of this paper can be inserted directly into your final paper.

You must include a research question in your proposal of this type: "What is the effect of *episode* on *concept*?" For example: "What do the George Floyd protests during the summer of 2020 tell us about the general validity of Doug McAdam's claims regarding "political opportunity structure" found in Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency?"

Successful papers discuss a specific aspect of the arguments that you intend to explore. While many scholars use case studies to find confirmatory examples of theory in action, you may want to argue the opposite (i.e., What do you think might be wrong or incomplete about these aspects of these arguments?). Remember, the goal of the paper is to search for and present facts and evidence to evaluate the strength of general claims concerning the political processes that govern contentious politics in the United States.

Annotated Bibliography: Find, analyze, and summarize 8-10 sources relevant to your paper. You must prioritize academic and peer-reviewed materials. We will have a workshop with the library to help you prepare for this assignment and frame how citation is a powerful way to promote ideas and center voices in knowledge production.

Peer-Review Draft: You will prepare a draft of your final paper for peer-review. The further along your paper is to a final draft, the more benefit you will receive from peer review. You will be assigned a partner and receive a structured worksheet to provide peer review. The peer review worksheet is divided into three parts: 1) specific areas that you would like feedback on, (2) content included in the paper, and (3) writing, structure, and organization. You will be asked to note at least one strength and one suggestion for improvement for each evaluation area.

Final Paper: Your 10–12-page final paper will be a focused analysis that will draw on a limited amount of original research. This document will be graded and comprise 30% of your final grade.

Suggested Structure of Key Final Paper Elements:

A. Real-world importance of your case study selection. What were the consequences and effects of your event or movement? Why did you choose it? Why is this important to the real world?

B. Introduce your theoretical question, citing scholars, and explain why it is important to know more about this question. Explain at least four citations from our reading list that inform your understanding of the theoretical issue at the heart of your case.

C. Context. Provide relevant context of your social movement that relates to the theoretical question. Describe the broader, national, state, social, and political context surrounding your event or episode. You must use some primary source material in this section (e.g., archives, newspapers, manuscripts, etc.).

D. Analysis. Discuss the theoretical question you introduced in section B. What does your episode tell us about the validity of author X's claims regarding the theory? (1 page). How useful or misleading are the histories or theories you have investigated, and how can they be applied to the real world? What new research would you recommend to further clarify your studied issues? Discuss whether your real-world case reflects the theoretical process you proposed to govern the case. You must finally discuss how your results might inform social movement strategies and tactics in hopes of addressing the real-world problem you introduced at the beginning of your paper.

Evaluation and Grading

Students can monitor their progress on Latte and are welcome to make an appointment to discuss grading. Grading rubrics will be provided separately for each assignment.

<u>Class Element</u>	<u>Grade Percentage</u>
Précis Memos	15%
Team Presentation	10%
Paper Idea	5%
Paper Proposal	10%
Annotated Bibliography	10%
Peer-Review	10%
Final Case Study Paper	30%
Class Engagement	10%

Course Schedule

The course schedule is an outline by the week of our class topic and readings. Updates and changes to this outline will be announced via Latte. All course materials will be available on Latte and are required for class preparation.

Week	Topic	Preparation
1	Greeting, Syllabus Review, Classroom Contract, Discussion on Social Change	Complete the class welcome survey Watch: Angela Davis: How Does Change Happen? Read: " The Combahee River Collective Statement "
2	Intro Contentious Politics	Tilly & Tarrow "Contentious Politics" - Part One; pages 3-25 Tarrow "Power in Movements" – Chapter 1; pages 16-34 McAdam & Tarrow "Ballots and Barricades"
3	Race and Political Process Models	McAdam "Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency" – Chapter 3; pages 36-60 Morris "Social Movement Theory: Lessons from Sociology of W.E.B. Bois" Bracey "Black Movements Need Black Theorizing: Exposing Implicit Whiteness in Political Process Theory"

