**It Takes a Movement: Social Mobilization and Rebuilding Democracy**

Date July 3 – July 9, 2023

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Lisa Guenther (Philosophy and Critical Prison Studies, Queen’s University)

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Liam Mayes (Communication and English, Tulane University)

Charles Taylor (Philosophy, Emeritus, McGill University)

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**Course Overview**

*Description*  
Around the world, democracies are breaking down. Many are being dismantled from within while others face attacks from without. In both cases, the issues underlying democracy’s erosion are not superficial but deeply entrenched and complex. As a result, democracies will not be renewed without considerable effort. Technical fixes imposed from above may slow democratic degeneration, but they cannot reverse it. Rebuilding democracy—fortifying its institutions and advancing its project—takes a movement from below.

Yet, when it comes to social mobilization, democratic societies tend to be apprehensive. A handful of exceptionally civil, organized, and focused social movements may serve as evidence of a dynamic public sphere and a healthy democratic culture. But far more often, democratic governments respond to social mobilization with less enthusiasm, treating it as anything from a nuisance to a threat. After all, what democratic purpose could social mobilization fulfill in a society with fair elections, democratic representation, and independent courts? Given the growing frequency, intensity, scale, and volatility of twenty-first century social mobilizations in democratic societies, it is difficult to see them simply as a confirmation of democratic flourishing or evidence of its undoing. Instead, from Indian farmers to Canadian truckers and Colombian taxpayers, from the Black Lives Matter movement to the Yellow Vests, these mobilizations index social, political, cultural, and economic crises that democratic governments have failed to address. In this context, what is the relationship between social mobilization and democracy? Do loosely networked local protests in disparate contexts share a global anatomy? When are social mobilizations a threat to democracy and when are they the foundation of its renewal?

The aim of It Takes a Movement is to re-examine the relationship between social mobilization and democracy by attending to the stunning complexity and diversity of twenty-first century protests and social movements. The course will employ a global perspective, comparing social mobilizations across different democratic contexts, tracing transnational connections and fissures, and establishing common features. To this end, the course will foster a robust dialogue among students, activists, and scholars assembled from all over the world. Students will leave the course with a deeper understanding of the fraught relationship between democracy and social mobilization as well as new questions and ideas about how it might be productively addressed.

*Format*Sessions at the Summer School are led by its distinguished faculty and will generally take one of three forms:

1. *Lectures* where faculty present research broadly related to the Summer School’s core themes; followed by a question-and-answer discussion period. The aim of the Lectures is to introduce students to pressing scholarly debates by having them engage with the forefront of academic research on the topic.
2. *Seminars* where faculty lead a discussion on pre-circulated readings related to the Summer School’s core themes. The aim of the seminars is to provide students with the opportunity to (re)visit the foundational and influential texts that are shaping current debates.
3. *Student Fora* where students identify and discuss their common interests and investments without the constraints of a question-and-answer period or a seminar with assigned readings. The aim of the fora is for students to critically engage with the course’s core questions and themes on their own terms, advance their own learning, and enrich subsequent sessions.

*Office Hours*

Students will have the opportunity to sign up for office hours with select faculty to discuss their research in one-on-one meetings.

**Schedule**

**Monday, July 3**

**9.00** SUN Joint Orientation (in Nador 15 / Auditorium B)

**9:30** Course administration (in the classroom)

**9.30** Opening Remarks

Dilip Gaonkar & Shalini Randeria

**10.45** Break

**11.15** Citizen Efficacy and Its Decline (Lecture)

Charles Taylor

**12.30** Lunch

**2.00** #AbolishCanada: Breaking Down the 2022 Freedom Convoy (Lecture)

Lisa Guenther

**3.15** Break

**3.45** The Revolution Born Around a Swear: Carnival Populism, Humor, and Social Mobilization in Romania (Lecture)

Camil Ungureanu

**6.00** SUN Opening (Nador 15/ Auditorium B)  
Reception to follow

**Tuesday, July 4**

**9.30** How Transformative Are Social Movements? (Lecture)  
Craig Calhoun

**10.45** Break

**11.15** The Changing Contours of the ‘Social’ in Social Movements (Lecture)

Prathama Banerjee

**12.30** Lunch

**2.00** Power and Social Movements in the Anthropocene (Lecture)

Lars Tønder

**3.15** Break

**3.45** Student Forum I

Liam Mayes

**5.30** The Role of the Public Intellectual: A Conversation with Charles Taylor

Auditorium B  
Reception to Follow

**Wednesday, July 5**

**9.30** Democracy, Climate Change, and Temporality in the Anthropocene (Seminar)

Lars Tønder

Read:

* Boris Shoshitaishvili, “Deep Time and Compressed Time in the Anthropocene: The New Timescape and the Value of Cosmic Storytelling”
* David Schlosberg and Romand Coles, “The New Environmentalism of Everyday Life: Sustainability, Material Flows and Movements”

