

Professor Margot Weiss

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please make an appointment at <http://calendly.com/margot-weiss>

This intensive, project-based research seminar enables you to embark on an independent, semester-long research project on the social movement of your choice. As a working definition, we will view social movements as collective forms of political action that seek social transformation and work outside of institutional structures, such as legal reform or electoral politics. To better understand social movements we will draw on both activist and scholarly (and scholar-activist) knowledges and analysis. We'll start with some readings on social movement research and histories of social justice struggles in the US. Next, we will acquaint ourselves with core methodologies used to study social movements, including archival, ethnographic, and participatory methodologies. With this foundation in place, we will turn to your projects. The movement or activism you study can be contemporary or historical; local, national, or global; and can take any shape: direct action, community organizing, art as activism, etc.

Why a *lab*? According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a lab is a place “for carrying out scientific experiments or procedures, esp. for the purposes of research, teaching, or analysis,” “a site or centre of development, production, or experimentation.” Our classroom is a lab: a place *to study*, *to study with*, and *to study for*. Each week, we will collaboratively analyze several of your projects, mapping out and comparing methods, goals, visions, struggles, and contexts. Our goal is to understand a range of social justice activisms in their economic, political, and historical context, with an eye toward integrating activist scholarship and social change. For this reason, the most critical element you can bring to our class is a desire to learn collaboratively.

This seminar is part of the Center for the Humanities 2019-20 theme, “Revolutions: Material Forms, Mobile Futures.” You are invited to attend the Monday night lectures; see the line up [here](#). We will be reading material by some of the visiting scholars; you should plan to attend the lectures that are particularly relevant to our class (marked in the syllabus). All lectures are Monday evenings at 6pm in the Daniel Family Commons.

Readings

There are no required books for this course. All essays and chapters are available on the course Moodle. We will be choosing some readings together, in the “lab” part of the course. The course readings are subject to change, as we move through the semester together.

Assignments

This is an intensive, project-based research seminar. The main assignment is a semester-long research project, which you will share with the class by bringing in material for us to study together, assigning key reading, and/or arranging for an activist to Skype into our classroom. Your final project/paper can take the form of more traditional academic analysis, historical

contextualization or comparison, a report useful to and/or requested by the organization with whom you are working, a digital archive, etc. and will be completed in stages.

Breakdown of assignments:

- **In class participation and attendance ----- 15%**

This is an intensive research course designed for an active learner. Your active participation and enthusiasm is crucial to its success. Come to class on time and prepared, and contribute to our discussion in a relevant, present, and respectful way. Remember, participation means contributing to our collective learning – asking questions and expanding others’ insights is often as useful as (maybe even more useful than) making declarations. In addition to in-class discussions, you’ll also participate in one structured in-class peer workshop.

- **10 Preparatory notes – 15%**

Each week, by midnight on the Sunday night before our Monday class, you will post a preparatory note of ~ 250 words on the Moodle. These notes are a way for you to gather your thoughts before class and for me to get a sense of what is on your mind. You might write a brief reflection on a reading that really spoke to you, pose several questions that the material raises, share a passage that struck you (with explanation), unpack a contradiction between readings, or reflect on a connection between the readings and your project, etc. Your notes should emerge from your careful reading practice: the notes need to engage the reading, and you will want to quote passages and cite texts so that your comments are grounded in the material we are studying together. The notes should allow you to direct our discussion in ways most conducive to your learning and interests, and provide a space of collective reflection. Everyone is encouraged to look over all notes before class.

- **Research project – 60%**

Your research project is the centerpiece of the class, and something you will be working on each week. For this reason, your grade reflects the depth, seriousness, and rigor of your engagement throughout the semester, and at various milestones – not, primarily, the final product that you turn in during finals week (although of course this is one aspect of your grade).

This includes:

- **Initial conception and map: due October 14 in class.** 1-2 page proposal for your research project. I will provide guidelines as the date approaches.
- **Research:** direct/primary and scholarly/literature
- **Analysis and conceptual work** during the semester
- **Lab presentations** (in class). This entails bringing in material for the class to engage together, to give us some insight into your project. Material might include: theoretical or analytical reading (academic, historical, etc.), activist reports or statements, a 15-minute discussion with an activist from your site, archival material that bears on your project, some of your own writing that illustrates core issues with which you are grappling, etc. You’ll need to let me know what you want us to engage with the week before you are scheduled to present, by Wednesday at midnight (by email, although you are strongly encouraged to come talk with me about your plans in person). I will put any readings on our class Moodle by Thursday, so that everyone has time to read and prepare for class.
- **Final product / paper / report: due December 14, 5 pm.**

Course Policies

1. Absences

You may miss 1 class without explanation or penalty: think of this as a sick or health day, and take it when you see fit. If you miss more than 3 classes, I will ask you to withdraw. Missing more than 4 classes is grounds to fail the course.

