



UCDC

Activism, Protest and the Politics of Change in Washington D.C.

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Course Instructor

Dale is the Congressional Liaison for the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington, DC. In that capacity, he advises the Organization's leadership on strategies to engage and communicate with the U.S. Congress to ensure that its priorities are understood by decision makers on Capitol Hill. Before that he managed press and media relations for the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, directed public relations for Bethesda-based Honest Tea, and served as the communications director for a member of Congress. He has also managed USAID and State Department-funded international development projects for various non-profit organizations promoting social, political, and economic development in Latin America and the Caribbean. He was a McNair Scholar, an APSA Minority Fellow, and is a PhD candidate in American Politics. Dale earned his MA in Congressional and Presidential Studies at the Catholic University of America and his BA in Government and Politics from the University of Maryland.

Course Description

How does social and political change happen in Washington? What strategies and techniques do underdogs use to take on entrenched and established powers in the nation's capital? Making real change is difficult. Yet, there are several examples of successful social movements in American history and politics that came to Washington and effectively changed the course of the nation's politics and history. This class will explore the history and stories of grassroots mobilization and advocacy on the national stage. By observing advocacy events and interacting with guest speakers, students will learn about the successes—and failures—of social groups' efforts to make lasting change in American politics and society.

The class read about, discuss, and debate the dynamics of protest and advocacy and meet with advocacy leaders and activists to discuss the strategies used to pressure decision makers—sometimes successfully and sometimes not— for political outcomes. They will learn about agenda setting and messaging; as well as techniques used to influence the debate such as protests, advocacy campaigns, petitions, and electoral lobbying. Students will learn about and discuss which types of groups and leaders engage in which strategies, and at what stage of the policy process they are most likely to be effective based upon the context of their particular policy or political goals.

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to identify the actors who participate in grassroots action and how their efforts can translate into policy. Students will also meet with advocacy leaders directly to better understand the various sides of important social and political issues, and assess the effectiveness—or not—of individual social movements and advocacy initiatives, and learn how to write and present on the issues and material covered.

Learning Goals and Objectives

Goal #1: Students will be able to relate their internship experience with the skills and substance learned in their course.

Objective #1: Students will discuss as part of their class participation how the weekly substance or skills learned applied to the work of their internship or their internship organization's goals or mission.

Goal #2: Students will experience a cultural, historical, policy or other event in the District of Columbia that relates to their course.

Objective #2: Students will attend (in person) at least two advocacy-related events such as a Congressional hearing, Hill briefing, think tank seminar or lecture, or NGO/advocacy/nonprofit event and will write a memo for each event explaining the significance and impact of that event.

Goal #3: Students will be able to communicate persuasively in writing and orally.

Objective #3: Students will write two advocacy event memos, one advocate interview, and one Op-Ed as well as possibly lead at least one class discussion and give a presentation on their Op-Ed to the class.

Goal #4: Students will be able to critically examine competing arguments, and use empirical evidence to research and apply theory to practice.

Objective #4: Students will write an observation-based memos, conduct research and formulate an argument for an Op-Ed and present it to the class by the end of the quarter.

Course Materials and Accessibility

Among the materials for this course are a combination of book readings, articles, blog entries, YouTube videos, and other items. The majority of the readings will include selections from David S. Meyer's ***The Politics of Protest: Social Movements in America, 2nd Edition***, Oxford University Press, 2015. The book is available for purchase online.

Additionally, the specific readings will be made available through Dropbox and/or email. Some of the items such as news articles and blog entries—as listed in the syllabus—will be available online.

****Importantly, I reserve the right to make changes to the course materials as the term progresses. This includes, but is not limited to, adding and subtracting articles and other readings.****

Students are also strongly encouraged to read a good daily newspaper (or two or three) so they can follow the examples used in lectures and offer their own in class. *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Hill Newspaper*, *Roll Call*, and *Politico* are good places to start, but students should feel free

to read which ever daily new sources they are accustomed to reading and bring those observations to share in class. Periodically, web readings may be assigned from these sources.

Additionally, the syllabus, updates, and other announcements about the course will be emailed to the class.

