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Epstein Edits Book on Global Youth Protest

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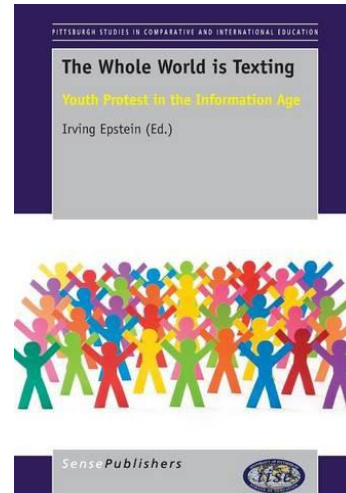
BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Illinois Wesleyan University’s Irv Epstein is the editor of a new book analyzing the nature of youth protest in the 21st century.

In *The Whole World is Texting: Youth Protest in the Information Age* (Sense Publishers, 2015), 10 authors provide commentary on ways in which youth protest has been influenced by the electronic and social media and evaluate the effectiveness of protest activities, many of which were framed in reaction to neo-liberalism and state authoritarianism. The case studies focus upon protest activities in 10 countries. The book’s title is appropriated from the phrase, “the whole world is watching,” which stems from television newscasts of police-protester clashes at the 1968 National Democratic Party Convention.

The book grew from a conference presentation Epstein gave three years ago. The Ben and Susan Rhodes Professor of Peace and Social Justice, Epstein said he has been drawn to issues involving student movements for many years, from the days when he wrote his undergraduate senior honors thesis on student demonstrations in France in May 1968.

“This book was a way of resurrecting that general interest,” said Epstein, who contributed three chapters to the volume in addition to serving as its editor. “In the intervening years, a great deal of scholarship was published rethinking the nature of the student protest and so, it was quite exciting to revisit the general topic.”

The book’s contributors offer a comparative analysis of an important global phenomenon, said Epstein. The authors further address issues involving the changing nature of globalized protest participation, its immediate and long-term consequences, and the ways in which protests have encouraged a re-evaluation of the nature of inequality, as constructed within educational, social and political spheres.



Irv Epstein

Epstein said that in his academic field of interest (comparative and international education), themes of student protest, social media usage, youth studies and their relationship to globalization factors have been underemphasized.

“By raising these topics, this book expands the initial discourse,” said Epstein, who also serves as chair of **educational studies** and the director of the **Center for Human Rights and Social Justice**.

One argument hypothesized in the book is that the use of social media has changed the way in which people organize, their propensity to do so and whether they meet their goals more effectively when they use social media, Epstein said.

“Scholars are split whether the use of social media creates more cohesiveness or group conflict, whether it is addictive or potentially empowering, and whether governments are as effective as protestors in limiting dissent through controlling and using social media for their own purposes,” said Epstein. “These splits are also apparent in the volume.”

Another issue explored in the book involves the relationship between youth and their governments, he said. “In a number of cases, one can see issues with which youth protests have broad social resonance and foreshadow wider social acceptance of their views,” he said. “One result is the growing global appreciation for the nature of inequality and its pernicious effects.

“But, their efforts have also been dismissed,” he added. “Some governments have become more authoritarian after the protests subsided. And in many instances, youth don’t aspire to behave or think differently from their elders.”

Epstein said the authors raise many useful questions but said conclusions are not definitive. “By raising the questions, I think a compelling case is made for more extensive study,” he said. “These are really important issues that are worthy of our attention.”

He noted that William Munro, the Betty Ritchie-Birrer '47 and Ivan Birrer Endowed Professor of Political Science, contributed the book chapter, "Adjusting the Margins: Poor People's Mobilization in Post-Apartheid South Africa."

A member of the faculty at Illinois Wesleyan since 1996, Epstein has twice served as chair of the department of educational studies, interim director of the International Studies program, director of the General Education Program, and associate dean of the faculty. He has published four books, one guest-edited journal issue, and 50 journal articles and book chapters. He has also served as associate editor for *Comparative Education Review* and co-editor of the *ASIANetwork Exchange*.

Epstein's professional service includes membership on the board of directors of the Comparative and International Education Society and service on the board of directors of the Scholars at Risk Network since its inception in 1999. He holds a Ph.D. in comparative and international education from the University of California, Los Angeles.