Contentious Politics and Social Movements

POL 451/2351 Winter 2015
Professor Fu  Diana.fu@utoronto.ca
Office: SS 3012

Seminar location: UC 148
Seminar hour: W 2-4pm
Office: SS 3012
Office Hours: Tuesdays 4-5pm*

*Office hours will be held in UC after class. If you need to meet me in my office (SS 3012), set up appointment in advance.

Course Overview

This seminar course engages students in reading and discussing the core literature in contentious politics and social movements through a comparative lens. The first part of the course examines the theoretical building blocks of the field, including the political opportunity structure, mobilizing structure, and frames. We will contrast social movements with social non-movements. Under what conditions is civil society able to mobilize citizens to thwart authoritarian regimes? And in existing authoritarian states where repression is a constraint on mobilization, how do citizens resist authorities without forming social movements? The second half of the course challenges students to critically interrogate the classic theories of contentious politics using a comparative lens. To what extent do these theories, developed in liberal democracies, apply to hybrid regimes and illiberal states in Eastern Europe, Asia, and the Middle East? How can we begin to revise and reformulate existing theoretical frameworks? Overall, this course asks students to read critically, think creatively, and write persuasively.

Learning Objectives

• Read closely and position the author’s argument in the broader literature
• Interrogate the classic social movement and contentious politics theories
• Apply and extend the framework developed in liberal democracies to illiberal regimes
• Craft a theoretically sound and empirically robust research paper

Required Texts

• All other readings will be posted on blackboard. You should always check blackboard for the most up-to-date readings for the week.
Evaluation
Participation: 30%
Presentation: 30% (20% oral, 10% written outline)
Final Paper: 40%

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Participation
Participation in this seminar is mandatory. To get full points, you have to not only speak up in class but also demonstrate a solid understanding of the readings.

You should come prepared with one to two high quality discussion questions for the class each week.

Make up Participation and Absence Policy
This is a seminar course so attendance is mandatory.
You can only make up participation points for documented medical reasons. Otherwise, if you miss a class, you will receive a 0 in participation points that day.

If you are going to miss a number of classes due to a medical reason, you should email the professor in advance, accompanied by medical documentation.
Group Presentations 30% (20% oral/10% written outline)

Sign up for group presentations in week 2. The first presentation is in week 3. 2 students per group, graduate students are encouraged to work with each other. Presentation length: approx. 30 min max. Presentation format: powerpoint, music, video, etc. Presentation topics: You will present the topic of the week. Presentation outline (2 pages single spaced, excluding bibliography)

- Each group should turn in a hard copy and email an electronic copy of the written presentation outline
- For groups presenting wks 3-7: outline due on the day of your presentation before class.
- For groups presenting wks 8-12: outline due Feb 25th (wk 8)*

Final Paper 40% * DUE week 11, March 18th at 2pm

You must turn in a hard copy and email an electronic copy in class on the due date.

Length-undergraduates:
7-8 pages, excludes bibliography, 12 point font, Times New Roman, double spaced.

Topic-undergraduates:
The paper topic should be different from your presentation topic. This challenges you to explore another aspect of contentious politics in depth. Choose from existing learning modules.

Length-graduates
18-20 pages, excludes bibliography, 12 point font, Times New Roman, double spaced

Topic-graduates:
You may choose from 1 of the 2 topics below:

Topic 1: In illiberal states where social movements are unable to form, how do citizens mobilize? Choose 1 illiberal state for in depth-country case study.

Topic 2: Collective action is the bedrock of the existing framework of contentious politics. Under what conditions can individual contention become powerful? What are some examples of individual contention and why do they fail or succeed? You may draw upon more than 1 country for empirical evidence.

Regardless of topic, your paper should include the following 3 components:
• Incorporate theoretical literature beyond the readings for this class regarding mobilizing in illiberal regimes
• Present evidence from a country (or countries) of your choice as a case study to support your argument. The goal is to probe deeply into the evidence and to link it to your argument.
• Argue how one or more aspects of existing theoretical framework should be revised in light of your findings.

**Late Assignment Policy**  
No late assignment will be accepted unless accompanied by a doctor’s note. There is only a presentation outline and a final paper assignment for this course so you should make every effort to hand it in on time. If you miss the class on the due date, you should turn in an electronic version to the professor before deadline.

**Academic Honesty**  
No cheating or plagiarism tolerated. No exceptions. Students who violate this policy will be reported to the administration. Your essays will be checked for plagiarism through turnitin.com

**Accessibility**  
All students are welcome in this course. If you need a particular wellness accommodation, please come see me and also contact the Wellness office as soon as possible. Your inquiries will be kept confidential. The UTSC AccessAbility Service staff (S302) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodation. (416) 287-7560 or ability@utsc.utoronto.ca

**Technology-Free Classroom**  
No digital devices permitted in lectures or tutorials. This is to help you concentrate on the course materials and to maximize your in-class participation.
**Reading Assignments** *Readings are due on the week it is listed under.

**Wk 1 Jan 7th Course Navigator**

“Do we live in a movement society?”

**Wk 2 Jan. 14th Theoretical Building Blocks**

*Film clip: Gene Sharp on How to Start a Revolution [iTunes]*

**Wk 3 Jan 21st Social Non-movements and Resistance**

*In the absence of social movements, how can citizens mobilize? What are the weapons at the disposal of the weak and unorganized?*


**Wk 4 Jan 28th: Mobilizing Structures**

*What counts as a mobilizing structure? What role do networks and organizations play in social movements? What are the advantages and disadvantages of having formal organizations? Was Facebook a mobilizing structure in the Arab Revolution?*


**Wk 5: Feb. 4th Political Process and Tactical Innovation**

*Even the best tactics lose their drama after some time. Tactical innovation is critical to sustaining movements. How was this borne out in the civil rights movement?*


Wk 6  Feb 11th Framing, Identity and Art of Moral Protest  

What does the cultural turn add to the analysis of protest? What art is there in protest?


*Film clip: The Square http://thesquarefilm.com [Netflix]

Wk 7: Feb 18th *READING WEEK

Wk 8: Feb 25th: Repression and Mobilization OUTLINES DUE GROUPS wk 8-12

What is the repression and mobilization nexus? What are the cycles of contention? Does repression cause protestors to escalate or de-escalate their tactics? How did this cycle of repression and mobilization play out in the Arab Spring?


Wk 9 Mar. 4th: Civil Society and Regime Change

Civil society is a mobilizing structure. Under what conditions can it mobilize citizens to topple authoritarian governments? What is the paradox of civil society?

Wk 10: Mar.11th Contention in China

*China is an authoritarian state with no viable social movements. How do citizens protest in the face of repression? What tactical innovations do they devise and why does the state tolerate it?*


Wk 11: Mar. 18th Comparing Contention Part I (Eastern Europe and S. E. Asia)

*What are some similarities and differences in resistance and contention across illiberal states? (Review James Scott’s Weapons of the Weak and Kevin O’Brien readings)*


*Film clip: Burma VJ: Reporting from a Closed Country

Wk 12 Mar. 25th Comparing Contention Part II (Middle East)


Where to from here? We can’t all be Gene Sharps, but we can advance the study of contention. What are the frontiers of research?

TBD