Political Violence and Revolution

Professor: Dr. Barry Levitt

Is violence an inevitable component of politics? Why do individuals ever take risks to join a protest or take up arms in support of a cause? Conversely, why do we not see even more rebellion and revolution, more radical change, more social movements? In this course we will critically rethink the politics of repression, mass protest, armed insurrection, and revolution. Students will develop crucial analytical skills as we examine the social science theories and the political and historical realities of revolution and political violence. We will read and discuss cutting edge social science research, as well as documentary films, web sites and other sources.

Students will also improve their awareness of, perspective on, and engagement with global issues, with the goal of enhancing preparedness to grapple with shared problems and fulfill civic responsibilities in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world. Political violence and social change provide us with a particularly urgent set of global issues with which we will engage.

By the completing this course, students will achieve the following Global Learning outcomes:

1. Students will demonstrate understanding of the connections between ideas/theories of collective action and examples of social movements and political violence observed in different parts of the world.
2. Students will be able to analyze major episodes of revolution from the perspectives of different local, national, international and global actors/groups involved.
3. Students will demonstrate willingness and ability to work together in teams to actively engage with the policy implications of political violence.

We will accomplish this through a variety of learning methods:
- assigned readings and in-class film screenings
- lectures, along with question & answer sessions
- frequent in-class activities and discussions, in both large and small groups;
- weekly response papers reacting to the materials assigned;
- exams that will require, among other tasks, that you analyze a problem from multiple perspectives using multiple theoretical lenses;
- a group project in which you will work in teams of 6-8 students to produce an 8-10 page policy brief analyzing the causes and consequences of an episode of political violence. (Note: teams of students will evaluate one another’s policy briefs; average grade received, from fellow students, by each team as a whole will be applied to each and every member of that team, no exceptions—so work together!)
Assignments % of grade Dates
Response papers 21% various
(9, with two lowest grades dropped)
Midterm exam 30%
Policy paper group project 10%
Final Exam 39%

Guidelines for Participation, Academic Integrity and Classroom Civility (the fine print!)

1. Class starts at xx precisely. Five minutes later, the doors will be closed and students will NOT be allowed into class (regardless of weather, traffic, or the validity of other individual excuses). Once class has started, please do not leave until we finish.

2. Consistent and timely reading is the key to success in this course. Every student must arrive to our class prepared (with outlines or notes) to discuss the day’s readings.

3. There will be no daily attendance roll. However, response papers will be assigned over the course of the semester, worth a total of 21% of your grade. They will assess your familiarity with the readings assigned for that particular day. I do not expect you to fully comprehend every nuanced argument of a reading before coming to class (that’s what class is for!). I do, however, expect you to make a sincere effort at digesting each reading, and the papers will reward you for such effort. You may NOT submit a paper after the deadline under any circumstances. I will, however, drop each student’s two lowest paper grades of the semester.

4. Similarly, our exam dates are set at the start of the semester, so I am unlikely to allow you to take a make-up exam if you miss one, regardless of the circumstances. In rare cases of severe and verifiable emergency or illness, I may, at my discretion: a) allow you to write a make-up exam on a date of my choosing or b) calculate your course grade without this exam. In the majority of cases, however, if you miss an exam you will simply receive a zero.

5. The FIU Code of Academic Integrity and all related University policies on cheating will be rigorously and strictly enforced at all times. (Please refer to the section on "Academic Misconduct" in the annual Student Handbook for further details.) Students who cheat in this class will face the most severe sanctions allowable: failing grades, disciplinary probation, suspension, even expulsion. What’s more, cheating is demeaning to the student who commits the infraction as well as to classmates and professors. So don’t do it; it’s really not worth it.

6. Students will not talk in class except to ask/respond to questions or participate in organized group discussions. Students must turn off cell phones, pagers, and all other electronic devices during class.

7. I strongly encourage you all to visit me during my office hours. If you wish to communicate with me outside of these times, please send an email message via our course’s web site. (Do not leave a voice message at my office, as it may be days before I hear it!) Your email message must a) have a subject line that indicates the content of the message, and b) be professional in tone and composition, with a salutation, proper grammar and punctuation, etc. I will reply to you within 24-48 hours.