2. Extensions and late papers: I do not grant extensions. Given the nature of this course, you cannot turn in assignments late. The final paper is due on the last day of finals week. If you have valid reasons for needing more time, you will need to request an Incomplete for the course.

3. Computers/ phones in the classroom:

4. Classroom rules

We will create collaborative classroom rules on the first day of our class, aiming to ensure that the classroom is as assessible as possible for everyone present (and acknowledging that accessibility needs might change over the semester). Showing up with an experimental attitude is crucial. We will strive to value “half formed” thoughts: you do not need to master the material to ask questions, think out loud, muse, or comment on it.

5. Office Hours: I am happy to meet with you in my office at the Center for the Humanities. Please come and talk to me about course material, dynamics, or any concerns or ideas you might have. My office hours are Tuesday afternoons 1-3pm. You’ll need to sign up for an appointment using my online calendar: <http://calendly.com/margot-weiss> – otherwise, I may not be available. If you cannot make Tuesday afternoon, let me know so that we can work out an alternative time.

Wesleyan Resources and Policies

Writing For peer tutoring, one-on-one mentoring, and other writing resources, see the [Writing Workshop](#) or email the Ford Fellow, Issy Steckel at writingworks@wesleyan.edu.

Disability Resources. Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a disability as defined by the ADA. If you have a disability, or think that you might have a disability, please contact [Accessibility Services](#) in order to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Accessibility Services is located in North College, rooms 021/022, or can be reached by email (accessibility@wesleyan.edu) or phone (860-685-5581). If you have an impairment or need that is not defined by the ADA, please come talk with me about it. I am committed to making the classroom as assessible a space as possible.

Honor Code All work must be done in compliance with the Honor Code. If you need help with proper citations or you have questions on how to avoid plagiarism, let me know or contact the **Writing Workshop** (above).

Course Schedule

Part 1: Openings

Monday, September 2: Introducing the Social Movements Lab

read before we meet

- María Isabel Casas-Cortés, Michal Osterweil and Dana E. Powell, 2008. “Blurring Boundaries: Recognizing Knowledge-Practices in the Study of Social Movements” *Anthropological Quarterly*

In class: brainstorm research project and introductions

Monday, September 9: Histories of US Social Movements after '68

- Nick Estes, 2019. “Prologue: Prophets” and Chapter 1, “Siege” in *Our History is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*
- *Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, 2016. “Introduction: Black Awakening in Obama’s America” and Chapter 7: “From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation” in *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*. Ch. 6: “Black Lives Matter: A Movement, not a Moment” recommended!
- Chris Dixon, 2014. “Introduction” and “Fighting Against Amnesia” in *Another Politics: Talking Across Today’s Transformative Movements*

.....**Want More?**

- ❖ Jordan T. Camp and Christina Heatherton, 2016. *Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter*
- ❖ Margot Weiss, 2018. “Queer Politics in Neoliberal Times (1970s-2010s),” in *Routledge History of Queer America*
- ❖ LA Kauffman, 2017. *Direct Action: Protest and the Reinvention of American Radicalism*

In class: “1968: A World in Revolt” and/or “Black Power Mix Tape”

Monday, September 16: On Study: Deconstructing the Theory/Practice Divide

- Douglas Bevington and Chris Dixon, 2005. “Movement-relevant Theory: Rethinking Social Movement Scholarship and Activism” *Social Movement Studies* (pp. 193-end)
- Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, 2013. “The University and the Undercommons: Seven Theses” and “The General Antagonism: An Interview with Stevphen Shukaitis” in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (“Blackness and Governance” and “Debt and Study” recommended)
- Selection from *American Quarterly* 2012 special issue on “Academia and Activism”: “Reinvigorating the Queer Political Imagination”: A Roundtable with Ryan Conrad, Yasmin Nair, and Karma Chávez of Against Equality”; “Academic & Activist Assemblages: An Interview with Jasbir Puar”; and Janet R. Jakobsen, “Collaborations” (Margot Weiss and Naomi Greyser, “Left Intellectuals and the Neoliberal University” recommended)

