

## **Social Movements, Collective Action, and Democracy**

(EURO-3000 | 3 credits)

### **Spain: Social Movements, Democracy, and Cultural Identity**

Academic Director: Dr. Victor Tricot

Office Hours: by appointment

#### **Course Description**

Social movements and their collective action repertoires have become an inseparable part of Spanish contemporary democracy during the second half of the XX century and the beginning of the XXI. The current European context provides several examples of different political regimes, from illiberal and populist to more progressive experiences. In this context, grassroots organizations of different kinds, democratic innovations, and collective organizations are becoming key in defending human rights, memory or conventional political systems that do not allow space for these voices. Understanding the rise, consolidation, and reaction against issues such as human rights, identity politics, memory recovery, workers' movements, women and feminist organizations, and migrant communities among others would not be possible without analyzing how and when social movements emerge, how they organize, how they act, the relations and alliances they form, or the discourses they create. Contemporary and classic social movement theory, as well as the analysis of empirical cases from different parts of Europe and Spain, will help students understand the question of the future role that these movements may have as collective political actors in the next years in Europe and Spain democracies.

#### **Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Describe and discuss a variety of theoretical perspectives on social movements and collective action;
- Apply social movement theoretical analytical frameworks to current Spanish, European, or Mediterranean cases;
- Examine the interplay between quality democracy, and different forms of political and social participation; and
- Understand the reasons for the emergence and decay of different cycles of social mobilization in Spain and Morocco.

#### **Instructional Methods**

The learning outcomes will be accomplished through readings, activities, discussions, and student presentations; instructor commentary and presentation;

peer feedback; systematic analysis of research studies and journal articles; and the design, completion, presentation, and evaluation of a research study.

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, and Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of a concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

### **Required Text**

Almeida, P. (2019). *Social Movements: The Structure of Collective Mobilization*.

University Of California Press.

### **Recommended Texts:**

della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (2020). *Social Movements: An Introduction* (3rd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

Tarrow, S. (2021). *Movements and Parties: Critical Connections in American Political Development*. Cambridge University Press.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

Timely completion of all assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, depth and argumentation, presentation of evidence and use of comparative perspective.

### **Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria**

#### **1) Text Analysis (20%)**

Students choose two texts from the list of their course required readings and engage with the main argument in each text. The text analysis should demonstrate the student's capacity to synthesize arguments, integrate data

collected through class lectures and field visits, and provide critical insights into how issues dealt with in the two texts could be understood from a Spanish collective action and social movement perspective. The paper should be 3-5 pages long and should also demonstrate the student's familiarity with social movement theories discussed in class.

## 2) Oral Presentation (35%)

Students will be required to present orally and creatively at the end of the thematic seminar highlighting the most relevant and important issues discussed in class and on the different excursions. Students choose from a social movement or protest experience discussed in class or during excursions and elaborate on how course lectures, readings, and field visits have helped (or not) map viable approaches to the issue at hand.

## 3) Social movements and collective action in Spain (35%).

In this assignment students should learn about any social movement in Andalucía or Catalonia and describe and reflect about the conflict catalyzing their emergence and the collective action repertoires that they use. The outcome of this work can be of two kinds. Students can choose to write a brief description and reflection (1000 words maximum); or to create an oral video presentation (10 min maximum).

## 4) Class Attendance and Participation (10%)

Attendance during the thematic seminar is mandatory and your grade will reflect your involvement in class and during other activities and excursions. This includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions, and excursions using the following criteria:

- Attendance - promptness to class and positive presence in class.
- Active Listening - paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in Class Discussions - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually do not, and also means allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
- Group Accountability – positive participation in the group during field excursions and classes; not keeping others waiting.
- Displaying Respect – culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.

### Assessment

Text Analysis	20%
Oral Presentation	35%
Social movements and collective action in Spain	35%
Class attendance and participation	10%

### Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, assignments, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

### Grading Scale

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64	F

### **Program Expectations**

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

- **Storing Your Work:** Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- **Personal Technology Use:** Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- **Content Considerations:** Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- **Classroom recording policy:** To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

### **SIT Policies and Resources**

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

### **Course Schedule**

Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lectures' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

## **Module 1: Collective Action and Social Movements: Theories and Analytical Concepts**

Social science has generated a large theoretical corpus of analytical studies about conventional politics, focusing on traditional collective actors such as political parties or institutions like the state, while focusing much less on non-conventional forms of political participation. This module will present and discuss different traditional and current theoretical perspectives that are internationally used in the analysis of social movements. Theories presented in this module will be complemented by empirical analysis of cases drawn from the Spanish and Mediterranean context.