8. I expend a great deal of effort to ensure that your grades in this course accurately reflect the quality of your work. Any questions that you may have about grades must be presented in writing, and may not be submitted sooner than one week after receiving the grade in question. (And if in this written statement you insist that your grade should be reexamined, please understand that as a consequence your grade could go down as well as up.)

9. Kindly show the respect that is due to your classmates (and, of course, your professor). We are all here to learn, and we all have something to contribute!
Readings

All readings are available online at our course’s web site. Login at http://online.fiu.edu/login, find our course and look for file(s) named “Course Readings.”

Tues., Aug. x COURSE INTRODUCTION: What is “political violence”?

Thinking about political violence and civil war.

Thurs., Aug. x
- Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War,” American Political Science Review, 97, 1, 2003, excerpt

Tues., Aug. x
- Brigitte Nacos, Terrorism and Counterterrorism, Chs. 2 & 3 (Longman: 2007)
- In-class debate on the causes of terrorism

Tues., Sept. x
- Brigitte Nacos, Terrorism and Counterterrorism, Ch. 6 (Longman: 2007)
- Robert Pape, “Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism,” American Political Science Review, 97, 3, 2003, excerpt

Tues., Sept. x
- Jones and Libicki, How Terrorist Groups End (Rand: 2008), excerpts

Thurs., Sept. x
- Small-group discussion on the problem of terrorism in a globalized world

Tues., Sept. x
- What is torture? (online readings)
- Role-playing exercise on the definition, ethics and utility of torture

Thinking about social movements, rebellion, resistance, and revolution.

Thurs., Sept. x
- McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements, Introduction (Cambridge: 1996)
- Goodwin and Jasper, Rethinking Social Movements, Ch. 1 (Rowman & Littlefield: 2003)

Tues., Sept. x
- Introduction to Game Theory and its Critics
- Acting out the principals of game theory (in class interactive game)
Thurs., Sept. x

Tues., Sept. x
- Farrokh Moshiri, Ch. 2 in Goldstone, Gurr and Moshiri, eds., *Revolutions of the Late Twentieth Century* (Westview: 1991)

Thurs., Sept. x

Tues., Oct. x
**MIDTERM EXAM**

Overview of Major Revolutions: France, Russia, China and Beyond

Thurs., Oct. x

Tues., Oct. x
- **Mock legislative debate (based on French Revolution)**

Thurs., Oct. x

Tues., Oct. x
- The Russian Revolution in film (TBA), in class

Thurs., Oct. x
- Schrecker, *The Chinese Revolution in Historical Perspective*, Ch. 5-6 (Praeger: 1991)
- FILM: “China in Revolution (1911-1949),” in class

Tues., Oct. x
- FILM: “China in Revolution (1911-1949),” in class

Thurs., Oct. x
- Theda Skocpol, “France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 18, 2, 1976

Tues., Nov. x
Argentina: Repression and Resistance

Thurs., Nov. x

Tues., Nov. x
- Writing testimonial literature on political repression (in class)

Democratic Republic of Congo: Civil Conflict and Regional War

Thurs., Nov. x
- Prendergast, “A Light at the End of the Tunnel,” *Foreign Policy*, online Feb. 26, 2010
- Baviera, “Congo’s New Mobutu,” *Foreign Policy*, online June 29, 2010

Tues., Nov. x
- Film, “The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo” (in class)
- Small-group discussion on use of film to document political violence

Peru: Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency

Thurs., Nov. x
- Film, “State of Fear” pt. 1 (in class)

Tues., Nov. x
- Film: “State of Fear” pt. 2 (in class)
- In-class debate on counter-insurgency techniques

Thurs., Nov. x
- Consultation with Prof. / Collaboration with students, re: team policy briefs

Tues., Dec x
- Presentation and mutual assessment of team-based policy briefs

** FINAL EXAM: Thursday, Dec. x, xx - xx **