



**VISITING
SCHOLAR
PROGRAM**

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Public Lecture Offerings

How Protest and Activism Matter

Why do some social movements drive significant and long-lasting changes while others lead to few or limited impacts? This question is important and timely given the scale and potential impact of movements in the U.S. and around the globe. Drawing on a broad range of historical and contemporary movements, I focus on three forms of power that movements can generate to overcome their relative powerlessness and create change: disruptive, cultural, and organizational. Movements exercise disruptive power by imposing constraints that make supporting the status quo or ignoring movement demands more costly. Cultural power involves the creation of new ideas, knowledge, or practices that can change how people think and act. Finally, organizational power builds new relationships among people, resources, and skills that enable strategic interaction and/or create alternative institutions. Social movements face significant challenges, but they are most impactful when they combine disruptive, cultural, and organizational power.

Lessons of the Civil Rights Movement and Black Freedom Struggle

The civil rights struggle has had a profound impact on our understanding of protest and social movements. Most of us are familiar with the broad outlines of the movement's heyday from the Supreme Court's 1954 Brown decision to the 1965 Civil Rights Act—what historians call the "short civil rights movement." However, this narrative often reduces the black freedom struggle to a small number of events and leaders in ways that conflict with a deeper understanding of the movement and its lessons. Thus, sixty years after the movement's heyday, the origins, leadership,

dynamics, and consequences of the civil rights struggle are poorly understood. This talk will focus on challenges to the conventional wisdom of the civil rights movement and argue that the more fundamental lessons of this movement are often buried or missing in mainstream discussion.

Classroom Discussion Topics

1. **Campus Activism in Historical and Contemporary Perspective** – Universities and colleges have incubated numerous social movements. Why is this and what are the implications for the development and impact of movements?
2. **Asymmetrical Social Movements in the Contemporary U.S.** – Social movements are often associated with causes and constituencies on the left. Yet, there are many historical and contemporary movements on the right. How do left- and right-wing movements differ, and why do right-wing movements seem to be growing in power and influence?