

Contentious Politics and Social Movements

POL 451/2351 Winter 2019
Professor: Diana Fu
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SK 348
W 2-4pm
Office Hours: W 4-5pm*

*Office hours will be held in the classroom after class.

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

- Tarrow, Sidney. 2011 (3rd edition). *Power in Movement*. Cambridge University Press <http://search.library.utoronto.ca/details?7456593> [On reserve at Robarts]
- Staggenborg, Suzanne. 2012. (2nd edition) *Social Movements*. Oxford University Press. [On reserve at Robarts]
- All other readings will be posted on blackboard. You should always check blackboard for the most up-to-date readings for the week.

Reference Texts

- The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements [On reserve at Robarts]

Evaluation

Participation: 30%

Presentation: 30% (20% oral, 10% written outline due March 6th or on day of the presentation if before March 6th)

Final Paper: 40% (due March 20th before class)

Grade	Percentage Equivalent	Definition
A+	90-100	Excellent
A	85-89	
A-	80-84	
B+	77-79	Good
B	73-76	
B-	70-72	
C+	67-69	Adequate
C	63-66	
C-	60-62	
D+	57-59	Marginal
D	53-56	
D-	50-52	
F	0-49	Wholly Inadequate

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: power point, 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 in class wk 7th Mar 6th**

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

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

Length-undergraduates:

8-10 pages, excluding bibliography, 12 point font, Times New Roman, double spaced.

Topic-undergraduates:

The paper will be the same as theoretical topic as your in-class presentation topic but the empirical case should be different. The goal is to translate verbal presentation into a coherent and well-written research paper. The presentation is essentially a research “primer” for your paper. It is NOT sufficient to simply turn in your notes for the presentation. The paper should be much more polished and have a coherent argument supported by robust case study evidence.

Length-graduates

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

Topic-graduates:

You may choose any puzzle in consultation with the prof, provided they don't overlap significantly with your exiting papers in other courses.

Sample questions:

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 collective action become powerful and when do they fail? 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 What is Contentious Politics?

“Do we live in a movement society?”

Wk 2 Theoretical Building Blocks

What are the basic building blocks of the contentious politics framework? How is collective action different from contentious collective action? What inadequacies is the political process theory trying to address?

[Text] Tarrow, Sidney. 2011 (3rd edition) *Power in Movement*. Introduction and Chapter 1. P.1-34

[Text and Online] Staggenborg, Suzanne. 2012. (2nd edition). *Social Movements*. Introduction and Chapter 2 Theories of Social Movements and Collective Action. P. 1-29.

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

Wk 3 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?

[E-book] Scott, James. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak*. Chapt 2. Pp. 28-47.

[Online] Bayat, Asef. 2017. *Revolution without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring*. Stanford University Press. Ch 3 Revolution in the Everyday p.49-68.

Wk 4: Mobilizing Structures and Collective Action

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?

[Text-optional for context] Staggenborg, Suzanne. 2012. (2nd edition) *Social Movements*. Chapter 3. P. 31-56.

[Online] Olson, M. *The Logic of Collective Action*. P. 5-43.

[Online] Piven and Cloward 1979. *Poor People’s Movements*. Ch. 1 The Structuring of Protest. p.1-40.

Wk 5 Political Opportunity and Tactical Innovation

Even the best tactics lose their drama after some time. Tactical innovation is critical to sustaining movements. What kinds of opportunities lead to tactical innovation?

[E-book] McAdam et. al. 2001. Dynamics of Contention. Ch. 1-2.

[Online] McAdams, Doug. 1983. "Tactical Innovation and the Pace of Insurgency." *The American Sociological Review*. 48(6).

Wk 6 Framing and Identity

What are some different theoretical approaches to the study of framing, and how does framing play a role in social movements? How is collective identity forged?

[Online] Benford R. and D. Snow. 2000. Frame Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 26: 611-39.

[Online] Melucci, A. 1989. Nomads of the Present. Ch 2. Towards a Theory of Collective Action.

Wk 7: *READING WEEK

*outlines due next week for groups presenting wk 8-12.

Wk 8: Repression and Mobilization

What is the repression and mobilization nexus? What are the cycles of contention? Does repression cause protestors to escalate or de-escalate their tactics?

[Online] Jack Goldstone and Charles Tilly. 2001. *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*. Cambridge University Press. Chapt 7 "Threat (and opportunity): popular action and state response in the dynamics of contentious action"

[E-book] Beissinger, M. 2002. Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State. Ch 7 p. 320-84.

[Online-bonus] Earl, Jennifer. 2011. Political Repression: Iron Fists, Velvet Gloves, and Diffuse Control. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 37: 261-84.

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

Under what conditions can it mobilize citizens to topple authoritarian governments?

[Online] Putnam, R. [Bowling Alone. Introduction and Ch. 2](#)

[Online] Michael Edward and Bob Foley. 1996. "The Paradox of Civil Society." *Journal of Democracy*. 7(3) p. 38-52.

[Online-Bonus]. Fu, D. (2017). [Mobilizing Without the Masses: Control and Contention in China](#). Cambridge University Press. Ch 1.

Wk 10: 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?

[E-book] O'Brien, Kevin and R. Stern, eds. Popular Protest in China. "Prologue and Introduction: Studying Contention in Contemporary China." P. 1-25.

[E-book] O'Brien and Li Lianjiang. 2006. *Rightful Resistance*. Introduction. P. 1-24.

[Online] Yao, Li. 2018. [Playing by the Informal rules: Why the Chinese Regime Remains Stable Despite Rising Protests](#). Introduction. P.1-26

Wk 11: Contention in Eastern Europe

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)

[Online] Robertson, G. 2011. [The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes](#). Intro. P. 1-16.

[Online] Havel, V. [The Power of the Powerless: Citizens Against the State in Central Eastern Europe](#). (Read for main points: long chapter).

Wk 12 Comparing in Middle East

[Online] Pearlman, W. 2017. [We Crossed a Bridge and it Trembled: Voices from Syria](#). Introduction and Part I Authoritarianism.

[Online] Bashara, D. 2018. [Contesting Authoritarianism: Labor Challenges to the State in Egypt](#) (Cambridge Middle East Studies Book). Intro and ch. 1

Wk 13 Contention in Latin America

[Online] Yashar, D. 2005. [Contesting Citizenship in Latin America: The Rise of Indigenous Movements and the Postliberal Challenge](#). P. 54-84

[Online] Simmons, E. 2016. [Meaningful Resistance: Market reforms and the roots of social protest in Latin America](#). Cambridge University Press. Intro. P.1-36