

Latin American Social Movements

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This course provides a survey of contemporary social movements in Latin America from an anthropological perspective, emphasizing the dual roles of personal and political agency in processes of social transformation. Some questions under discussion will include: What forms of activism have been the most successful in promoting/preserving local rights, and which have not? What does it mean to be "indigenous" in Latin America? How have political movements framed in cultural and ethnic terms differed from other political movements in the region? How have neoliberal economic policies and globalization affected communities in Latin America, and how have they responded?

After a consideration of general social movement theory, the course will focus on range of Latin American case studies that highlight the connections between social protest movements and the following issues: subsistence for individuals and families, gender and women's movements, ethnic identity and cultural rights, agrarian conflict and environmental concerns, religion and religious conversion, and the nature of citizenship and democratization. The course will also address the impact of globalization and transnational migration on Latin America, and the political and economic contexts that have given rise to social movements over the last two decades. Case studies from Mesoamerica (Mexico and Guatemala) and Peru will receive significant attention, but movements in other countries will also be highlighted. The goal of the course is to provide students with a working knowledge of current issues in the study of Latin American social movements. In addition to deepening our knowledge of current issues facing the peoples of the region, this course will also provide a firm foundation for understanding the dynamics of popular social movements in other world regions.

Possible Texts:

Langer, Erick D. & Elena Munoz. 2003. Contemporary Indigenous Movements in Latin America (220 pages). SR Books.

Susan Eckstein (ed.). 2001. Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements Berkeley: University of California Press.

Warren, Kay B. & Jean E. Jackson (eds.) 2003. Indigenous Movements, Self-Representation, and the State in Latin America. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Collier, George. 1999. Basta: Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas. Food First.

Stephen, Lynn. 1997. Women and Social Movements in Latin America. Austin: University of Texas Press.