Welcome: In ESM 442, we will explore the tactics and communication strategies used by groups and social movements to affect change. Consider for example, any trending social movement hashtag – when does a hashtag become more than just a word, when does it actually spur a shift in public consciousness or policy – this is the type of puzzle our course will attempt to address. Groups, which may consist of social movements or formalized interest groups or non-governmental organizations, exist for the very purpose to instill change. In this course, change refers to any intent to move away from the status quo. Without the perceived necessity for change, groups of any kind are unlikely to emerge.

This course will address civic engagement & grassroots organizing from four thematic areas: 1) traditional and contemporary theories of organizations; 2) the on the ground tactics employed by groups & social movements; 3) institutional barriers to organizational success and; 4) the role of communication in organizational efforts. Course lessons will rely on foundational group theory, contextualized by current events and the experiences of activists. Importantly, we will draw from a diverse set of cases that address issues of social and environmental concern. YOU will be the gatekeepers of this information and expected to contribute this knowledge on a weekly basis (as will be discussed at our first meeting).

Learning Objectives:
1. Chart and predict a path forward – what should the future of grassroots look like?
   a. Identify ‘repertoires of action’ or the tactics used by organizations to promote public engagement & affect change
   b. Explain how tactics change in response to political institutions and characteristics of the policy space
   c. Compare and contrast the communication strategies employed by groups and social movements in the traditional communication environment and now in the context of Web 2.0
   d. Apply your understanding of how institutions shape organizational efforts & processes in order to predict the potential for success on the part of current environmental movements
Course Flow: everything you need to do will be updated on GauchoSpace weekly. I will make it really clear how I want you to engage with the materials. The weekly flow will be something along the lines of this:

- Read/listen to/watch the following (1-3 sources, very manageable)
- Complete your grassroots organizing activity for the week and come prepared to share in class
  - Wks 2 & 3 - Identify the organizations involved (network/stakeholder map);
  - Wks 4 – 6 - Observe their tactics and communication efforts (analysis of repertoires of action);
  - Wks 7 & 8 - Describe the intuitional / policy landscape (flow chart);
  - Wks 9 & 10 - Predict opportunities for success and sources of failure (mock consultant).

Assessment: This course is S/U. Satisfactory is the result of regular attendance, in-class participation, and presenting your final pitch.

Course Outline

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**We will have 2-3 guest speakers this year, and their availability is still TBD.

Readings & activities

This is a living syllabus. Page 2
Week 1
REVIEW: the living syllabus for the course

RESEARCH: (via media of choice) contemporary issues with civic engagement or grassroots organizing components. The topic does not need to be an environmental issue.

READ: Rolling Stone article on “Justice for January 6th” rally, focusing on the perception vs. reality of “grassroots” inspired events. (You should be able to access one time)

IN CLASS: We will discuss the syllabus and plans for the course, including expectations for WK2, and hop right into our first activity.

Week 2
PET ISSUE RESEARCH (2 hrs): Choose a contemporary issue, NGO, or social movement that is of high interest to you. It does not need to be environmentally focused. Examples are included here. Conduct initial research on the above, identifying the different stakeholders/groups, goals, frames, political landscape and institutions, just take in the big picture. Take note of helpful websites, SM handles, etc, for future reference. Consider this to be your background research.

UPDATE: go to the issue spreadsheet and add your name to one of the pre-existing categories or add under OTHER.

IN CLASS: (no class). In lieu of lecture this week, every student will need to schedule 20 minutes with me to discuss their pet issue.

Week 3
LISTEN: MLK’s “I have a dream” speech

WATCH: “Selma, 50 years later” (released 4 years ago) and take note of the protest and communication tactics used at Selma

LEARN: the impact of MLK and Selma (it’s a little dry, but important to understand the influence on voting rights act)

LISTEN: “A new march on Washington” considering how MLK inspired protests of today

PET ISSUE RESEARCH: (no more than 30 minutes) - investigate the history of your issue. Consider what tactics where deployed pre-social media (if possible). Early on how did groups work to affect change in this space?

