

Environmental Activism

Winter 2017 Olin-Rice 370

Monday Nights 7-10 pm

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We live in a social movement society. Though we are not always aware of the level of activism going on around us, the number and different types of organizations working to create some type of social change is larger than ever before. Nationally, Minnesota usually ranks in the top three for indicators regarding civic engagement, non-profit donations, and volunteer time, and it has the fifth highest number of non-profits in the country.

This seminar presents students with a historic and current look at environmental activism. We will examine how activists try to create change on behalf of the environment and survey various approaches to environmental advocacy – from individual, to organizational, to community based – emphasizing strengths and weaknesses.

Students in this class will learn and practice some of the skills needed to be an effective environmental advocate, including the development of effective actions and strategies, and methods for implementing these through organized, collective action. This course will also introduce you to some basic activism skills, including understanding the role of non-profit advocacy groups and the variety of strategies they use, branding, working with volunteers, using art as a tool for activism, direct action, entrepreneurship, and others. We will also explore the emergence of new types of activism and legal advocacy, the tension between national organizations and grassroots efforts, day-to-day battles vs. long term goals, elite leadership and global activism. Guest speakers from a variety of organizations will contribute to this understanding. This knowledge will be useful for those working within government, the private sector, environmental advocacy groups, and as citizen activists.

Our learning goals for the semester are as follows:

1. Identify and date the emergence and development of the environmental movement, situate it in its historical and present moment, considering some of the issues and challenges that face the environmental movement.
2. Analyze actors and actions within the environmental movement to help explain why the movement emerged when it did, who their constituencies were, and what circumstances allowed them to succeed or fail.
3. Examine the variety of stakeholders who influence the success or failure of advocacy campaigns.
4. Identify the potential environmental and social consequences of different campaigns.
5. Gain some basic hands on skills in non-profit work, messaging, volunteer work, branding, community engagement, and non-profit event planning.

Since students may have very different interests and motivations for taking this class, many if not most of our class discussions will be based around student questions and other short assignments. While we have readings to start our journey, your interests and passions will be the drivers in filling out the rest of semester.

Your input is crucial to the course development and to your classmates' learning. You are required to come to class prepared to engage the assigned material at each class meeting. This also means keeping up with the reading, being supportive and considerate of others—I expect you to come to class with a willingness to express your responses to the readings and to your classmates' comments. I also encourage you to add to class discussion even when you are still thinking things through or you are puzzled by something.

To facilitate this process, all students are required to write a short *Typed* response that will also include discussion questions to every class meeting. These responses are due no later than noon on Monday so that I have the time to synthesize them before class. You might start by selecting a short passage from each reading that you feel is important, provocative, inspiring, and/or confusing. You can type the passage or explain the passage in your own words, situating it in the author's main argument, write a reflection that includes a discussion question related to your passage that is designed to prompt intelligent discussion with your peers (avoid simplistic Yes/No or "*Do you agree*" type questions). Your write-up should demonstrate close, careful reading. Your question must be directly related to the reading assignment in ways you can further clarify in class. I will call on students during the class to put forth their discussion questions, so be sure to be prepared to engage in meaningful discussion about your passages and questions.

In addition, Please come prepared with two typed questions for each guest, based on the general topic they are presenting on. There is potential for these assignments to be revised based on student desires and needs.

You might think of your undergraduate education as a full time job. It is a norm at Macalester that students are required to put **ten to twelve** hours into their course work, including class time.

Grading: (Subject to revision)

- Participation 25%
- Student responses 20%
- Short projects 10% each
- Activist event and reflection 10%
- Final Project and Action 25%

Texts:

- Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Island Press, 1993)
- Frank Zelko. *Make It a Green Peace! The Rise of Countercultural Environmentalism*. (2013) (sections only)
- Elizabeth Blum *Love Canal Revisited: Race, Class, and Gender in Environmental Activism* (2008)
- Rebecca Solnit *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities* (2014, revised edition)



Office Hours: are by appointment. I teach all day Tuesdays and Thursdays, but we should be able to find a time on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday in a given week. I am committed to identifying ways for students to be successful and engaged in this course. Do not be shy. This is a great way to interact with me, offer me feedback about how things are going in the class, learn about course related contacts and opportunities, discuss course readings and projects, and share your goals and concerns that might extend beyond our time in class.

E-mail: I will respond to e-mail inquiries or phone calls within 48 hours.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: Reasonable adjustments are available for students with documented disabilities. Students should meet with the Associate Dean of Students, Lisa Landreman, at the start of the term to ensure that your accommodations are approved and in place. You can reach Lisa in the Office of Student Affairs, 119 Weyerhaeuser, at 651-696-6220, or by email at llandrem@macalester.edu

Academic Integrity: The best learning environment is one based on mutual respect and trust. Macalester has established codes concerning proper academic conduct and the consequences resulting from improper behavior. If you are unclear about what constitutes academic dishonesty or plagiarism, please ask me or inquire with a librarian – Ignorance is not an excuse.

Please turn off all electronic devices including laptops, i-pads and cell phones during class time. I plan to be firm about this policy.

You are responsible to check for assignment revisions and updates on Moodle each week by Sunday

Unit One History of the Environmental Movement

Week one January 23rd

Introduction to the class, and one another

Monumental (2012)

Optional women's march readings

Week two January 30th

Gottlieb pp. 31-120 (the introduction is optional)

Short student presentations on "successful environmental actions"

First two acts of *Fierce Green Fire* (2012)

Week three February 6th

Gottlieb pp. 217-306

Guest: Jeannie Fox, Overview of non-profits and the role of non-profits in environmental advocacy

Finish *Fierce Green Fire* (2011)

Week four February 13th

Gottlieb pp.217-306

Additional short readings TBA

Guest: Anee McDonald ten steps toward better branding

Week five February 20th

Gottlieb pp. 307-409

Additional short readings

Guests will include representatives from the Sierra Club, the Nature Conservancy, and Wilderness Watch

Unit Two Environmental Justice and Activism

Week six February 27th

Elizabeth Bloom pp 7-85

Additional readings TBA

Guest: Ameer McDonald (again)

Week seven March 6th

Elizabeth Bloom pp. 85-150

First short project due

SPRING BREAK!

The remainder of the semester TBA. Topics may include direct action, non-violent action, community engagement, using art and entrepreneurship as a tools for activism, and fundraising.

