

**SOC 316 Fighting Social Injustice from the Margins: Urban Space and Social Protests  
in France (W-Focus)  
(a.k.a. A Survey of Social Changes)**

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**Course Description**

From the French Revolution of 1789 to the Paris Commune of 1848, from May 1968 to the recent Yellow Vest Protests, France has a long tradition of civil disobedience and active resistance. These protests have been led by the powerless, including young people, the urban poor, immigrants, women, and workers. Demonstrations were a means to correct the social wrongs they confronted and bring about social justice.

This course aims to explore a succession of social protests and investigate what they did, why they happened, and what the protesters achieved through their collective actions. We will pay particular attention to the role of *urban space* in facilitating (or limiting) social protests and how urban space in turn has evolved and been transformed with the experiences of social protesters. To delve into these questions about urban space and social protests, this course will combine class lectures and discussions, field trips, and film screenings. By exploring important historical and political events that took place in France, this course aims to provide a better understanding of contemporary French politics and society. Note that this is a writing intensive course (W-Focus) and students need to complete a variety of writing assignments through the semester.

**Student Learning Objectives and Outcomes**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- 1) Clearly understand sociological theories of social movements and articulate the strengths and weaknesses of each theory
- 2) Demonstrate a clear understanding of the causes, processes, and consequences of social protests
- 3) Clearly articulate the relationship between urban space and social protests
- 4) Identify key historical facts and theoretical concepts related to social protests in France
- 5) Analyze important protest events using social movement theories and concepts
- 6) Demonstrate knowledge about what changes social protest events brought about in French society
- 7) Discuss the similarities and differences between past and contemporary social movements in France in terms of demands, actors involved, targets, and means of mobilization
- 8) Identify important places and their symbolic meanings for social activism in Paris
- 9) Critically assess readings and films that address social protests
- 10) Develop an appreciation of diversity and difference by experiencing French society

## Course Requirements

- 1) **Class attendance and participation (20%)**: Students are expected to participate in class discussions, which will be based on the assigned films and readings. Discussion questions will be posted beforehand. In addition, at the beginning of each class session, students are expected to share the places that they visited in the past week. They will discuss how they got there, what they saw, and other details. This practice will help students better understand urban spaces in Paris.
- 2) **Two short papers (15% each, 30% total)**: During the semester, you will write two short papers (3 pages, 750 words) analyzing protests or social movements that have taken place in France. For each paper, you should choose a social movement and discuss the following questions: What were the causes of the movement? Who were the actors involved? What were the targets of the movement? What were its demands and goals? What did they achieve? In your opinion, did it succeed or fail? How did this movement affect current French society? You should integrate the course materials in explaining your answers.
- 3) **Neighborhood project and group presentations (paper 20% + group presentation 10% = 30%)**: For this paper, you will have to think not only about how culture and place are established and defined, but also how they change over time with technology, migration, and other global flows. You will partner with a classmate to conduct field research in a place/neighborhood/region of your choice in Paris. You should address two aspects of this site: mapping and observation. First, describe the site's characteristics: architecture, points of interest, centers of activity, and transportation routes, and discuss how human-made urban infrastructure is used. Second, make observations about everyday life in the place/neighborhood. What are the characteristics of people in the neighborhood (race/ethnicity, class, etc.)? What kinds of activities are they doing? Is the neighborhood diverse or homogenous? What can you tell from the non-human elements in the space (greenery, garbage, signage, sounds, smells)? In your paper, analyze the patterns you observe, using conceptual tools and ideas from the course. Take the time to dig into, synthesize, and criticize ideas. Illustrate your observations with specific details. Tie your insights to specific course readings and lectures.
- 4) **Policy memo (20%)**: Students will write a policy memo (4 pages, 1,000 words). In this memo, students should identify a social or political problem in France and suggest some solutions from a policy-maker perspective. More detailed instructions will be handed out later in the semester.

Note: Late papers will lose one full letter grade per day unless accompanied by a documented medical excuse.

## Grade Scale

A	above 94	B+	87-90	C+	77-80	D	below 70
A-	91-93	B	84-86	C	74-76	F	below 60
		B-	81-83	C-	71-73		

I will be happy to explain why you received the grade you did on any assignment and to discuss how you might improve your performance in the future. But be advised that grades are not up for negotiation.

## **Course Materials**

All reading materials will be posted on Laulima. Please find them on the Resources tab. You must finish assigned readings *before* each class and be fully prepared to discuss them.

## **Course Policies**

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will result in a mandatory grade of F for the course. If you borrow words, ideas, thoughts, etc. from someone, you must give them credit. Purchasing papers online, cheating on exams or turning in work written for another course without the instructor's permission is also unacceptable. You are expected to turn in assignments on the day they are due. **No make-up discussions or exams will be accepted.**

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **Week 1. Introduction**

Introduction to the course and review of the syllabus

### **Week 2. The Urban Revolution**

Henri Lefebvre (1976) "Reflections on the Politics of Space," *Antipode*, 8(2), 30-37.

Henri Lefebvre (2002) "The Right to the City," in *Blackwell City Reader*, edited by Sophie Watson and Gary Bridge, 367-74.

### **Week 3. Understanding Paris**

Walter Benjamin, 2007[1978], "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century" in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, Schocken Books, pp. 146-162.

David Harvey, 2003, "Introduction: Modernity as a Break" in *Paris: Capital of Modernity*, Routledge, pp. 1-22.