Class Meetings, Course Responsibilities, and Assignments

Class Meetings: Students will be required to complete weekly readings and, depending on the level of voluntary participation and class discussion, may be assigned the responsibility of leading a portion of each class discussion on the weekly topic. There will be four written assignments. One will be to produce a briefing memo covering an event or activity held by an advocacy organization addressing an issue in Washington, DC. Another will be an interview of a leader or advocate from an advocacy organization. The third will be an in-class, team-drafted Op-Ed column presentation and discussion of an argument related to an issue that involves a community-based or grassroots advocacy organization and their stated policy or political issue or campaign. The fourth will be an individually drafted Op-Ed submitted at the end of the quarter.

Attendance: Attendance is required. Please be on time. Excused absences are usually extraordinary events such as the death of an immediate family member (parent, sibling, or grandparent), personal illness, or a major religious holiday that is recognized by the [UCDC calendar](#). **You MUST provide written documentation for each of these absences; and for religious holidays, you must submit your excuse one week in advance of the absence to be excused.** On occasion, and with at least 48-hours notice, you may request to be excused for a special internship or other DC event. If granted, it is likely you will be asked to report on your experience in class. For information about missed and late assignments, see below.

Note: Each *unexcused* absence will lower your final course grade to the next lower grade (e.g. A- will become a B+).

In-Class Individual Participation and In-Class Quizzes: (Class Participation=Prepared discussion questions and summary + discussion question presentation + class attendance + quality of participation in class + quality of questions for guest speakers+Quizzes.)

All students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned material, this includes posing questions about the material and outside, related observations based on your internships and what you are reading in various news sources. Your participation grade also includes your questions and engagement for any in-class guest speakers. You will be graded on the quality of your participation. **If needed, I reserve the right to give unannounced quizzes at the beginning of each class related to that session's assigned readings.**

Depending on the level and quality of routine in-class participation, **students may be asked to prepare discussion questions and a brief summary of the next week's reading for at least one class session.** Students may be called upon at the beginning of the next class to lead the discussion and a corresponding letter grade will be given. This work will factor into your overall participation grade. Students are expected to present their ideas and questions to the class and will hand in a paper copy of

their comments and questions to the professor at the beginning of the class. The participation grade may also take into account a student's attendance and punctuality.

Participation is very important for this class, and everyone will be expected to contribute in a substantively meaningful way to the class discussion. You should always be ready to be asked for your input on any and all things assigned for class. In-class participation cannot be made up.

Reading Assignments: All the reading assigned in this syllabus—and any added throughout the semester—is required. This means that you should read all of the material BEFORE the class meeting and be ready to use it for your graded class discussion leads (if relevant) EVEN IF we do not discuss it in class. I reserve the right to change the readings and the schedule if necessary as the term progresses. See the Weekly Schedule below for dates and assignments. You should bring assigned reading to class for discussion.

Advocacy Briefing Memo: You will attend an advocacy-related event (e.g. Congressional hearing, Hill briefing, constituent meetings, public policy event, public protest, interest group conference, Supreme Court session, or fundraising event, etc.) submitted for my approval and prepare a two-page, single-spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font memo describing the event (who, what, where, when, why, and how), and give your assessment of (1) the goal of each event, (2) whether or not each event had the desired impact, and (3) provide your recommendations on how to improve such events for the future. More information about these two assignments will be provided and discussed once the course is underway.

Advocacy Leader Interview: You will identify, with my approval, an advocacy/lobbying leader in Washington to interview and prepare a three-to-five page double-spaced Times New Roman 12 point font paper summarizing the interview with the subject. Specifically, you should ask about the subject's background, how they became involved in their issue, how they arrived in Washington, some of their successes, examples of frustrations or setbacks, and their plans for pursuing their issue goals for the future. Unlike the memos, which should practice formal policy-oriented writing styles, the interview paper should be more conversational—but not too informal—and follow a human interest style found in a news media outlet or periodical.

Advocacy Op-Ed: The advocacy Op-Ed (opinion column) 700 to 900 words, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font) will be (1) an analysis on a national-level issue of current debate in Washington, DC. The Op-Ed should include (a) a statement of the problem/issue, (b) a description of the involved sides or parties, (c) a description of the current state of the issue and (d) a proposed plan to accomplish a specific policy change or goal and an explanation on how that plan will impact the issue.

Essentially, you must identify the issue and intended goal, make a case for your preferred strategy or policy proposal, and provide an analysis of possible outcomes. You will be evaluated how well-written the Op-Ed is, including grammar, typos, organization and structure; and on the quality of the analysis and the thoroughness of the information. More detailed information about this assignment will be provided and discussed once the course is underway.

