Overall Expectations and Scope

Students taking the social movements and collective area exam are expected to be familiar with the development of the field, the dominant theoretical traditions, the major substantive questions and debates, and the various methodological approaches employed. The social movements and collective action area exam covers such broad questions as:

- What are social movements? How are they similar and different from other civic and political actions?
- Why do social movements emerge and grow and what explains different emergence and growth trajectories?
- What explains why some people—but not others—participate in social activism?
- How do social movements attempt to recruit and mobilize a critical mass of participants?
- Why do particular social movements choose certain strategies and tactics and not others?
- Do social movements matter? If so, what consequences do they have and what explains these consequences?
- What is the effect of state repression on social movements? Does it radicalize or deter participation?
- What are the most common methods used to study social movements and what are their strengths and weaknesses?
Suggested Reading List

Note: The committee has done their best to organize the readings below by major theoretical traditions and important substantive topics. However, some works do not neatly fit under one rubric, but rather under several ones. Students should thus not put too much stock in how the readings are classified. What is most important is to understand the readings’ arguments and how they relate to the broader debates and themes in the field. Also, though it is recommended that students familiarize themselves with the readings on the list below, the social movement and collective action exam is not restricted to them.

Definitions, Methods, & Trends


Collective Behaviorist and Grievance Tradition, Old & New


Rationalist Tradition, Old & New


Resource Mobilization Tradition, Old & New


**Political Process/Opportunity Tradition, Old & New**


**Culture, Collective Identity, Commitment & Framing**


**Emotions & Social-Psychology**


Differential Participation & Networks


**Markets, Organizations, & Movements**


**Media & Movements**


**Movements & Countermovements**


**Movement Abeyance, Cycles, & Diffusion**


**New Social Movements**


**Repression & Policing**


Movement Consequences & Outcomes

Micro-Level


McAdam, Doug and Cynthia Brandt. 2009. “Assessing the Effects of Voluntary Youth Service: The Case of Teach for America.” *Social Forces* 88:945-969.


Macro-Level


**Right-Wing/Conservative Movements**


Mobilization Forum: Awkward Movements


Transnational Movements


