Course content
The course is designed to be interactive and can be adapted in light of current events. The following issues are addressed through presentations, discussions and research:

- The history of social movements and their scientific study;
- Definitions of the notion of social movement and the controversies they entail;
- The influence of economics in the study of social movements: the resource mobilization paradigm;
- The role of the state in the protection/regulation/repression of social movements;
- The impact of the mobilization of law and lawyers by social movements on the cause and the identities;
- The legal strategies commonly implemented and the evaluation of their failure or success;
- Etc.

Objectives (and/or specific learning outcomes)
The course aims to question and study the militant use of law by social movements, by offering theoretical keys to access it and by examining contemporary case studies. The course will seek to interrogate this use of law and allow students to critically reflect on legal discourse and practice.

In practice, students who take the Law & Social Movements course have the opportunity to choose a social movement and to consider how law, legal actors and institutions intervene both in the scientific analysis and in the implementation of a past and/or contemporary activist struggle. To this end, this course will enable students to become familiar with:

- theories aimed at understanding and explaining, but also stimulating or repressing, collective action;
- the plural and complex concept of social movement and its contemporary developments;
- the main paradigms (rationalist, culturalist and interactionist) that run through the social science disciplines that take social movements as objects of study;
- finally, the multiple manifestations of the importance, both analytical and practical, of the legal register in the development of militant struggles.

Pre-requisites and co-requisites
Required knowledge and skills
A good knowledge of French is a prerequisite, as assigned readings are in French and the paper has to be written in group (and most students are French speaking).

Teaching method and learning activities
An initial series of sessions will outline the theoretical material. Students are expected to have read articles or sections of books before each session in order to participate in the discussion. External speakers (from the academic or activist world) will then be invited to present their research or practice.

The other main learning activity is the completion of a collective research paper and a presentation of this paper. In order to complete this work, students will have the opportunity to:

- develop an original thought mobilizing the theoretical and methodological tools taught during the course sessions;
- become familiar with the main steps necessary to carry out a research project (drafting of a note of intent, bibliographic and empirical research, design and presentation of a poster and production of a written report);
- self-assess their work and to evaluate the work of their peers;
- Receive individualized guidance in meeting these learning objectives;
- present their work orally.

Contribution to the teaching profile
This course is part of the optional modules on critical approaches to law. It therefore aims at introducing students to such an approach, which is enlightened by scientific disciplines other than law (in this case the sociology of social movements). It extends the objectives set out in the bachelor’s degree profile, in particular the “identification of the social stakes of legal phenomena” and the “development of critical thinking” based on social sciences. Finally, since the evaluation of the students will be based essentially on group work, this teaching contributes to “experimenting the conditions of good teamwork”, an objective specifically provided for in the teaching profile of the master’s degree.
References, bibliography and recommended reading
The list of resources and references will be provided in the detailed course outline available on the Université Virtuelle (UV). Here are some of the books that will be particularly used:


Course notes
Université virtuelle

Contact(s)
Any request on this course can be addressed to Julien Pieret (jpieret@ulb.be) and/or Laura Van den Eynde (laura.van.den.eynde@ulb.be).

Evaluation method(s)
Group work and Oral presentation

Main language(s) of evaluation
French

Programmes
Programmes proposing this course at the faculty of Law and Criminology
MA-DROI | Master in Law | finalité Public and International law/unit 1, finalité Economic and Labour law/unit 1 and finalité Civil and Penal law/unit 1

Other information

Place(s) of teaching
Solbosch