You will work in class in teams to draft preliminary Op-Eds to present to the class. You and your team will give a brief presentation of your Op-Ed to the class and conduct a short question and answer period with your peers.

A separate final individually drafted Op-Ed on a different topic will be due on the last day of class, March 12.

Grading Standards and Measurement

Individual assignments in this course will be worth various points but converted to a 100 point scale such that an A=100-93%, A-=92-90%, B+=89-87, B=86-83, B-=82-80, etc. **You should understand that only excellent work will earn an A. If the work is good, it will earn a B, and satisfactory work will earn a C.** You will earn Ds and Fs if your work is less than satisfactory or of poor quality. If you fail to complete the work, you will earn a 0 for the assignment. Incompletes will be allowed only under the most exceptional circumstances.

Final course grades will be proportioned as follows:

Class Attendance, Participation, and Discussion (30%)
Advocacy Event Briefing Memo (20%)
Advocacy Leader Interview (20%)
Team Op-Ed and Presentation (10%)
Final Advocacy Op-Ed (20%)

According to general university policies, final course grades earned in this class will be worth the following points: A=4.0, A-=3.7, B+=3.3, B=3.0, B-=2.7, C+=2.3, C=2.0, C-=1.7, D=1.0, F=0. (NOTE: I will consider using A+ grades for students coming from campuses that issue them. Please notify me at the beginning of the semester.)

Course Communication Tools

I will use email for communicating with you this term. Unless you tell me otherwise, I will be communicating with you using the email address that you included as your primary address when you enrolled for classes. You are responsible for checking your email regularly for messages and feedback. You are responsible for letting me know if you change your email address.

Policy on Attendance

See Course Responsibilities and Assignments (above).

Policy on Missed and Late Assignments

Assignment deadlines are firm, and makeup assignments are permitted only for excused absences (see above). You may submit assignments early, but I do not guarantee early feedback.

Missed assignments. Assignments can be made up only for excused absences (see above). Be aware that you may be asked to turn in a written assignment *before* the deadline, and the makeup assignment may be different than the original assignment. If there is some other reason for you to miss an assignment (e.g. a previously scheduled family engagement), you must inform me within the first week of classes *to be considered* eligible to make up the assignment; this is not a guarantee that you

will be allowed to make up the assignment. If you do not meet these conditions, you will receive a zero for the assignment. **IMPORTANT:** You should discuss make up assignments with me as soon as you are aware of them in office hours or by email; I will not discuss these arrangements in class.

Late assignments. All assignments are considered due at the beginning of each class period, even if I don't formally ask for them until later in the class. Assignments submitted after the time and date at which they are due, and that are NOT accompanied by an acceptable excuse (as described previously) will be addressed as follows. **For every 24 hour period after the date and time that the assignment is due (including weekends), the grade received for the assignment will be decreased by two (2) parts of a grade.** The 24 hour periods include weekends. For example, if you turn in an A quality assignment on Friday before 11:00a, after it was due on Wednesday at 11:00a, then the assignment will be 2 days late and you will earn a maximum grade of B- on that assignment. If you turn in a B quality assignment at that same time, you will earn a C-.

Statement on Weather Emergencies

In the event of a weather emergency, UCDC follows the [federal government's decisions](#) about delays and closures. We will cross that bridge if/when we get there!

Policy on Academic Misconduct

UCDC has a zero-tolerance policy for cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of dishonesty. Students should refer to their home campus Student Code of Conduct for the regulations that apply to them. The burden is on each student to know what behaviors constitute cheating and plagiarism. Ignorance of these behaviors is not an adequate defense.

Policy on Classroom Conduct

I'm sure it goes without saying that we all must treat others in class with respect. We do not have to agree, but being polite and thoughtful in our interactions with each other is absolutely required. Also, in consideration of your classmates and me, you should observe the following rules: (1) DO set your cell phones to silent and answer them only in an emergency (e.g. child care or medical for you or an immediate family member). (2) Do NOT arrive late to class unless you have advanced approval; you may arrive during the break for the second part of class. (3) Do NOT do homework for other classes or read material not related to this class. (4) Do NOT use a laptop computer, other electronic device, or audio taping equipment unless you have approval from me. For any of these infractions, you will be warned only once; after the warning, you may be excused from class and will be docked 2 percentage points of your total course grade for each infraction at the end of the term.

