

Sociology 626 Social Movements Fall 2007
Book Report Assignment

In general, the first two book reports must come from the list attached to the syllabus. (Exceptions are made only for honors, graduate or other advanced students who have a well-defined alternate plan for the course.) Additional reports may come from this list. Other books should receive my prior approval; I will generally need to SEE the book to approve it. Remember that there are other assignment options besides book reports after the first two.

Even though you are summarizing parts of the book, the actual writing must be in your own words. Ask for help from me or the writing center if you are unsure how to summarize in your own words without unintentional plagiarism. You are allowed to quote from the book, but if you do so, the quotation must be enclosed in quotation marks with a page reference. You should NOT base your paper on extensive quotations or paraphrases from the book. At least 90% of the paper should be written in your own words.

You have two tasks in this book report. You may do them in two separate steps, or may combine them in one integrated essay (or some combination).

A. Write a coherent essay that relates parts of this book to one, two, or three (no more than three!) of the basic theoretical questions/topics we are discussing in this class. Your essay should be 500-1000 words long. (There is no penalty for being too long, but grading standards will be calibrated so that it is possible to make an A while staying within the word guideline.) You may discuss how the book answers the question on its own terms, OR may relate material from the book to other course materials or other knowledge you have. This essay should have an introduction and conclusion, should clearly pose the issue(s)/question(s) being discussed, should build arguments about the issue(s)/questions(s) and should include information from the book as evidence in support of the arguments. The basic theoretical questions are those from the syllabus and should be understood as including the refinements and sub-questions implied by the syllabus and course readings. Speak to me if you feel there is an important theoretical question not on this list.

1. Why do individuals participate in movements? What are their motivations or interests? What are the structural conditions that shape these interests or motivations?
2. How does mobilization occur? What is the process?
3. How do people come to identify with and be committed to a movement (or not)?
4. How do people understand grievances and persuade others to agree with them?
5. How are movements organized? What networks do they draw on, what is their organizational structure?
6. How do movements draw on external resources or allies or take advantage of political opportunities (or not)? How are they constrained by social structure?
7. What tactics or strategies do movements employ? How are they constrained? What role does creativity or leadership play?
8. How do regimes, opponents, or other outsiders (including media) respond to movements?
9. What are the temporal dynamics of movements? What affects their trajectory over time?

(I understand that the book reviews are generally done before you have read course materials, and will not penalize you for not having read material you have not gotten to yet.)

B. Convince me that you read the whole book by giving 10 or more separate examples of events or arguments from the book drawn from different sections of the book, with page references. These examples will NORMALLY be included in the essay as "evidence," but you may simply list additional points if you have not included enough in your essay. These are not quotations from the book, but summaries in your own words, with page references to what you are summarizing. You may include a quotation if you feel it is appropriate, but then you must in addition write something in your own words that explains or discusses the quotation. Please note that I expect that if you are doing your own work, the examples you choose will tend to be different from those others have chosen. You may comment on these events or arguments in any way you wish (if it is not part of the theoretical discussion). That is, you can summarize, criticize, reflect on how this relates to other events you know about, etc. If you do this well, your minimum grade will be a C, even if you are weak in your theory essay.