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Lesson 4: Community-based Adult Learning and Social Movements

Overview

In this lesson you will be introduced to social movement and community-based learning. Over the past few decades, social movement theory has provided us with new grounds to understand learning and knowledge-production from alternative perspectives. In this lesson, through various examples we will learn what a social movement is and how learning takes place in diverse forms. We will look at two recent examples of social mobilization—Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring—to explore alternative cultural formation by social movement groups. The Occupy Movement has been contentious in terms of its organization, claims, and efficacy. What are its critiques and proposed alternatives? In what ways has the social media played an important role in both the Occupy Movement and the Arab Spring? What are the tensions between women's rights and political democratization? And what pedagogical lessons can we draw from these two movements?

Learning Objectives

After completing this lesson, you should be able to grasp:

- An overview of the field of social movement theory in its relation to learning and education;
- The relationships between social movement theory and critical adult education;
- Gender and social movement-based learning; and
- The pedagogical dimensions of the Occupy Movement and the Arab Spring.



Learning Activities

- Read the Week 4 assigned readings and jot down notes to prepare to post your comments, questions, and reflections on the readings on social movement and community learning.
- Continue to work with your group on your project. Ensure you have an equitable division of labor among the group members. Let your instructor know whether you have any difficulties regarding the course, the assignments, the schedule, the course materials, etc.

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Required Readings

Hall, B. (2006). Social movement learning: Theorizing a Canadian tradition. In T. Fenwick, T. Nesbit, & B. Spencer (Eds.), *Contexts of adult education. Canadian perspectives* (pp. 230-238). Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.

Calhoun, C. (2013). Occupy Wall Street in perspective. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 64(1), 26-38.

Pedersen, J., & Salib, M. (2013). Women of the Arab spring: A conversation with Esraa Abdel Fattah and Lina Ben Mhenni. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 15(2), 256-266.

Social Movement Learning

Occupy Wall Street in Perspective

▶▶ How to Start a Movement

Derek Sivers' TED Talk: "How to Start a Movement"



Whenever possible, videos will be directly embedded into the page.

Calhoun argues that OWS is more a moment in the past than a continuing movement. He asserts that the next phase of this movement will happen under a different name. He highlights five significant points about the OWS. 1) It was not just an American phenomenon but part of a much larger global wave of mass mobilization on related issues. 2) The tactic of occupying major public spaces itself limited the movement's scope and longevity as it was very difficult to encamp for longer periods of time. 3) The police brutality and the use of social media by protesters helped in the sudden flourishing of OWS. 4) OWS was unique in being the first mass mobilization to focus entirely on the financial apparatus that caused the problem in the first place. 5) OWS was more performative than organizational. Passion and affect played a key role in the dramatic escalation of protest rallies while the organizational structure was always absent. Calhoun concludes that OWS was temporary but it will have enduring cultural effects. It has changed the way people looked at structural issues like inequality.

Women of the Arab Spring: A Conversation with Esraa Abdel Fattah and Lina Ben Mhenni



