

Are You Down With the Cause?: Student Activism in Higher Education
(3) Credit - Sterling; (1) Credit - COA
Sterling - Spring 2022; COA - Mid-Winter/Spring 2022

Zoom Link: <https://coa.zoom.us/j/7883451119>

Instructors: Rachael Blansett

- 300-level (at Sterling)
- 1-credit (COA)
- Social Science
 - Prerequisite (at Sterling): One Foundations class (other than Foundations of Ecology)
 - Prerequisite (at COA): Must be sophomore-standing or higher

Description

Following the founding of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013, many colleges have seen an increase of student protests to address racial injustice and anti-Blackness at their institutions. Student protests have also extended outside of race to cover topics such as gender exclusion and transphobia, sexual violence and harassment, student labor and wage exploitation, lack of institutional resources, access, representation and more. Student activism can be seen used as a response to specific institutional acts of discrimination and bias while other movements are being built based around national and global events (i.e. Black Lives Matter, #FreePalestine, DACA, etc.). Though we have seen growth of student unrest on college campuses, student activism is actually not new and holds a long, historical legacy in higher education.

In this course, students will examine the significant role student activism plays within higher education and will identify the institutional inequities that exist and persist to allow for student organizing to occur. We will review the historical context of student activism specifically ranging from the 1700s to the present-day through a predominant U.S. based framework. Students will deepen their understanding on different forms of student activism, the efficacy of online and offline activism, transformative justice and abolition, and the additional intersectional dynamics that student activism presents in the lives of historically disenfranchised and intentionally excluded communities such as: Black students, students of Color, disabled students, poor and working class students, international students, those who hold non-western religious beliefs, etc. Students will also develop and strengthen skill-building, strategic planning, and critical consciousness around creating equitable change within a college setting and influence civic engagement in a larger societal context.

Land Acknowledgement

Sterling: Sterling College uses education as a force to address critical ecological problems caused by unlimited growth and consumption that is destroying the planet as we have known it. Our mission is to advance ecological thinking and action through affordable experiential learning that prepares people to be knowledgeable, skilled, and responsible leaders in the communities in which they live. Sterling acknowledges that the land on which we gather—places now known as Vermont and Kentucky—are the traditional and unceded territories of several indigenous peoples: the Abenaki in the North and the Shawnee, Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Osage people to the South. We also learn in-and-from a range of landscapes that belong to

other indigenous peoples. As we seek deep reciprocal relationships with nature, we respect and honor the place-based and cultural wisdom of indigenous ancestors and contemporaries. Words of acknowledgement and intention are just a first step. We must match them with acts of respect and repair.

COA: TBD

Course Objectives

Students will:

- Review how student activism and higher education function together and how they are dependent on one another to operate.
- Examine the ways student activism has played an integral role in shaping the foundations and progression of higher education and academia.
- Review the historical context and importance of student activism on college campuses and the impact of current events and intersectional dynamics.
- Discuss the inception of higher education and its embedded legacy within anti-Blackness and erasure of Indigenous communities (alongside various other marginalized identities).
- Analyze the influence of student activism on student learning and retention and the differences in efficacy between online and offline activism.
- Explore the fundamental themes and elements associated with transformative justice and abolitionist frameworks
- Construct practical skill-building and praxis towards creating change in higher education and beyond.

Meeting Times: We modified the schedule a bit to try to work with students from both schools. The course will typically meet twice a week virtually (online), but there will also be (2) in-person workshop sessions in which students from both colleges come together for an extended period. The goal is to have COA students experience Sterling's campus and vice versa. One of these workshop sessions will take place on February 9th. over COA's Spring Break. The other in-person session will be held over COA's Spring Break on March 21st. Coordination & logistics for these in-person sessions have yet to be determined, but will be solidified soon. Seminar Schedule (**Unless otherwise noted on the schedule below, class sessions will be held virtually Mondays 1pm-2:25pm, and Wednesdays 6:30pm-8pm. The weeks are listed by their Monday dates**)

