

# William Hopewell

**Hometown:** *East Falmouth, Massachusetts*

**Thesis Advisor:** *Pr. Boswell. Pr. Abbas*

**Concentration:** Cross Cultural Relations

I am studying the formation and extinction of the 2011 Anti-Sectarian Movement in Beirut. This thesis by nature of the Cross Cultural Relations concentration is cross-discipline in nature drawing from the styles of both ethnography and political/social theory to explain the roots and actions of the movement and explain it in the context of social movement theory. I would also like to position it within the context of the Arab Spring though this would not be my primary focus. I feel that this is a unique opportunity to approach a very specific movement and focus on a select few groups within that movement without being limited by the conventional disciplinary bounds that separate the realms of anthropology and politics.



Within this historical instance the role of the social/professional student as an agent of change is of particular interest. I seek to follow a two pronged approach to this subject, studying both the theoretical role of the student historically, from the perspective of cultural anthropology, using the anti-sectarian movement as my primary example, but drawing historically from the 1990's anti-Milosevic uprising in Serbia, failed student "radical" groups in both American and Soviet block universities, and the riots of 1958 in the French Fourth Republic. The theoretical components of this thesis will be influenced by the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Clifford Geertz, Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow, and Michael Foucault.

Data would come from two overlapping sources. The first would be several notebooks from meetings, protests, and other functions relating to the movement, that I attended throughout the spring semester of 2011 and the first few weeks of summer while in Beirut. The second would be several more formal interviews with participants representing the interests of various religious/sectarian backgrounds, student, and labor interests to gauge their feelings and perceptions on their roles within the movement and the larger regional context. All of this would be influenced by a close reading of materialist and modernist anthropological and social contextualization of the events of this flash pan movement. This is to illustrate tangibility of theory in active student movements and examine the ways in which the identity of a student activist is formed by theories, which they are often learning simultaneously with their public political actions either academically or socially.

I will work with Pr. Boswell as my thesis advisor. Pr. Abbas will be the second reader on this thesis. I know that they know much more about the history and scholarships of the disciplines, which this project could fit into, and have much to offer in the way of guidance.