Introduction to Contentious Politics
Political Science 667
Spring 2014
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00-12:15
Erica Simmons
Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Studies
North Hall 222
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-4pm in Ingraham 321 (you MUST make an appointment in advance via the link on my political science faculty page).
essimmons@wisc.edu

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 Mexican Revolution, the Cuban Revolution, The Iranian Revolution, and the Arab Uprising.

Requirements, expectations and grading

1) There will be 100 points available over the course of the semester.

2) 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 points).

3) Reading questions. You will be required to pick five weeks for which you write 2-4 questions for class discussion based on the readings. Questions need to be submitted to me via Learn@UW the day before class on Tuesday. Please turn them in no later than 5pm Monday night. Questions should cover the readings for the entire week but you need not write a question for every reading (2 points per question, graded on a pass/fail basis). **YOU MUST WRITE AT LEAST ONE SET OF READING QUESTIONS FOR EACH UNIT OF THE COURSE.**

4) Exams. There will be three unit tests during the course (25 points each).
5) 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.

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 Learn@UW. Please notify me immediately if you find that a reading is missing.
Syllabus

Week 1:

Tuesday, January 21: Introduction to contentious politics
- What is contentious politics?
- What questions do we have?
- What moments/episodes do we hope to explain?

Thursday, January 23: Introduction to the theoretical themes (I)
Defining social movements and understanding grievances
Readings:
- Snow and Soule (Chapter 1 and 2 p. 1-63)

Week 2:

Tuesday, January 28: Introduction to the theoretical themes (II)
Political opportunities
Readings:
- Snow and Soule (Chapter 3, p. 64-109)

Thursday, January 30: Introduction to the theoretical themes (III)
Resources
Readings:
- Snow and Soule (Chapter 4, 109-132)

Week 3:

Tuesday, February 3: Introduction to the theoretical themes (IV)
Frames
Readings:
- Snow and Soule (Chapter 4, 132-148).

Thursday, February 5: Critiques of the dominant paradigms (overview)
Readings:


**Week 4: Unit Test I**

**Tuesday, February 11: In-Class Review**

**Thursday, February 13: Unit Test**

**Week 5: CASE I (The Civil Rights Movement)**

**Tuesday, February 18—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, February 20**
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 6: CASE II (Tiananmen)**

**Tuesday, February 25**
Readings (the readings for this week are long, but they are a narrative, so they will go fast):

**Thursday, February 27**
Readings:
In Class: Movie, *The Tank Man.*
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tankman/

**Week 7: Emotions**

**Tuesday, March 4**
Readings:

**Thursday, March 6**

No class. Begin preparing for unit test.

**Week 8: Unit Test II**

**Tuesday, March 11. Emotions (continued) and in-class review**

Readings:

**Thursday, March 13. Unit Test II.**

****SPRING BREAK****
Week 9: Revolutions--Introduction

Tuesday, March 25
Readings:


Thursday, March 27

In-class film, *How Facebook Changed the World*.

Week 10: CASE III—The Mexican Revolution

Tuesday, April 1
Readings:


Thursday, April 3
Readings:


Week 11: Case IV—The Cuban Revolution

Tuesday, April 8
Readings:


Thursday, April 10
Readings:

Week 12: Case V—Iran

Tuesday, April 15

- Kurzman, Charles (2004). The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran (selected chapters)

Thursday, April 17

- Kurzman, Charles (2004). The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran (selected chapters)

Week 13: Riots

Tuesday, April 22

Readings:


Thursday, April 24


Week 14: CASE VI: The Arab Uprising

Tuesday, April 29: The Arab Uprising—Background

Readings:

- Roger Owen. State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East. Chapters 2 and 3.

Thursday, May 1: Arab Uprising—Social Media, Country Cases

Readings:
- Wael Ghonim *Revolution 2.0* p. 58-121.
- Haddad, Bsheer, and Abu-Rish (2012). *Dawn of the Arab Uprisings: End of An Old Order?* Chapters 6, 15, 24, 27 (each is only a few pages as they are reprints of articles from Jadaliyya.

**Week 15: Unit Test III**

**Tuesday, May 6: In Class Review**

**Thursday, May 8: Unit Test III**