(OPTIONAL) EXPLORE: additional resources, interesting perspective

This is a living syllabus. Page 3
Week 4
READ ONE ARTICLE: (30-60 mins)

ISSUE ACTIVITY: (60 mins)
Continue to investigate you chosen issue/group/movement.
In the Issue Signup Spreadsheet, complete the columns in yellow. Recommendations: 1) enter a hashtag associated with your issue into Twitter and browse what comes up; 2) pick 3-5 groups really active in this space and explore their SM handles and spaces; 3) try other key word searches in SM to identify stakeholders/hashtags/etc.

Be prepared to discuss what you learned about your topic in assigned breakout groups during class and then summarize in the main class.

Week 5
LISTEN to parts 1, 2, 3 of The New York Times’ Rabbit Hole (90 mins)

REFLECT on any examples from your own research that emphasizes the power of the Internet and Social Media

Complete the mid quarter check in survey

Week 6
EXPLORE the history of Standing Rock and DAPL at Native Knowledge (30 mins)

COMPARE and CONTRAST the Indigenous fight to protect sacred resources to the Tunisia Uprising and Arab Spring through the following
Pick one
● The Daily Podcast’s Trouble in Tunisia (~20 mins)
● Vox’s The Unsexy Truth about Why the Arab Spring Failed (20 mins)
● Washington Post’s Why is the world protesting so much?
● What do the movements have in common? What makes them different?
● What is the importance of grassroots organizing to their initial success?
● What role did SM play?
● How do we measure success? Why did protests not always lead to the outcomes we expect?
PET RESEARCH (30 min) - within your issue or movement/group, focus on 1) how the political institutions involved shape group tactics and 2) see if you can find any evidence of inner movement/group division or fracturing that threatens the long term success of the movement.

Week 7
READ ONE of the following academic articles (~45mins):

INVESTIGATE your pet issue through the following prompts
- What types of posts are they making (is it informational, are they asking for participation, for people to show up or do something, if you were to describe their actions to others what would you say)
- Are they connecting and tagging other groups or hashtags to garner greater support?
- Are they relying on expert opinion and news to support their cause?
- Are their leaders visible?
- How do their online efforts connect to offline efforts?

CONSIDER based on what you read and see with your issue whether social media is just another way to distribute your message or whether it actually changes the approach and tactics used by groups. (for example when the Goleta water district posts about water conservation, social media is just another place to put their comms, they haven’t really changed their strategy)?

Week 8
READ: Community Activism & Environmental Justice - the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative [45 mins] sorry the PDF is not the highest quality, do your best

LISTEN: Trash Academy: Communicating Consumption and Waste through Activism and Advocacy w/ Ron Whyte. [36 min]

REFLECT: We have learned a lot about grassroots organizing focused on protest and direct action or online participation, but these efforts can sometimes take on a much different form as you’ll see with these two cases.

This is a living syllabus. Page 5
• Why is grassroots organizing critical to the EJ efforts in Dudley Street Neighborhood and Philadelphia?
• What is it about these approaches that make them so sustainable and enduring?
• What could other orgs/movements learn from these cases?

SIGN UP for your pitch time in Wk 9 or 10 via this form (please complete by 2/26)

Week 9 & 10
For our final 2 weeks, I want to put it all together. Along the way, we covered traditional grassroots organizing, new forms of organizing under Web 2.0, new tactics deployed, the importance of institutions both for strategies and outcomes, and more.

PREP: pick a group important to your pet issue research and develop a 2-minute pitch for a new communication campaign or tactic.

• What tactics should they use
• Who should their audience be
• What institutions should they consider and why
• It should read like 'for the Sierra Club to get ahead on the green new deal, they need to do 1), 2), 3)
• Include some example social media posts to provide flavor, be creative!

PITCH YOUR STRATEGY: 2 minutes in class + 2 mins for questions, feel free to pair up with others in your area or work solo.