

Charles Tilly Obituary

The Columbia University community mourns the loss of one of its beloved members, Charles Tilly, the Joseph L. Bottenwieser Professor of Social Science, who passed away on April 29 after a long battle with cancer. He was 78.

Tilly, who had a joint appointment with the University's Departments of Sociology and Political Science, is widely considered the leading scholar of his generation on contentious politics and its relationship with military, economic, urban and demographic social change.

President of the Social Sciences Research Council Craig Calhoun called Tilly "one of the most distinguished of all contemporary social scientists," adding: "He is the most influential analyst of social movements and contentious politics, a path-breaker in the historical sociology of the state, a pivotal theorist of social inequality."

"His intellectual range and level of productivity are virtually unrivaled in the social sciences," said Columbia sociology Professor and Chair Thomas DiPrete. Adam Ashforth, professor of anthropology and political science at Northwestern University, described Tilly as "the founding father of twenty-first century sociology."

During the course of his 50-year career, Tilly's academic expertise covered urbanization, industrialization, collective action and state-making, and his most recent work explored social relations, identity and culture. His primary interest concerned Europe from 1500 to the present, but his work extended to North America and other parts of the world as well.

Tilly is well known for his generosity to students. Many recall thanking Tilly for his mentorship, only to receive the response: "Don't thank me, just do the same for your students."

One important training ground he offered to students was a succession of informal seminars, co-launched with his former wife Louise in their living room 40 years ago when he was a younger professor at the University of Michigan. Once titled the "Think, Then Drink" workshop, the name changed to the "Workshop on Contentious Politics" and was held regularly at Columbia for more than a decade. Many students continued to participate well past graduation and into their own professorship tenures.

"Much as his own scholarship transcended traditional disciplinary boundaries, these vibrant discussions brought a diverse array of professors and students together in an ongoing conversation that represented the best of historical social science," said former student and close friend Wayne Te Brake, now a professor of history at Purchase College. Participants enjoyed Tilly's "egalitarian rules for presentation, critique and intervention," he added.

Tilly was born May 27, 1929, in Lombard, Ill., and studied at Harvard University, earning the bachelor's degree *magna cum laude* in 1950 and the Ph.D. in sociology in 1958. He also studied at Balliol College, Oxford, and the Catholic University of Angers, France, and served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War. Before arriving at Columbia in 1996, Tilly taught at the University of Delaware, Harvard, the University of Toronto, the University of Michigan and The New School for Social Research. In addition, he held several short-term research and teaching appointments at universities throughout Europe and North America during the course of his career.

Tilly was a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, the Sociological Research Association and the Ordre des Palmes Académiques.

In addition to his theoretical and substantive interests, Tilly wrote extensively on the subject of research methodology. His writings touched on epistemology, the nature of causality, process analysis, the use of narrative as a method for historical explanation, mechanism-based

explanations, contextual analysis, political ethnography, and quantitative methods in historical analysis, among many topics.

During his lifetime Tilly received several prominent awards, including: the Common Wealth Award in sociology (1982); the Amalfi Prize for Sociology and Social Sciences (1994); the Eastern Sociological Society's Merit Award for Distinguished Scholarship (1996); the American Sociological Association's Career of Distinguished Scholarship Award (2005); the International Political Science Association's Karl Deutsch Award in Comparative Politics (2006); the Phi Beta Kappa Sidney Hook Memorial Award (2006); and the Social Science Research Council's Albert O. Hirschman Award (2008).

In addition, he was awarded honorary doctorates in social sciences from Erasmus University, Rotterdam (1983); the Institut d'Etudes Politiques, University of Paris (1993); the University of Toronto (1995); the University of Strasbourg (1996); the University of Geneva (1999); the University of Crete (2002); the University of Québec at Montréal (2004); and the University of Michigan (2007).

In 2001, Columbia's sociology graduate students named Tilly the Professor of the Year.

He authored, co-authored, edited or co-edited 51 published books and monographs and over 600 scholarly articles. His major works include "The Vendée: A Sociological Analysis of the Counter-Revolution of 1793" (1964); "As Sociology Meets History" (1981); "Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons" (1984); "The Contentious French" (1983); "European Revolutions 1492-1992" (1993); "Cities and the Rise of States in Europe: A.D. 1000 to 1800" (1994); "Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758-1834" (1995); "Durable Inequality" (1998); "Transforming Post-Communist Political Economies" (1998); "Dynamics of Contention" (2001); "Social Movements 1768-2004" (2004); "Trust and Rule" (2005); "Why?" (2006); and "Democracy" (2007).

"Professor Tilly will be remembered as an extraordinarily generous and innovative scholar and teacher by a vast network of colleagues, students and friends around the country and across the globe," said Te Brake.

Tilly is survived by his former wife (and sometimes collaborator), Louise; his brothers, Richard and Stephen, and sister Carolyn; his children, Chris, Kit, Laura and Sarah; their spouses Marie, Steve, Derek, and David; his grandchildren, Amanda, Charlotte, Chris, Abby, Ben, Jon and Becky; and his great-grandchildren, Jamie and Julian.

President Bollinger's Statement on the Passing of Professor Charles Tilly

Columbia lost one of its finest citizens when Professor Charles Tilly passed away April 29. Most recently the Joseph L. Bottenwieser Professor of Social Science, serving the departments of Political Science and Sociology, he was a scholar of boundless energy and intellect. Few could, or will ever, match his scholarly output and lasting impact. His 50 years of teaching, writing and intellectual inspiration will be missed here at Columbia and everywhere people seek to understand how history and societies move forward.

The extraordinary half-century career of Charles Tilly continuously demonstrated scholarship that transcended disciplinary boundaries. It seemed that he could write, interpret, and explain virtually anything to curious minds. With more than 600 articles and 51 books and monographs bearing his name, Charles Tilly literally wrote the book on the contentious dynamics and the ethnographic foundations of political history.

Though he received an extraordinary number of special awards, scholarly inductions and honorary degrees during his long and productive career, we will remember that, since 1996, he was a distinguished member of the Columbia community. His students, fellow faculty members and friends will all remember someone not only who reached and remained at the pinnacle of his

field but also a warm and valued colleague who never stopped asking profound questions.

Lee C. Bollinger
President