Introduction to Contentious Politics  
Political Science  401 Fall 2012  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-11:00am  
Erica Simmons  
North Hall 222  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-4pm  
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Course Description

What explains when, where, and why people come together to engage in acts of political protest? How do we understand the emergence and growth of social movements? Of political upheavals dramatic enough to be understood as revolutions? What explains when grievances foment riots and when they motivate long-term movements for social change? As recent events in the Middle East show, it is difficult to understand politics without taking a careful look at moments when people organize outside of established political institutions to demand change. Through readings, lectures, discussion, and films, this course will introduce students to the main theoretical and empirical themes in the study of contentious politics. We will focus on social movements, revolutions, and riots, addressing both the theoretical literature and specific case studies. The course will touch on a number of 20th century social movements and revolutions but will focus specifically on the U.S. civil rights movement, the 1989 student movement in China, the Cuban Revolution, the Zapatista rebellion, and the so-called Arab Spring.

Requirements, expectations and grading

1) Class attendance. You must be present for every class. The course will be conducted as a discussion-based lecture. You will be expected to have done the readings assigned for each class and be prepared to talk about them (15% of the final grade).

2) Computers. Electronic devices cannot be used during class (e.g. laptops, iPads, smart phones, etc). Please see me if you think you might be exempt from this requirement for medical or learning-related reasons.

3) Reading questions. You will be required to pick three weeks for which you write questions for class discussion based on the readings. Questions need to be submitted to me via email the day before class no later than 5pm (10% of the final grade).

4) Exams. There will be a mid term (25% of the final grade) and a final (40% of the final grade).

5) Papers. You will write one short response paper during the semester. The paper will be graded on a “check” system and will be 10% of the final grade.
To contest any grade you must submit a request in writing to the instructor. The request must contain a detailed description of why the grade given should be changed.

Students affiliated with the McBurney Center should see me about exam arrangements and any other accommodations.

**Books to purchase**


**Other readings**

All other readings should be available online via the Library reserve system. Please notify me immediately if you find that a reading is missing.
Syllabus

Week 1:

**Tuesday, September 4: Introduction to contentious politics**
- What is contentious politics?
- What questions do we have?
- What moments/episodes do we hope to explain?

**Thursday, September 6: Introduction to the theoretical themes (I)**

*Overview*

*Readings:*
- *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements* (Introduction, p. 1-22)

Week 2:

**Tuesday, September 11: Introduction to the theoretical themes (II)**

*Political opportunities*

*Readings:*
- *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements* (Chapter 1, p. 23-40)

**Thursday, September 13: Introduction to the theoretical themes (III)**

*Resources*

*Readings:*
- McCarthy, John D. 1996. “Constraints and Opportunities in Adopting, Adapting, and Inventing” in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (eds), pp 141-151.
Week 3:

**Tuesday, September 18: Introduction to the theoretical themes (IV) Frames**
Readings:
- *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements* (Chapter 11, p. 261-274).
  
  - Noonan, Rita K. 1995. “Women against the state: political opportunities and collective action frames in Chile’s transition to democracy.” *Sociological Forum*, 19, p. 81-111

**Thursday, September 20: Critiques of the dominant paradigms (overview)**
Readings:


Week 4: CASE I (The Civil Rights Movement)

**Tuesday, September 25—Movie Eyes on The Prize (selections)**
Readings:
- Ransby, Barbara. *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement*. Ch. 6 (entire--p. 170-208), Ch. 7 (p. 237-238 only), Ch. 8 (p. 239-253; 266-272 only).

**Thursday, September 27**
Readings:
- Ransby, Barbara. *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement*. Ch 9 (p. 273-298—entire), Ch. 10 (p. 299-301, 318-329 only), Ch. 11 (p. 330-342 only).

Week 5: Culture

**Tuesday, October 2**
Readings:
- Polletta, Francesca. “Culture is not just in your head.” In *Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Meaning, and Emotion*, (pp. 97-110).
Thursday, October 4
Readings:
- Kurzman, Charles. “Poststructuralist consensus in social movement theory.” In *Rethinking Social Movements* (p. 111-120)

Week 6: CASE II (Tiananmen)

Tuesday, October 9
Readings (the readings for this week are long, but they are a narrative, so they will go fast):

Thursday, October 11
Readings:

In Class: Movie, *The Tank Man*.

Week 7: Emotions

Tuesday, October 16
Readings:

Thursday, October 18
Readings:

Week 8: Mid term review and mid term

Tuesday, October 23 MID TERM REVIEW

Thursday, October 25 MID TERM

Week 9: Revolutions--Overview

Tuesday, October 30
Movie--TBD

Thursday, November 1
Readings:


Week 10: CASE III—Cuban Revolution

Tuesday, November 6
Readings:


Thursday, November 8
Readings:

Week 11: Revolutions—Comparing success, failure, and non-emergence in Central America

Tuesday, November 13: Theories and a “non case”
Readings:
- Goodwin, Jeff. 2001. No Other Way Out, p. 137-180

Thursday, November 15
Readings:
- Goodwin, Jeff. 2001. No Other Way Out, p. 180-213

Week 12: Globalization and Revolution—CASE IV: The Zapatista Uprising

Tuesday, November 20
- George Collier and Jane Collier, "The Zapatista Rebellion in the Context of Globalization," in John Foran, ed., The Future of Revolutions: Rethinking Radical Change in the Age of Globalization

***Thursday, November 22 NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY***

Week 13: Riots

Tuesday, November 27
Readings:

Thursday, November 29
Week 14: CASE V: The “Arab Spring”

Tuesday, December 4: The Arab Spring--Background
Readings:
- Roger Owen. *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*. Chapters 2, 3, 8 and 10

Thursday, December 6: Arab Spring--Social Media
Readings:
- Wael Ghonim *Revolution 2.0* p. 58-121.

Movie: *How Facebook Changed the World*

Week 15: CASE V (continued): “The Arab Spring” II

Tuesday, December 11: Arab Spring--Egypt, Syria, and Yemen
Readings:

Thursday, December 13: REVIEW FOR EXAM