- **Week 1:** Jan 24: Monday session will be an evening session
- **Week 2:** Jan 31: Monday session will be an evening session
- **Week 3:** Feb 7: No Monday session, first "in-person" group workshop meeting (hosted at Sterling College – details TBA)
- **Week 4:** Feb 14
- **Week 5:** Feb 21
- **Week 6:** Feb 28: No Monday session
- **Week 7:** March 7
- **Break 1:** March 14 (Spring Break for COA)
- **Week 8:** March 21 (Spring Break for COA)
 - Note one of the week of March 14th will be off to account for COA Spring Break (no classes). The next week on March 21st will have our second and final in-person group workshop meeting (hosted at College of the Atlantic – details TBA)
- **Week 9:** March 28

- **Break 2:** April 4 (Sterling Spring Break- no classes)
- **Week 10:** April 11

Office & Hours: Virtually (*unless otherwise specified)

- Can be arranged via email at rblansett@sterlingcollege.edu or rblansett@coa.edu
- Can schedule a time to meet through my [calendly link](#) or via email

Email/Phone: rblansett@sterlingcollege.edu or rblansett@coa.edu

Required Texts

Excerpts from:

- *Plantation Politics and Campus Rebellions: Power, Diversity, and the Emancipatory Struggle in Higher Education* edited by Dian S. Squire, Bianca Williams & Frank A. Tuitt
- “We Do This ‘til We Free Us” by Mariame Kaba
- “Emergent Strategy” by Adrienne Maree Brown
- “Ebony & Ivy” by Craig Steven Wilder

Supplementary Readings

- [Additional Supplemental Readings](#)
- Harrison, L. M. & Mather, P. C. (2017). Making meaning of student activism: student activist and administrator perspectives. *Mid-Western Educational Researcher*, (29)2, 117-135.
- Hoffman, G. D. & Mitchell, T. D. (2016). Making diversity “everyone’s business”: A discourse analysis of institutional responses to student activism for equity and inclusion. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 9(3), 277-289.
- Jones, V. A. & Reddick R. J. (2017). The heterogeneity of resistance: how black students utilize engagement and activism to challenge pwi inequalities. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 86(3), 204-219.
- Klar, M. & Kasser, T. (2009). Some benefits of being an activist: measuring activism and its role in psychological well-being. *Political Psychology*, 30(5), 755-777.
- Linder, C., Quaye, S. J., Lange, A. C., Roberts, R. E., Lacy, M. C., & Kwamogi Okello, W. (2019). “A student should have the privilege of just being a student”: student activism as labor. *The Review of Higher Education*, 42, 37-52.
- Ndemanu, M. T. (2017). Antecedents of college campus protests nationwide: exploring black student activists’ demands. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 86(3), 238-251.
- Rhoads, R. A. (2016). Student activism, diversity, and the struggle for a just society. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 9(3), 189-202.
- Schumann, S. & Klein, O. (2015). Substitute or stepping stone? Assessing the impact of low-threshold online collective actions on offline participation. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 45, 308-322.
- Tuck, E. & Yang, K.W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 1-40.

Format

Course will include traditional classroom lectures, various dialogue and discussion elements, and (2) in-person workshop session components. For these course sessions, students will be asked to have read required texts

and to be ready to engage and participate in class discussions and activities. Guest speakers may be invited to present for online course sessions.