Sessions may include:

- Why do people move? What makes people participate in politics and collective action? What does the theory tell us?
- Collective political actor's similarities and differences
- When do social movements emerge?
- Political opportunity structure
- How do social movements act? Repertoires of contention and resource mobilization;
- Discourses and frames, social movements, and their messages
- Political process model
- Continuous politics in Spain and the Mediterranean

### *Required Readings*

Almeida, P. (2019). Chapters 1 and 2. In *Social Movements: The Structure of Collective Mobilization*. University Of California Press.

della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (2020). Chapter 7. In *Social Movements: An Introduction* (3rd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

Tarrow, Sydney (1998) Chapter 5. In *Power in Movement. Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition.

### *Recommended Readings*

Bidegain, G., & Tricot, V. (2017). Political Opportunity Structure, Social Movements, and Malaise in Representation in Uruguay, 1985–2014. In *Malaise in Representation in Latin American Countries. Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay*, 139–160. [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59955-1\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59955-1_6)

Groves, T. (2012). Everyday Struggles against Franco's Authoritarian Legacy: Pedagogical Social Movements and Democracy in Spain. *Journal of Social History*, 46(2), 305–334. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jsh/shs094>

McCarthy, J. D., & Zald, M. N. (1977). Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(6), 1212–1241. <https://doi.org/10.1086/226464>

Tejerina, B., & Perugorría, I. (2017). *Crisis and Social Mobilization in Contemporary Spain*. Routledge.

## **Module 2: Protests and Social Movements in Spain**

This module will introduce students to the current complexities and dynamics of collective action and social movements in Spain, addressing how the movement has unfolded since the austerity crisis of 2009 and particularly since the indignados or 15M movement of 2011 that became the starting point of a cycle of mobilization where a multitude of social movements emerged with expressions in the streets, as well as in institutions. Different cases will be studied and analyzed using different theoretical tools offered by the study of social movements.

Sessions may include:

- Civil society in times of crisis and austerity measures
- Waves of discontent and color
- Organizing against austerity measures during the 2008 crisis
- Memory as a field of social and political dispute
- Nationalist movements at the forefront of mobilization or in downward spiral?
- Workers' rights and unions in XXI century Spain
- Women and the feminist movement in Spain
- Collective and Political Rights of Regional Minorities in Europe
- From movements to parties, social movements in the streets and institutions

### *Required Readings*

Aguilar, P. (2017). Unwilling to Forget: Local Memory Initiatives in Post-Franco Spain. *South European Society and Politics*, 22(4), 405–426. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2017.1395078>

Castells, M. (2015). *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. John Wiley & Sons.

Flesher Fominaya, C., & Feenstra, R. A. (2023). Reconsidering social movement impact on democracy: the case of Spain's 15-M movement. *Social Movement Studies*, 22(3), 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2023.2190090>

### *Recommended Readings*

Barbero, I. (2015). When rights need to be (re)claimed: Austerity measures, neoliberal housing policies and anti-eviction activism in Spain. *Critical Social Policy*, 35(2), 270–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018314564036>

della Porta, D. (2015). Chapter 5. In *Social movements in times of austerity: bringing capitalism back into protest analysis*. Wiley.

Rovira-Sancho, G. (2021). Activism and affective labor for digital direct action: the Mexican #MeToo campaign. *Social Movement Studies*, 22(2), 145–162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2021.2010530>

Tarrow, S. (1998). Chapter 5. In *Power in movement: social movements and contentious politics*. Cambridge University Press.

### **Module 3: Democratic Tensions and Innovations in Spain and Europe**

Current European context provides several examples of different political regimes, from illiberal and populist to more progressive experiences. We can see how societal and political polarization is impacting these so-called old democracies. In this context, grassroots organizations of different kinds, democratic innovations, or collective and community empowerment movements are becoming key when defending human rights as memory or conventional political systems often don't allow space for these voices. This is what students will explore in this module, learning about participatory experiences in Spain, work done towards improving quality of democracy, and community empowerment from above and below.

