Seminar Description

This is an ethnographic and analytical exploration of contemporary social movements in changing economies and states. The seminar charts emergent forms of collective action against inequality and violence among the urban poor, indigenous peoples, women, patient groups, and environmentalists in several regions of the world (with a particular focus on Latin America). It examines the constituencies, networks, representations, and political strategies of these activist groups at both the local and international levels, and places them in dialogue with social scientific literature on economic globalization and citizenship. While familiarizing students with ethnographic dilemmas and methods, the seminar also assesses the paradigmatic quality of these collective struggles over life, rights, and accountability: To which extent do these activist groups and actions refigure social experience, the public sphere, and governance writ large? In which ways do they challenge ideas about the scale and impact of global institutions and processes over states, populations, and individual subjectivities? What do these historical struggles and ethnographic studies do to social theory?

Requirements

The success of the seminar depends on your commitment to complete all required readings for each session and to participate actively in the discussions.

Grading will be based on:
- Attendance, participation in discussions, and an oral presentation (25%)  
- A weekly précis with questions and comments that arise during the reading of the materials for that week (no more than one single-spaced page, 25 %)  
- A final research paper on a contemporary social movement (50 %). An outline is due on March 10 and the paper is due on May 11 at 5 pm.
Course Materials

Assigned articles and book chapters can be downloaded from Firestone Library’s electronic reserve. The following books will be available for purchase at the U-Store and will also be on reserve at Firestone Library:


Week One

**Anthropology and Social Movements**


Film: *Zapatista* by Richard Rowley and Staale Sandberg (1998)

Week Two

**The Subject and Power**


Week Three

**Social Inequality, Activism, and the State:**

**The Case of Indigenous Movements in Latin America**


Yashar, Deborah J. *Contesting Citizenship: Indigenous Movements, the State, and the Postliberal Challenge in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Forthcoming (Chapters One and Three).

Week Four

Globalization and the Power of Identity


Week Five

Life, Labor, Language


Week Six

Democratization, Women’s Struggles, and NGOs


Han, Clara. “The Work of Indebtedness: The Traumatic Present of Late Capitalist Chile.” Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry (forthcoming).


Week Seven

Identity and Diversity


Week Eight

Capitalism, Everyday Violence, Governmentality


Week Nine

Cultures of Human Rights


Week Ten

Environmentalism


Week Eleven

Beyond Biopolitics:

Commercial Science and Medical Activism


Week Twelve
Corporate Power and the New Technologies of Mobilization
