

POLS 689: Contentious Politics

Dr. Ches Thurber

Spring 2022 (Revised April 13, 2022)

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Office Hours: Tue 2:00-3:30 p.m | Wed 9:30-11:00 a.m.

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Class Hours: Wed 12:30-3:10 p.m.

Class Room: 464 DuSable

Course Description

This course is intended as a graduate-level survey of the literature on the dynamics of political mobilization, revolt, and repression. We will ask questions such as what motivates individuals to resist government rule? How and when do groups mobilize to express dissent? What tactics do they use and why? How do states respond to dissent? How do transnational forces affect these patterns of repression and dissent? To answer these questions, we will draw on major works from comparative politics, international relations, and sociology. A unifying theme is the view of contention as not an aberration, but a (the?) central dynamic of political order, through which institutions are formed and changed, and social contracts are (re-)negotiated. We will examine multiple methodological approaches to this field of study, ranging from comparative historical analysis to cross-national quantitative statistics, and from ethnography to formal modeling. Students will develop a broad understanding of major works and theoretical traditions in the study of contentious politics, the current frontiers of the field, and the art of constructing book-length research projects in political science.

Texts

This course focuses on major books as the primary texts of study. The point here is twofold. First, I want to give you the chance to carefully read classic works that are often short-changed in modern syllabi because of their length. Second, I want you to be able to see how scholars construct and carry-out a book-length argument. After all, most of you will be writing “book-style” dissertations, so you need to read complete academic books to understand the genre. That said, there are drawbacks. Because books require more time to read, we will be unable to cover the literature as broadly. More practically, books are expensive. Fortunately, almost all of the titles for this class are available electronically from the library. You can look them up in the catalogue, and download an electronic version of the text, much as you would a journal article. I have marked these books (EL) below. Others, however, you will need to obtain on your own. Many are available used for very reasonable prices.

The following are the books that we will be reading in this course:

- Charles Tilly *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978). (BB)

- Theda Skocpol *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). (EL)
- Donatella della Porta *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). (EL)
- Jeremy M. Weinstein *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). (EL)
- Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Non-violent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). (EL)
- Courtenay R. Conrad and Emily Hencken Ritter *Contentious Compliance: Dissent and Repression Under International Human Rights Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). (EL)
- Corinna Jentsch *Violent Resistance: Militia Formation and Civil War in Mozambique* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022). (TBD)

Evaluation

Class attendance, preparation and participation (20%): The time we spend in class is for me the most important of this course. As such, punctual attendance is mandatory. But more important than just being present is that you are actively engaged. I expect that you have done the readings and that you try to participate in discussion each and every class section.

Reading Analyses (20%): For each week, you will be required to draft written summaries on each of the readings. These summaries will be invaluable as you prepare for comps as well as help ensure a high level of discussion in seminar. You may pick five weeks over the course of the semester in which you opt not to complete summaries. Summaries are due at midnight the day BEFORE class. This will allow me to read them before class and draw on them for our discussion.

Final Project (40%): You will produce a research paper similar in scope to what you might present at a professional academic conference (6k-8k words). It should identify a puzzle in the realm of international security, broadly defined, propose a theoretical explanation, and evaluate that explanation with quantitative and/or qualitative evidence.

You will produce two drafts of the paper, the first of which will be reviewed by me and another student. You will then have the opportunity to produce a revised version of the paper. Only the grade on the second draft of the paper will count toward your final grade.

Variation in the final project is welcomed based upon your specific needs. This includes, but is not limited to:

- improving a paper from a previous course
- writing a paper in combination with another course
- preparing comps-style essays in lieu of a research paper.

Please talk with me as early as possible in the semester to discuss these alternatives.

Peer Review Essay (20%):

You will read another student's initial research paper draft and write a 1,000 word review memo as if you had been asked to read the paper as a submission to a professional political science journal (except that you will *not* be making a recommendation for publication). Your memo will be sent to the author, but the identities of both author and reviewer will be kept anonymous. Of course, in a small class, it is entirely possible that you may be able to figure out the identities of either the

author or reviewer. This is often true in professional practice as well. But I expect that you not engage in deliberate efforts to ascertain or disclose identities, as is the professional norm.

A Note on Learning Amidst Pandemic

These are *still* crazy times. We will be proceeding with this class the best we can and to some degree I hope the process of reading, writing, and talking about topics we are all passionate about helps provide you with some sense of normalcy. But sometimes that can feel like absurdity. Please know that you are not alone in feeling it and that we are all in this together. I will be as accommodating as I can this semester in light of these circumstances and I hope that we can all agree to engage each other in a spirit of mutual patience, empathy, and understanding. If you or somebody you know is struggling with anxiety or other issues, do not hesitate to reach out. Resources available include the DRC, Student Counseling Services or call 815-306-2777.