Sessions may include:

- Participatory budgets in Spanish city halls
- Spanish political system and power distribution
- Participatory processes in the elaboration of public policies in Spain
- Assemblies and direct democracy a longstanding tradition in Spain
- Gender quotas theory and praxis in Spain
- The emergence of local power alternatives: From the streets to the “*ayuntamiento*”
- Democratic innovations in XXI century Spain

### *Required Readings*

Font, Joan and García-Espín, Patricia (2019) “From Indignad@s to Mayors? Participatory dilemmas in Spanish municipal movements”, in Flesher Fominaya, C and Feenstra, Ramon (2019) *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary European Social Movements. Protest in Turbulent Times*, Routledge, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351025188>



Barbas, Á., & Treré, E. (2022). The rise of a new media ecosystem: exploring 15M's educommunicative legacy for radical democracy. *Social Movement Studies*, 22(3), 1–21.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2022.2070738>

Sanz, C. (2019). Direct democracy and government size: evidence from Spain. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 8(4), 1–16.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2018.65>

### *Recommended Reading*

Della Porta, D., O'Connor, F., Ribas, A. S., & Portos, M. (2017). *Social movements and referendums from below: direct democracy in the neoliberal crisis*. Policy Press.

Fernando Mendez and Mario Mendez (2017) "Direct Democracy and the European Union". In Saskia P. Ruth, Yanina Welp and Laurence Whitehead (2017) *Let the People Rule? Direct Democracy in the Twenty-First Century*.

Hix, Simon (1999) "Introduction: Explaining the EU Political System". In Hix, Simon (1999). *The Political System of the European Union*

Mosca, L., & Quaranta, M. (2017). Voting for Movement Parties in Southern Europe: The Role of Protest and Digital Information. *South European Society and Politics*, 22(4), 427–446.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2017.1411980>

## **Module 4: Catalonia: Much More Than Just Independence**

Catalonia in this last decade has been the center of political polarization particularly due to the nationalist independent demand which has multiple dimensions. One of the most important dimensions is its roots in civil society. But Catalonia is more than this, and social movements and grassroots organizations are part of their political culture and landscape. As students will see in this module, carried out during our week-long excursion to Girona and Barcelona, these movements have different manifestations that go from classic worker organizations, strong feminist movements, urban, neighbor, or environmental organizations among others. Through meetings with political and social actors, as well as with academics, students will appraise the multidimensional complexities of Catalonia's active and participatory civil society.

Sessions may include:

- Catalan identity and national movement construction
- Catalonia's independence movement and constitutional crisis in Spain

- Right to the city and the PAH movement (Antieviction)
- From the streets to institutions, the experience of social movements in municipalities (Barcelona en Comun and Guayem Girona)
- Climate emergency and solutions from below
- Energy poverty and social justice
- Human rights in times of polarization

### *Required Readings*

Romanos, E. (2013). Evictions, Petitions and *Escraches*: Contentious Housing in Austerity Spain. *Social Movement Studies*, 13(2), 296–302.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2013.830567>

Schwartz, C. (2022) Collective memory and intergenerational transmission in social movements: The “grandparents’ movement” iaioflautas, the indignados protests, and the Spanish transition, *Memory Studies*, 15(1) 102–119

Ubasart, G. (2021) “The Independence”. In García, A. (2021) *Catalan Independence and the Crisis of Sovereignty*, Palgrave MacMillan.

### *Recommended Readings*

Carbonell Ballester, M. (2020) #RavalVsBlackstone. The right to the city versus the finance-real estate-tourism complex. Cities versus Multinationals. European Network of Corporate Observatories.

Dunlap, A. (2021). Spreading “green” infrastructural harm: mapping conflicts and socio-ecological disruptions within the European Union’s transnational energy grid. *Globalizations*, 1–25.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2021.1996518>

Coll-Planas, G, and Marta Cruells. 2017. "Exploring the Social Movements Institutionalization Thesis: The Case of Feminist, Ecologist, and LGTB Activism in Catalonia." *The International Journal of Civic, Political, and Community Studies* 15 (1): 25-39. doi:10.18848/2327-0047/CGP/v15i01/25-39.