4	Gender and Mobilization	Klandermans “The Dynamics of Demand”; - Chapter 1; pages 3-12 Blee “Becoming a Racist: Women in Contemporary Ku Klux Klan and Neo-Nazi” Robnett “How Long? How Long” – Part 1; pages 3-32 Munson “The Making of Pro-Life Activists” – Part 2; pages 18-75
5	Class and Political Institutions	Piven and Cloward “Poor People’s Movements” – Chapter 1 (pages 1-40) Martin “Rich People’s Movements” – Introduction (1-23) Williamson, Skocpol, & Coggin “The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism” Listen: “ The Whiteness of Wealth ”
6	Sexuality and Cultural Change	Van Dyke and Taylor “The Cultural Outcomes of Social Movements” Andersen “Transformative events in the LGBTQ rights movement.” Armstrong and Cragg “Movements and Memory: the Making of the Stonewall Myth”
7	Intersectionality and Strategies for Resistance	Meyer and Staggenborg “Thinking About Strategy” Hill Collins “Rethinking Black Women’s Activism” Ganz “Resources and Resourcefulness: Strategic Capacity in the Unionization of California Agriculture, 1959-1966” Leandro Gimeno “The Reluctant Reproductive Justice Organizer and Birthworker”
8	Research Workshop with Library Guest Speaker	Review: https://guides.library.brandeis.edu/politics
9	Theme 1	<i>Student Presentation</i>
10	Theme 2	<i>Student Presentation</i>
11	Theme 3	<i>Student Presentation</i>
12	Theme 4	<i>Student Presentation</i>
13	Peer-Review Workshop Final Class Reflection	Miller, B., et al. (2013). How To Be a Peer Reviewer: A Guide for Recent and Soon-to-be PhDs. <i>PS: Political Science & Politics</i> , 46(1), 120-123. doi:10.1017/S104909651200128X

Important Policies and Resources

Academic Integrity

Every university community member is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. A student shall not submit work that is falsified or is not the result of the student's own effort. Infringement of academic integrity by a student subjects that student to serious penalties, which may include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension from the University or other sanctions. Please consult [Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities](#) for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work via TurnItIn.com or similar software to verify originality. A student who is in doubt regarding standards of academic integrity as they apply to a specific course or assignment should consult the faculty member responsible for that course or assignment before submitting the work. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to

the Department of Student Rights and Community Standards. Citation and research assistance can be found at [Brandeis Library Guides - Citing Sources](#).

Breaks

Each meeting of 90 minutes will include a 10-minute break.

Classroom Health and Safety

- Register for the [Brandeis Emergency Notification System](#). Students who receive an emergency notification while attending class should notify their instructor immediately. In the case of a life-threatening emergency, call 911. As a precaution, review [this active shooter information sheet](#).
- Brandeis provides [this shuttle service](#) for traveling across campus or to downtown Waltham, Cambridge and Boston.
- Review up to date [COVID-related health and safety policies](#) regularly.

Course Materials/Books/Apps/Equipment

If you are having difficulty purchasing course materials, please make an appointment with your Student Financial Services or Academic Services advisor to discuss possible funding options, including vouchers for purchases made at the Brandeis Bookstore.

LATTE

[LATTE](#) is the Brandeis learning management system. Login using your UNET ID and password. For LATTE help, contact Library@brandeis.edu.

Library

[The Brandeis Library](#) collections and staff offer resources and services to support Brandeis students, faculty and staff. Librarians and Specialists from Research & Instructional Services, Public Services, Archives & Special Collections, Sound & Image Media Studios, MakerLab, AutomationLab, and Digital Scholarship Lab are available to help you through consultations and workshops.

Our librarian for political science is Aimee Slater, aslater@brandeis.edu; please reach out for assistance on resources and research tips.

Privacy

To protect your privacy in any case where this course involves online student work outside of Brandeis password-protected spaces, you may choose to use a pseudonym/alias. You must share the pseudonym/alias with me and any teaching assistants as needed. Alternatively, with prior consultation, you may submit such work directly to me.

Student Support

Brandeis University is committed to supporting all our students so they can thrive. If a student, faculty, or staff member wants to learn more about support resources, the [Support at Brandeis](#) webpage offers a comprehensive list that includes these staff colleagues you can consult, along with other support resources:

- [Care Team](#)
- [Academic Services](#) (undergraduate)
- [Graduate Student Affairs](#)
- [University Ombuds](#)
- [Office of Equal Opportunity](#)
- [Health Center](#)
- [Feminist Sexual Ethics Project](#)
- [Report It!](#)
- [Sexual Harassment Prevention Resources](#)