(Recommended: Marc Bousquet, Stefano Harney, and Fred Moten, 2008. “On Study: A Polygraph Roundtable Discussion” *Polygraph* and Charles R. Hale, 2001. “What is Activist Research?” *SSRC*)

Part 2: Methods

Monday, September 23: Historical Study: Archives and Oral Histories

- Zora Neale Hurston, 2018. *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo"* (excerpt)
 - Amy Starecheski, 2014. "Squatting History: The Power of Oral History as a History-Making Practice" *Oral History Review*
 - Emily K. Hobson, 2016. *Lavender and Red: Liberation and Solidarity in the Gay and Lesbian Left* (excerpt)
- Visit Special Collections in Olin, archival research on student activism at Wesleyan

→ **Friday, September 27:** fieldtrip to NYC, to participate in Jay Toole's walking tour of pre-Stonewall history. Trip arranged from CHUM: depart ~11:30am; return ~8pm

Monday, September 30: Grappling with the University

- *Roderick Ferguson, 2017. *We Demand: The University and Student Protests* (excerpt)
 - Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira, 2014. Introduction to *The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent*
 - bell hooks, 1994. "Engaged Pedagogy" and "Theory as Liberatory Practice" in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*
- (Recommended: *Abigail Boggs, Eli Meyerhoff, Nick Mitchell, and Zach Schwartz-Weinstein, 2019. "Abolitionist University Studies: An Invitation")
- ♣ Lecture, Margot Weiss, "Desiring Otherwise"

Monday, October 7: Ethnographic Interventions: Activist Anthropology

- Aimee Cox, 2013. "Moving the Field: Young Black Women, Performances of Self, and Creative Protest in Postindustrial Spaces" in *Feminist Activist Ethnography: Counterpoints to Neoliberalism in North America*
 - Jeffrey S. Juris, 2007. "Practicing Militant Ethnography with the Movement for Global Resistance" in *Constituent Imagination: Militant Investigations, Collective Theorization*
 - "Activist Anthropology: A Conversation between Daniel M. Goldstein and Keisha-Khan Y. Perry" 2017. *American Anthropologist* (on Moodle)
 - David Graber, 2009. *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (excerpt)
- (Recommended: Jeffrey S. Juris and Alex Khasnabish, 2015. "Immanent Accounts: Ethnography, Engagement, and Social Movement Practice" in *Oxford Handbook of Social Movements*)

.....**Want More?**

- ❖ Dana-Ain Davis, 2013. "Border Crossings: Intimacy and Feminist Activist Ethnography in the Age of Neoliberalism" in *Feminist Activist Ethnography*
- ❖ Charles R. Hale, 2006. "Activist Research v. Cultural Critique: Indigenous Land Rights and the Contradictions of Politically Engaged Anthropology" *Cultural Anthropology*
- ❖ Michal Osterweil, 2013. "Rethinking Public Anthropology Through Epistemic Politics And Theoretical Practice" in *Cultural Anthropology*

Part 3: Lab

Monday, October 14: In-class workshop**Due: Research Project Proposal**

- ♣ lecture, Roderick Ferguson, “The Aural Life of the Bookshop of Black Queer Diaspora”

Monday, October 21 -- Fall Break - no class

→ this week: schedule a 1-1 meeting with me to discuss your project and plans

Monday, October 28: Lab 1**Presentations and reading TBD**

- ♣ lecture, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, “Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership”

Monday, November 4: Lab 2**Presentations and reading TBD**

- ♣ lecture, Abigail Boggs, “Towards an Abolitionist University Studies”

Monday, November 11: Lab 3**Presentations and reading TBD****Monday, November 18: Lab 4 (if we need it)****or “Queer Dreams and Nonprofit Blues”**

- Incite!: Women of Color Against Violence, 2007. *The Revolution will not be Funded* (excerpt)

In class: Queer Dreams and Non-profit Blues

Part 4: Results / Report Back

Monday, November 25 – no class, AAAs + Thanksgiving

→ Email me progress notes by end of class time, Monday

Monday, December 2: The Radical Imagination / Report Back

- adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* and/or *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good* (excerpt)
 - Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (excerpt)
- (Recommended: *Joshua Clover, “Introduction” to *Riot, Strike, Riot*)

In class: short presentations with Q&A on projects

- ♣ lecture, Joshua Clover, “Yellow Vest. Red Warrior, Black Strike”

Final research project due: December 14, 5 pm