Eric Hazan, 2018, *A Walk Through Paris: A Radical Exploration*, Verso, pp. TBA.

### **Field Trip: TBA**

### **Week 4. Theories of Social Movements**

Susan Fainstein and C. Hirst (1995) "Urban social movements," in *Theories of Urban Politics*, edited by D. Judge, G. Stoker and H. Wolman. Thousand Oaks, Sage. 181-204.

Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani. "The study of social movements." In *Social Movements: An Introduction* (Blackwell 2006): pp. 1-29.

<https://voidnetwork.gr/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Social-movements.An-introduction-by-Della-Porta-and-Mario-Diani.pdf>

### **Week 4. The French Revolution**

Charles Tilly, 1986. *The Contentious French: Four Centuries of Popular Struggle*. Harvard University Press, Chapters 1 and 3.

Charles Tilly, 2004. *Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1965-2000*. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 4.

### **Week 5. The Paris Commune**

Ross, Kristen. 2015. *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune*. Verso, pp. TBA.

Gould, Roger V. "Multiple networks and mobilization in the Paris Commune, 1871." *American Sociological Review* (1991): 716-729.

Ross, Kristin. *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune*. University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

### **Week 6. French Intellectuals**

Baert, Patrick (2011). The power struggle of French intellectuals at the end of the Second World War: A study in the sociology of ideas. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 14(4), 415–435. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431011417928>

Sarah Bakewell, "Occupation, Liberation," *At the Existentialist Café* (2016), pp. TBA.

Émile Zola, "I Accuse..." Open letter to the president of the French Republic. <https://jean-max-guieu.facultysite.georgetown.edu/other-interests/english-translation-of-emile-zolas-jaccuse>

**Watch:** *La Chinoise* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1967)

**Field Trip:** St Germain-des-prés, Cimetière du Montparnasse, Centre Culturel Simone de Beauvoir

### **Week 7. Anti-Colonial Thoughts and Movements**

Stefan Kipfer (2007) "Fanon and space: colonization, urbanization, and liberation from the colonial to the global city," *Environment and Planning D*, 25(4), 701-726.

Jim House and Neil Macmaster, 2006. *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror, and Memory*. Oxford University Press, chapter 4.

Jim House (2001) Antiracist memories: The case of 17 October 1961 in historical perspective, *Modern & Contemporary France*, 9:3, 355-368

**Field Trip:** Place du 8 Février 1962

### **Week 8. May 1968 I**

Boltanski, Luc. "The Left After May 1968 and the Longing for Total Revolution." *Thesis Eleven* 69, no. 1 (May 2002): 1–20.

Sarah Waters; Situating Movements Historically: May 1968, Alain Touraine, and New Social Movement Theory. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 1 February 2008; 13 (1): 63–82.

Ross, Kristen. "The Police Conception of History." Chapter 1 in *May '68 and Its Afterlives*. University of Chicago Press, 2004, pp. 19–25.

**Field Trip:** Latin Quarter

**Week 9. May 1968 II.**

Robert Linhart, 1981, *The Assembly Line*

**Watch:** *The Dreamers* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 2003)

**Week 10. After May 1968: Second Wave Feminism**

Christine Delphy, "Women's Liberation: The Tenth Year," (1980) *French Connections: Voices from the Women's Movement in France*

Julian Bourg *Gender and 68: Tensions from the Start*, in *From Revolutions to Ethics*

**Watch:** *Les Années Super-8* (Annie Ernaux and David Ernaux-Briot, 2022)

**Week 11. Suburban Uprisings in Paris**

Étienne Balibar (2007) "Uprisings in the Banlieues," *Constellations* 14(1), 47-71.

Mustafa Dikeç (2007) "Revolting geographies: Urban Unrest in France;" *Geography Compass* 1(5), 1190-1206.

Loic Wacquant (1999) "Urban marginality in the coming millennium," *Urban Studies* 36(10), 1639-1647.

Yousuf Al-Bulushi, (2012) "Learning from urban revolt: From Watts to the banlieues," *City* 16.1, 34-56.

**Watch:** *La Haine* (Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995)

**Week 12. Nuit Debout**

Felicetti, A., & Della Porta, D. (2018). Between deliberation and contestation: The convergence of struggles against austerity and its world in the Nuit Debout movement. *Social Movement Studies*, 17(6), 658-675.

Shaw, Robert. "Pushed to the margins of the city: The urban night as a timespace of protest at Nuit Debout, Paris." *Political Geography* 59 (2017): 117-125.

**Field Trip:** Place de la République

**Week 13. Yellow Vests**

Édouard Louis, "Can the Yellow Vests Speak," *Jacobin Magazine*, December 8, 2018.  
Interview with Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *The Observer*. December 8, 2018.

Daniel Driscoll, *Populism and Carbon Tax Justice: The Yellow Vest Movement in France*, *Social Problems*, 2021

Chamorel, Patrick. "Macron Versus the Yellow Vests." *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 30 no. 4, 2019, p. 48-62.

**Week 14. Far-Right Movements**

Dorit Geva, Daughter, Mother, Captain: Marine Le Pen, Gender, and Populism in the French National Front, *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, Volume 27, Issue 1, Spring 2020, Pages 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxy039>

Elizabeth Zerofsky, 2022. France's Far Right Turn. *The New York Times Magazine*.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/31/magazine/new-french-right.html?searchResultPosition=3>

**Week 15. Student Presentations**