



Communication Studies (CMNS) 385

Rebel with a Cause: Social Movements in History and Popular Culture (Revision 3)

Status:

Replaced with new revision, see the **course listing** [↗](#) for the current revision **✖**

Delivery mode:

Individualized study online [↗](#)

Credits:

3

Areas of study:

Arts or Social Science

Prerequisites:

There are no prerequisites for Communications Studies 385. However, it is recommended that students have at least one previous course in sociology, such as **SOCI 348 Sociology of Environment and Health**.

Precluded:

CMNS 385 is a cross-listed course—available in two disciplines—with **SOCI 378**. (CMNS 385 may not be taken for credit by students who have obtained credit in SOCI 378.)

Challenge:

CMNS 385 is not available for challenge.

Faculty:**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences** 

Overview

CMNS 385 explores the causes of social movements. These causes include both the *negatives*—that is, the pressing social, economic, and environmental (and other) injustices that have caused social movements over history to protest—and the *positives*—those being the “worthy” causes—or the *alternatives and answers* that social movements posit to correct these injustices. Course readings, resources, and assignments give attention to a range of social movement causes in history and in contemporary times, in theory and in practice, and in relation to developments in popular culture.

The course begins with an overview of the origins of social movements as a distinct form of public politics. Rooted deep in history, social movements have evolved over time to constitute an enduring feature of popular culture in democratic and democratizing societies. We learn about a range of theories and methodologies for studying social movements and apply these toward explaining how movements have changed over time and ways that they have contributed to positive social change directly or, more broadly, through creation of contexts and social relations that facilitate democratization of cultures, governance, and economic activities that, in fact, impact everyone’s lives.

Course readings consist of articles written by scholars, activists, and artists, along with videos by documentary film makers and musicians. The readings and course activities examine specific cases of social movement activism and explain, with reference to a range of cases and concepts, how and why activists mobilize, campaign, communicate demands, and impact learning and change at different levels, including in policy and popular culture. The course is premised on the recognition of social movements as important contributors to democratization, both in theory and in practice, in history and today. As such, we focus on the development of social movements as they seek to make change using peaceful (though not always quiet) means.

Outline

CMNS 385 is presented in five units:


- Unit 1: Social Movements in History and Popular Culture
- Unit 2: Lenses on Ecological Social Movements
- Unit 3: Fenceline Activists and Environmental Causes
- Unit 4: Gender, Race, Class, and Food Justice Social Movements
- Unit 5: Social Movements and Social Change

Evaluation


Your final grade in CMNS 385 is based on the grades you achieve on the following graded elements: five critical commentaries (one per unit), a research proposal, a literature review, and a final examination. To **receive credit** [↗](#) for the course, you must achieve a minimum grade of D (50 percent) on the final examination and a minimum overall course grade of **D (50 percent)** [📄](#).

Activity	Weight
Critical Commentaries	40%
Research Assignment Part 1: Proposal	10%
Research Assignment Part 2: Literature Review	20%
Final Online Examination	30%
Total	100%

The **final examination** for this course must be requested in advance and written under the supervision of an AU-approved exam invigilator. Invigilators include either ProctorU or an approved in-person invigilation centre that can accommodate online exams. Students are responsible for payment of any invigilation fees. Information on exam request deadlines, invigilators, and other exam-related questions, can be found at the **Exams and grades** [↗](#) section of the Calendar.





To learn more about assignments and examinations, please refer to Athabasca University's [online Calendar](#) .

Materials

This course either does not have a course package or the textbooks are open-source material and available to students at no cost. This course has a **Course Administration and Technology Fee** , but students are not charged the Course Materials Fee.

All required materials for this course, including readings and films, can be found online.

Important links

- › [Academic advising](#) 
- › [Program planning](#) 
- › [Request assistance](#) 
- › [Support services](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

Opened in Revision 3, April 9, 2019

Updated January 28, 2025

View [previous revision](#) 