Assignments & Evaluation

- **Class Participation & Attendance - 30%**
 - [Class Participation & Attendance Guideline Sheet](#)
 - Attending class on time
 - Actively contributing to class discussions with questions and thoughtful commentary
 - Reference to course readings and materials
 - Participation in small breakout groups and large group discussions
 - Engaged listening and critical dialogue
- **Weekly Reflection Assignments - 20%**
 - [Weekly Reflection Instruction Sheet](#)
 - Students will be given a prompt based on the weekly reading assigned and will turn in a written reflection response (no more than 500 words) to the instructor each week
 - Reflections will include thoughtful and critical reflections or questions that were raised based on the reading selection
 - Students will be able to use their reflections to further expand on discussion points in the classroom and will allow for a different avenue for students' various communication styles and thought processes
- **Current Topics Research Assignment - 15%**
 - [Current Topics Research Assignment Instruction Sheet](#)
 - Students will identify a contemporary movement happening on college campuses or globally that they research, write an essay, and briefly present (no more than 5 minutes) highlights of assignment to the class at the beginning of the session
 - Students will research and identify the following:
 - Contemporary U.S.-based or international student activist movement happening within the past decade
 - How you heard about the movement
 - Historical context leading to the current campus climate/student protest
 - Barriers and challenges (whether societal or administratively) students are facing
 - Overview of student demands and administrative responses
 - How can people find out more about the movement, be in solidarity, etc.
- **Final Project - 35%**
 - [Final Project Instruction Sheet](#)
 - Students will identify a social justice issue happening within their college and identify ways to cultivate change around that issue
 - Group project
 - Students will utilize knowledge and skill-building within the course to develop an idea, proposal, collective, art initiative, etc. to present as a possibility to facilitate change at the colleges; they will have to address potential barriers (administrative, financial, etc.) and utilize problem-solving skills to navigate
 - Each group will have 30 minutes to present to the class and can utilize multimedia

- The project will be rooted in facilitating change rather than purely direct action pieces (however, can include them)
- Present to larger community (if applicable)

Course Calendar/Outline:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings & Assignments</u>
Monday, January 24th 6:30pm-8pm	Intros & Syllabus Overview • Icebreaker(s) • Syllabus Overview • Assignment Overview • Current Topics Sign Up	N/A
Wednesday, January 26th 6:30pm-8pm	Creating Space & Intentional Dialogue • “White Dominant Culture & Something Different” handout • Overview of “PAN” (Pay Attention Now) worksheet and active listening worksheet • Identifying elements of meaningful discussion (i.e. asking open questions, referring to reading with page numbers and specificity, observing who is talking/who is not, monitoring air time, etc.) • Designing collective agreements around dialogue and discussion	N/A
Monday, January 31st 6:30pm-8pm	History of Student Activism & Higher Education • Analyze the connections of the first U.S. colleges and the Atlantic Slave trade • Identify the legacies, wealth, and power of original founding college board trustees and direct connections with U.S. slavery • Discover the historical underpinnings of anti-Blackness in U.S. higher education	<i>Wilder, C.S. (2013). “Bonfires of the negroes”: The bloody journey from slave traders to college trustees. Ebony & Ivy, pp. 47-77</i> Link to Class Reading Weekly Reflection #1 Due
Wednesday, February 2nd	History of Student Activism & Higher Education Contd.	<i>Rhoads, R. A. (2016). Student activism, diversity, and the struggle</i>

6:30pm-8pm	• Introduction to various student activist movements throughout the decades • Overview of student activism through (3) broad periods in time: the sixties, the post-sixties, and contemporary context	<i>for a just society. Journal of Diversity in Higher Education</i>, pp. 189-202 Link to Class Reading Weekly Reflection #2 Due
Monday, February 7th 1pm-2:30pm	NO SESSION	N/A
Wednesday, February 9th	First In-person workshop • TO BE RESCHEDULED	N/A
Monday, February 14th 1pm-2:30pm	Building Relationships Across Identity • A series of activities focused on building trust, communication, and understanding across lived experiences • Reflection & analysis on own identities and intersectionality	N/A
Wednesday, February 16th 6:30pm-8pm	Framing of Colleges as a Plantation • Introduction to the framework of “plantation politics” in higher education • Recognition of higher education serving as a tool to uphold an anti-Black racial project • Overview of the ways higher education maintains barriers of capitalism, white supremacy, and repression for Black students	<i>Williams, B.C., Squire, D.D. & Tuitt, F.A. (2021). Allochronism’s Pull on Contemporary Formations of Higher Education</i>, pp. 35-55 Link to Class Reading Weekly Reflection #3 Due (2) Current Topics Research Presentations
Monday, February 21st	Framing of Colleges as a Plantation (Contd.) • Further analysis of higher education operating from a plantation politics framework • Introduction to the “Slave Society” model	<i>Williams, B.C., Squire, D.D. & Tuitt, F.A. (2021). Plantation pedagogies in contemporary higher education classrooms: Instruments of the slave society and manifestation of plantation politics. Plantation Politics and Campus Rebellions,</i>

