Human rights scholar Kate Nash defines cultural politics as, “...the contestation of ideas in practice that potentially transforms social relationships and conditions.” In this class we will look at the interrelation between thought and action and the ways that each shapes the other. We will also consider how power determines meaning and expression and, at the same time, how culture can challenge the political ordering of society.

Cultural studies emerged as a response to the absence of the working classes, and later racial groups, in the British academy. At the same time, cultural studies was (and continues to be) shaped by its relationship to international social protest. In this class, we will look at the ways that cultural studies understands power, conflict, and change and, also, how cultural studies has been shaped by both its intellectual legacies and political projects.