**10.45** Break

**11.15** Proliferation vs. Scaling Up in Movements (Seminar)

Craig Calhoun

Read:

* Craig Calhoun, Chapter 2, “Social Movements and the Idea of Progress” and Chapter 10, “Progress for Whom” (309-16) in *The Roots of Radicalism*
* Philippe Schmitter, “The Future of Democracy: Could it Be a Matter of Scale?”
* Recommended: Craig Calhoun, Chapter 9, “New Social Movements of the Early 19th Century” and Chapter 10, “Progress for Whom” (282-309) in *The Roots of Radicalism*
* Recommended: Massimiliana Tomba, “1994: Zapatistas and the Dispossessed of History” in *Insurgent Universality*

**12.30** Lunch

**2.00** Temporalities of Politics: Between the Culture of Patience and the Rhetoric of Impatience (Lecture)

Dilip Gaonkar

Read:

* Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
* Dilip Gaonkar, “Demos Noir: Riots after Riots”

**Thursday, July 6**

**9.30** Technology, Ecology, and Democracy (Seminar)

Prathama Banerjee

Read:

* Tiziana Terranova, “Securing the Social: Foucault and Social Networks”
* Tiziana Terranova and Ravi Sundaram, “Colonial Infrastructures and Techno-social Networks”
* Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Andrew S. Mathews, and Nils Bubandt, “Patchy Anthropocene: Landscape Structure, Multispecies History, and the Retooling of Anthropology”
* Nicholas J. Long and Henrietta L. Moore, “Sociality Revisited: Setting a New Agenda”

**10.45** Break

**11.15** Confronting Unaccountability: Dilemmas of Social Movements (Lecture)

Shalini Randeria

Read:

* Christopher Chase-Dunn, Roman Stäbler, Ian Breckenridge-Jackson,  
  and Joel Herrera, “Articulating the Web of Transnational Social Movements”
* Carwil Bjork-James, Melissa Checker, and Marc Edelman, “Transnational Social Movements: Environmentalist, Indigenous, and Agrarian Visions for Planetary Futures”
* Marc Edelman, “Social Movements: Changing Paradigms and Forms of Politics”

**12.30** Lunch

**2.00** Opening up the Future: The Temporal Horizons of Social Protest (Lecture)  
Humberto Beck

**3.15** Break

**3.45** Populism and Rhetoric: Lessons from Spain (Seminar)

Camil Ungureanu

Read

* Pablo Iglesias, “Understanding Podemos”
* Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (pp. 67-110)
* Recommended: *No* (Dir. Pablo Larrain, 2012)

**Friday, July 7**

**9.30** From the Ground Up (Seminar)

Charles Taylor

Read

* Charles Taylor, “Degenerations of Democracy”
* Charles Taylor, Patrizia Nanz, and Madeleine Beaubien Taylor, *Reconstructing Democracy*

**10.45** Break

**11.15** The Neodemocratic Condition: From Civil Rights to Civic Cruelty, and What Comes After (Lecture)

Aishwary Kumar

Read

* Judith Shklar, “Putting Cruelty First”
* Judith Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear”
* Ta-Nehisi Coates, “My President Was Black”
* Recommended: Ta-Nehisi Coates, *We Were Eight Years in Power*

**12:30** Lunch

**2.00** TBD (Lecture)

Ulrike Flader

Read

* TBD

**3.15** Break

**3.45** Student Forum II

Liam Mayes

**Saturday, July 8**

**9.30** Decolonial Abolitionist Movements (Seminar)

Lisa Guenther

Read:

* Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, “Criminal Empire: The Making of the Savage in a Lawless Land”
* Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “The Brilliance of the Beaver: Learning from an Anishnaabe World”
* “Every Day We Must Get Up and Relearn the World, An Interview with Robyn Maynard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson”
* Robyn Maynard, “Pandemic (In)Securities: Police Abolition/Black Revolt”
* Recommended: Robyn Maynard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *Rehearsals for Living*

**10.45** Break

**11.15** Democratic Road Rage (Lecture)  
 Liam Mayes

**12:30** Lunch

**2.00** Democratization and Social Movements in Mexico (Seminar)

Humberto Beck

Read:

* María Inclán, *The Zapatista Movement and Mexico's Democratic Transition: Mobilization, Success, and Survival* (pp. 1-18)
* Shannan Mattiace, "Social and Indigenous Movements in Mexico's Transition to Democracy”

**3.15** Break

**3.45** Democracy Under Duress

Dilip Gaonkar & Shalini Randeria

**Sunday, July 9**

**9.30** Student Presentations I

**10.45** Break

**11.15** Student Presentations II

**12:30** Lunch

**Course Bibliography**

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