



VIU
Graduate
Seminar
ACTIVISM
and **social**
movements

Activism and Social Movements

May 24-28, 2021

Venice International University
Isola di San Servolo, Venice

VIU Graduate Seminar

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Scientific Coordinators:

Martina Avanza
University of Lausanne

Patrick Heinrich
Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Orin Starn
Duke University

Katya Wesolowski
Duke University

This program is a VIU Global Challenges Initiative

From local anti-cruise ship protests in Venice to pro-democracy mobilizations in Hong Kong and the global Black Lives Matter movement, organizing for change is shaping planetary history just as it always has. We face the rise of xenophobia and authoritarianism in many places; economic inequality has increased; alt-right, anti-immigrant and even neo-fascist movements have grown in various countries; and global warming threatens our species in the perhaps not so faraway future. Yet, at the same time, we have seen increased environmental action and awareness; LGBTQ organizing has gained traction; and new feminist and anti-racist initiatives have developed worldwide. Far from any consensus about the best way forward, the range of social activism reflects the profound polarization of politics and ideology in many countries. The seminar will give students tools for making sense of organizing as well as for thinking more about our own role and responsibilities as scholars of activism and social change.

Our student and faculty participants will be invited to engage with the complexities of protest and social movements. Understanding mobilization demands attention to the forces of history, economics, and emotion at work as well as to the forms of expression and identity that inevitably develop in the course of mobilizing. A special attention will be paid to how cultural forms like art, dance, video and film, and language itself may give voice to new visions. To link our discussions to area issues, there will be activities in Venice involving culture, media, and protest, including meeting with activists and performers. In the spirit of joining theory and practice, students will also work in groups to produce a short video on a topic of their choice related to social change with the help of the dancer/artist/videographer Pierre Emmanuel-Sorignet from the University of Lausanne. We will also have a workshop about the role of bodies and embodiment in transformative activism led by Sabanci University professor Ayşe Gül Altınay. The seminar will thus join rigorous academic study, experiential learning and collective

participation to explore the possibilities for the research and practice of activism.

This Graduate Seminar will be led by:

- Duke University, USA
- University of Lausanne, Switzerland
- Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy

In cooperation with:

- Korea University, Korea
- Waseda University, Japan

We want students to come away with concepts, tools, and inspirations to bring to their own work. They will gain exposure in the seminar to ways of theorizing about protest movements from across Anthropology, History, Sociology, Feminist theory and other fields. This will include discussion of a diversity of specific issues including the role of the body in feminist organizing tactics, minority languages and cultural protest, and contemporary labor unionism. The seminar will also explore various methodologies for researching social movements, among them interviewing, participant-observation, and on-line research in an age where digitality and social media have become essential tools for activists everywhere. This will include activities and discussions to consider the part of the researcher in projects of collective transformation. Our hope is that the event will lead all of us – students and faculty alike – to think about activism and social movements in new ways.

Faculty

Orin Starn, Duke University (Coordinator)

Katya Wesolowski, Duke University
(Co-coordinator)

Martina Avanza, University of Lausanne
(Co-coordinator)

Patrick Heinrich, Ca' Foscari University of Venice
(Co-coordinator)

Susanne Franco, Ca' Foscari University of Venice
Pierre-Emmanuel Sorignet, University of
Lausanne

Doowon Suh, Korea University

Koji Toba, Professor, Waseda University

Ayşe Gül Altınay, Sabanci University, Turkey

Methodology

The format of the seminar will be strongly participatory and interactive. There will be presentations by faculty, who will be paired in groups of two to promote a more open-ended exchange of ideas. Students will lead breakout sessions following the presentations to discuss questions posed by faculty, then reporting back to the whole group. In their video productions, students will learn practical media skills as they grapple with the role of culture, media, and protest. The workshop on transformative activism also involves a more hands-on and personal kind of engagement. Our excursions in Venice will allow us to learn directly from local organizers and performers about their activist efforts. The layering of seminar activities to complement classroom discussion with outside activities and participatory experiences is designed to make for a thought-provoking week at multiple levels. The aim is to create a welcoming collective experience where students and faculty come together to learn from their activities in Venice and each other.

Learning Outcomes

- **Approach:** students will be challenged to think about social issues in an interdisciplinary and multi-perspective way.
- **Experiential learning:** students will link what they hear in lecture and discuss in seminar to outside activities that tap into the seminar themes.
- **Methodology:** students will expand their toolkit of methods through exposure to how differing disciplines approach the interpretation of social change.
- **Deliverables:** students will be grouped in video-making teams, to do a project for presentation on the last day. They will also gain new insights and perspectives to bring to their own research as well as for thinking about their own role and responsibilities in changing the world.

Who can apply?

This Graduate Seminar is offered to Master and early PhD students in the Humanities and Social Sciences, with special relevance among others for

Anthropology, Art History/Visual studies, Dance, Development studies, History, Political Science, Public Policy, Sociology, and Women's studies.

Fees & Grant Support

Students from the VIU member institutions will pay no participation fees. Grant support is also available to support, partially or fully, the costs of international travel and accommodation. The participation fee for students of non-member institutions is Euro 1.1000 VAT incl. The fee is inclusive of tuition, course materials, accommodation, lunches, social events and taxes. Students from non-member institutions are not eligible for VIU grant support. VIU Alumni are eligible for a reduced fee.

Credits

Participation in the Graduate Seminar is considered equivalent to 2 ECTS.

The final program will be available on the VIU website

Applications

December 5, 2020 – February 10, 2021

via the VIU website

Applicants must submit the application form, a letter of motivation – which should include a brief description of the candidate's research interests, a curriculum vitae and a photo.

As the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing, VIU will continue to monitor the situation, and in the event that it is not possible to confirm the program on the VIU campus as scheduled, other practicable solutions will be evaluated. Applicants and confirmed participants will be informed of any changes.

VIU Graduate Seminars

These are thematic intensive seminars given in a concentrated period on subjects of universal interest, open to a broad spectrum of disciplines. They are suited to both Master's and PhD students and are open to candidates from all the VIU member institutions. The young researchers will receive support in defining their research proposal. Significant cooperation among departments in the member institutions is expected.

Venice International University is a consortium of 20 universities, representing 15 countries throughout the world.

The mission of VIU is to foster cooperation among VIU member institutions while facilitating the exchange of knowledge and ideas, by developing, promoting and organizing joint academic, research and training/capacity-building program. Students from non-member institutions may participate in selected academic programs. The academic programs at VIU are distinguished by a markedly interdisciplinary approach to the topics, and by the international perspectives that the participants contribute to the discussions. The VIU campus is on the island of San Servolo in Venice, Italy.

Location



Venice International University

Isola di San Servolo

30133 Venice

Italy

T +39 041 2719511

F +39 041 2719510

E summerschools@univiu.org

<https://www.univiu.org>