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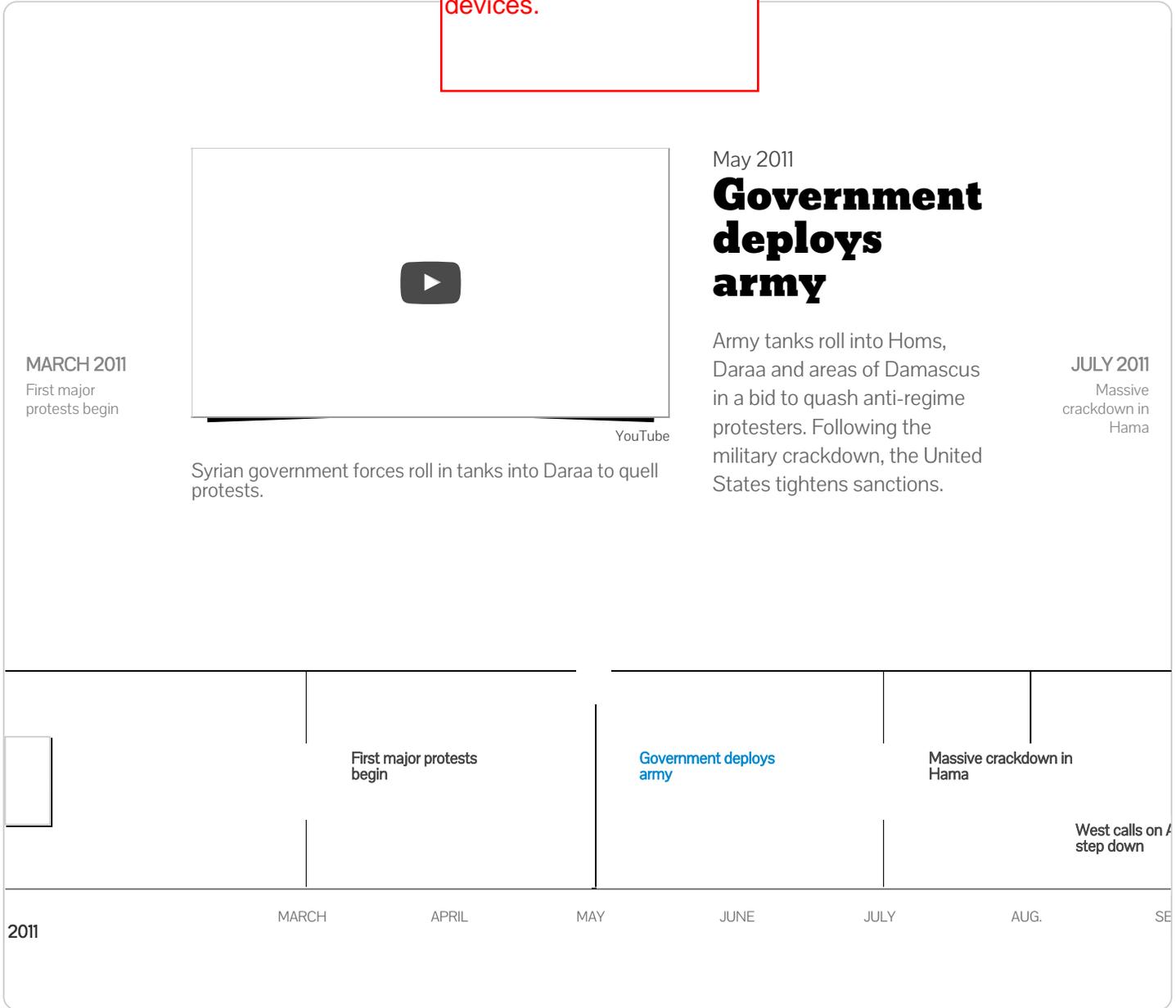
Two women activists at the heart of Arab Spring, Egyptian Esraa Abdel Fattah and Tunisian Lina Ben Mhenni talk to two academics about their experiences. Esraa runs [Egyptian Democratic Academy](#) while Lina blogs at [A Tunisian Girl](#). Both were nominated for the Nobel peace prize. In their interview, they attest to the fact that women's involvement in the Arab Spring is very significant and women from all walks of life such as students, activists, doctors and nurses, housewives etc. participated in the protests. The protests had given Arab women a much-needed chance to participate in the political process but Lina feels that in Tunisia, women's participation in electoral politics is still nominal and women in the parliament are reliant on their male colleagues. Although they are hopeful that women's place in post-revolution Egypt and Tunisia will change for the better, they are fearful that there are still challenges ahead which must be addressed in order to make sure that women's freedom is maintained for a long term. Both women call for the separation of politics and religion and a secular constitution to move forward with building the post-revolutionary Arab world.



Links to external sites are set to open in a new browser

“The Arab Spring” – A Timeline

Multimedia components are developed in a format that is cross-platform and accessible on mobile devices.



Some Questions to Guide Your Readings and Reflections

- What is a social movement and how does it relate the learning and education?
- How do people learn from social movements?
- Present an overview of the social movement theories in the context of learning and education?
- Why a deeper understating of social movement learning essential for emancipatory political praxis?
- What alternatives does the OWS movement advocate?