[Statement on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence](#)

Click on this link for the University of California statement on sexual harassment and sexual violence.

The University of California is committed to creating and maintaining a community where all individuals who participate in University programs and activities can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Every member of the community should be aware that the University prohibits sexual harassment and sexual violence, and that such behavior violates both law and University policy. The University will respond promptly and effectively to reports of sexual harassment and sexual violence, and will take appropriate action to prevent, to correct, and

when necessary, to discipline behavior that violates this policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence.

Students who wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct should contact UCDC's Counseling Services at UCDCCounseling@gmail.com. To report sexual misconduct to ask questions about UCDC policies and procedures regarding sexual misconduct, please contact the UCDC Title IX administrator, Josh Brimmeier (202-974-6214 or josh.brimmeier@ucdc.edu). Because the University of California is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, the confidentiality of reported misconduct cannot be guaranteed.

[Statement on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#)

Click on this link for the University of California statement on accommodations for students with disabilities.

If you require accommodation for class, please let me know at our first meeting (if not earlier) so the necessary arrangements can be made.

Course Schedule

Class 1: Introduction to Course, Overview, Assignments, and Expectations

- Read course syllabus, come prepared with questions
- Nathan Heller, "Is There Any Point to Protesting?" The New Yorker, August 21, 2017 (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/08/21/is-there-any-point-to-protesting>)
- “Do protests really work?” CNN Video, 2018
<https://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2018/03/23/do-protests-work-orig-acl.cnn>

Class 2: Background: Social Movements & the American System of Advocacy

- Meyer, Chapters 1, 2
- Workshop on Memo Writing

Class 3: Who Becomes an Activist and What Do Their Groups and Movements Look Like?

- Meyer, Chapters 3, 4
 - Other Articles TBD
 - Tentative Guest Speaker (Possible Topic Includes Immigration Reform, LGBTQ Rights, Women's Rights, Environmental Issues, Criminal Justice Reform, or the Pro-Life/Pro-Choice Movements, among others)
- EVENT MEMO DUE**

Class 4: Which Way to Go? Choosing the Best Approach

- Meyer, Chapter 5
- Other Articles TBD
- Interview Writing Workshop
- Tentative Site visit to historic social movement location, TBD

Class 5: Spreading the Word—Changes in Communication and Media

- Meyer, Chapter 6

- Other Articles TBD
- Op-Ed Writing Workshop
- Tentative Guest Speaker (Possible Topic Includes Immigration Reform, LGBTQ Rights, Women's Rights, Environmental Issues, Criminal Justice Reform, or the Pro-Life/Pro-Choice Movements, among others)

Class 6: Advocacy Organization Site Visit and Interview

- This week will be used to visit an advocacy organization and to observe and interview an issue advocate.
- Work in teams to draft Op-Eds
- Work on preliminary drafts of individual interviews

Class 7: Peaceful Protest—The Legacy of Civil Disobedience

- Meyer, Chapter 7
 - Other Articles TBD
 - Tentative Guest Speaker (Possible Topic Includes Immigration Reform, LGBTQ Rights, Women's Rights, Environmental Issues, Criminal Justice Reform, or the Pro-Life/Pro-Choice Movements, among others)
- PRESENTATION OF GROUP-DRAFTED OP-EDS**

Class 8: From Foundation to Roof—Transforming the Movement

- Meyer, Chapter 8
 - Other Articles TBD
 - Tentative Guest Speaker, (Possible Topic Includes Immigration Reform, LGBTQ Rights, Women's Rights, Environmental Issues, Criminal Justice Reform, or the Pro-Life/Pro-Choice Movements, among others)
- ADVOCACY INTERVIEW DUE**

Class 9: Going Mainstream—The Broader Adoption of Protest as Advocacy

- Meyer, Chapter 9
- Other Articles TBD
- Tentative Guest Speaker (Possible Topic Includes Immigration Reform, LGBTQ Rights, Women's Rights, Environmental Issues, Criminal Justice Reform, or the Pro-Life/Pro-Choice Movements, among others)

Class 10: From Protest to Policy—Effecting Lasting Change

- Meyer, Chapter 10, 11
 - Other Articles TBD
 - Tentative Site visit to historic social movement location, TBD
- FINAL INDIVIDUAL OP-ED DUE**