Course Policies

- All students are expected to adhere to the highest levels of academic integrity. Violations of university, departmental, and disciplinary standards will not be tolerated. Instances of plagiarism will lead to an F for the assignment and will be reported through institutional procedures.
- If you need an accommodation for this class, please contact the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible. The DRC coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities. It is located on the 4th floor of the Health Services Building, and can be reached at 815-753-1303 or drc@niu.edu. Also, please contact me privately as soon as possible so we can discuss your accommodations. Please note that you will not be required to disclose your disability, only your accommodations.
- It is my personal policy to allow graduate students to call me by my first name, "Ches." This reflects the idea that I view you all as colleagues-in-training. Please let me know how you prefer to be addressed, both in name and pronoun, if it differs from what is in the university directory. I will make every effort to address you in the way you wish to be addressed. Please try and do the same for your fellow classmates, as well as for other faculty in the department.
- I am committed to your success in this class – if you feel that you are not performing to your expectations, please come and see me. I am available to answer any questions you may have about course assignments, requirements or content. I generally answer e-mails within 24 hrs on weekdays, and would be happy to schedule an appointment to meet with you if you are unavailable during my posted office hours.

Class Schedule

Students are expected to read the following before Monday's class session. Readings marked (EL) are available electronically from the library. Those marked (BB) are posted on Blackboard. Students are responsible for obtaining all others.

Challengers and States

Week 1 (Jan. 19)

- Ted Robert Gurr *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970) Intro-Ch. 1.
- Tilly *From Mobilization to Revolution* Chs. 1-4.

Week 2 (Jan. 26)

- James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75–90.
- Tilly *From Mobilization to Revolution* Chs. 5-8.

Week 3 (Feb. 02)

- Skocpol *States and Social Revolutions* Chs. 1-3.
- Charles Tilly "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169–87.

Week 4 (Feb. 09)

- Skocpol *States and Social Revolutions* Chs. 4-Conclusion.
- Eva Bellin "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (2004): 139–57.

Organizing Violence

Week 5 (Feb. 16)

- della Porta *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State* Chs. 1-3.
- Stathis N. Kalyvas "The Ontology of 'Political Violence': Action and Identity in Civil Wars," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (September 2003): 475–94.

Week 6 (Feb. 23)

- della Porta *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State* Chs. 4-End.
- Margherita Belgioioso "Going Underground: Resort to Terrorism in Mass Mobilization Dissident Campaigns," *Journal of Peace Research* 55, no. 5 (2018): 641–55.

Week 7 (Mar. 02)

- Weinstein *Inside Insurgency* Intro - Ch. 3.
- Paul Staniland "Organizing Insurgency: Networks, Resources, and Rebellion in South Asia," *International Security* 37, no. 1 (2012): 142–77.

Week 8 (Mar. 09):

- Weinstein *Inside Insurgency* Chs. 4-End.
- Megan A. Stewart "Civil War as State-Making: Strategic Governance in Civil War," *International Organization* 72, no. 1 (2018): 205–26.

Week 9 (Mar. 16): Spring Break

Revolution without Violence?

Week 10 (Mar. 23)

- Chenoweth and Stephan *Why Civil Resistance Works*.

Week 11 (Mar. 30):

- Paper First Submission Due
- Ches Thurber "Social Ties and the Strategy of Civil Resistance," *International Studies Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2019): 974–86. and Reviewer Comments

Week 12 (Apr. 06):

- Review Memos Due
- Devorah Manekin and Tamar Mitts "Effective for Whom? Ethnic Identity and Nonviolent Resistance," *American Political Science Review*, September 14, 2021, 1–20.

State Violence

Week 13 (Apr. 13)

- Christian Davenport "State Repression and Political Order," *Annual Review of Political Science* 10 (2007): 1–23.
- Conrad and Ritter *Contentious Compliance* Intro-Ch. 3.

Week 14 (Apr. 20)

- Emilie M Hafner-Burton “Trading Human Rights: How Preferential Trade Agreements Influence Government Repression,” *International Organization* 59 (2005): 593–629.
- Conrad and Ritter *Contentious Compliance* Ch. 4 - Conclusion.

Militias

Week 15 (Apr. 27)

- Jentsch *Violent Resistance* Chs. 1-4.

Week 16 (May. 04)

- *ibid.* Chs. 5-End.

Paper Final Submission Due: Wednesday 5/11 at 5pm.