1pm-2:30pm	activism in student curriculum and/or support of student voices	Weekly Reflection #6 Due Final Project Topic Ideas Due (2) Current Topics Research Presentations
Wednesday, March 9th 6:30pm-8pm	Student Activist Burnout & Marginalization • Compare student activism strengths with the social justice burnout • Understanding that marginalized students are more likely to participate and lead activism on campus • Student activism can have an increased negative effect on Black/Students of Color • Overview of Racial Battle Fatigue	<i>Linder, C., Quaye, S. J., Lange, A. C., Roberts, R. E., Lacy, M. C., & Kwamogi Okello, W. (2019). "A student should have the privilege of just being a student": student activism as labor. The Review of Higher Education, pp. 37-52</i> Link to Reading Weekly Reflection #7 Due (2) Current Topics Research Presentations
Monday, March 14th 1pm-2:30pm	NO SESSION - COA SPRING BREAK	N/A
Wednesday, March 16th 6:30pm-8pm	NO SESSION - COA SPRING BREAK	N/A
Monday, March 21st 1pm-2:30pm	NO SESSION - COA SPRING BREAK	N/A
Wednesday, March 23rd 6:30pm-8pm	NO SESSION - COA SPRING BREAK	N/A
Monday, March 28th	Online v. Offline Activism • Defining online and offline activism • Comparing the strengths and challenges between each realm of activism • Analysis of the effects and relationship to online activism v. offline engagement	<i>Schumann, S. & Klein, O. (2015). Substitute or stepping stone? Assessing the impact of low-threshold online collective actions on offline participation. European Journal of Social Psychology, pp. 308-322</i> Link to Reading

1pm-2:30pm		<i>Greijdanus, H., de Matos Fernandes, C. A., Turner-Zwinkels, F., Honari, A., Roos, C. A., Rosenbusch, H., & Postmes, T. (2020). The psychology of online activism and social movement: Relations between online and offline collective action. Current Opinion in Psychology, pp. 49-54</i> Link to Reading Weekly Reflection #8 Due (2) Current Topics Research Presentations
Wednesday, March 30th 6:30pm-8pm	IN-PERSON CLASS (STERLING): Transformative Justice, Abolition & Creating Change • Introduction to transformative justice and abolitionist politics • Understanding the history of carceral punishment and police brutality in society • Recognition that structural violence disproportionately impacts Black people/People of Color • Reflections of our own engagements in transformative justice work • Critical dialogue and discussion towards creating meaningful change in higher education • Analyzing the timeline of creating change within systems • Overview of resilience as an integral tool of creating change	<i>Kaba, M. (2021). So you're thinking about becoming an abolitionist. We Do This 'til We Free Us, pp. 2-13</i> Link to Reading <i>Agbebiyi, K., Hamid, S. T., Kuo, R., & Mohapatra, M. (2020). Abolition cannot wait: Visions for transformation and radical world-building. Wear Your Voice. Retrieved from online.</i> Link to Reading <i>Brown, A. M. (2017). Nonlinear and iterative: The pace and pathways of change. Emergent Strategy, pp. 103-121</i> Link to Reading <i>Brown, A. M. (2017). Resilience: How we recover and transform. Emergent Strategy, pp. 123-150</i> Link to Reading My Transformative Justice Workbook Due (*this will count as

