Civil Resistance and Social Change

Sociology and Psychology 492P-01
UMass, Amherst, Fall Semester 2015, 09/09/2015 – 12/07/2015

Machmer Hall Room W-22
Mondays and Wednesdays 4.00-5:15 PM

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Professor Stellan Vinthagen
Endowed Chair in the Study of Nonviolent Direct Action and Civil Resistance
Department of Sociology
200 Hicks Way, Thompson Hall
University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003-9277
phone: 413.545.4072
fax: 413.545.3204
email: vinhagen@soc.umass.edu
Website: http://umass.edu/resistancestudies
Blog: http://blogs.umass.edu/vinthagen/

In the US Sep-Dec only.
Office: Thompson, Room 706
Office hours: Mondays 9.00-12.00 noon, and by appointment
Affiliated to:
*School of Global Studies, Gothenburg University, globalstudies.gu.se
*Department of Social and Behavioural Studies, University West, hv.se
*Resistance Studies Network (RSN), resistancestudies.org
*War Resisters' International wri-irg.org

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OVERVIEW
In recent years it has become increasingly obvious how ordinary people, within mass mobilizations of protests and resistance of different kind are able to overthrow governments, without using military means. We have seen how racist dictatorships have fallen (as in South Africa), as well as communist authoritarian regimes (as in Easter Europe and former Soviet Union), and military dictatorships (as in several South American states, e.g. Chile and Bolivia). We have also seen how major reforms have been implemented against structural violence and legalized injustices within liberal democracies (as e.g. racist segregation in the Southern states of USA). However, some of these mobilizations have encountered hard obstacles and protracted violent conflicts, with few or any achievements (as in e.g. Palestine, China, Syria, Egypt, Western Sahara, Tibet). Others have overthrown their government in sudden transitions, only to find themselves within an even worse authoritarian regime than before (as in Iran), while others have succeeded to create a fundamentally more democratic and just society after a series of smaller challenges and reforms over longer periods (as in Scandinavia).
This course focuses on what has variously been called ‘nonviolent direct action’, ‘people power’, ‘unarmed insurrection’, or ‘color revolution’. It applies sociological perspectives on the ‘resistance’ that is played out in political and non-institutional mobilizations: its causes, effects and dynamics. In what way does organized, strategic and mass mobilized popular resistance bring about change, or reproduce domination?

By the end of the course you should, based on your learning from the literature and class discussions:

- show ability to read a larger text material and extract the main points claimed by different authors.
- recognize key features of nonviolent action or civil resistance when you encounter it in public discourse or media reports.
- understand the differences between key concepts such as nonviolent action, protest, direct action, civil disobedience, contentious politics and social movements.
- be familiar with several different theoretical frameworks that try to explain the mobilization of civil resistance.
- understand how it is possible to explain why civil resistance might be utilized effectively against authoritarian regimes.
- recognize some different choices activists will have to conduct when it comes to an appropriate tactical and strategic application of civil resistance.
- show ability to critically analyze a case or event involving civil resistance, or someone making an argument in favor or against civil resistance in a particular context, by pointing out some key questions or factors that need to be considered.

**REQUIREMENTS**

**Participation in class discussions:** This course is organized with a combination of different class meetings (lectures, text seminars, movie seminars and paper seminars). During text seminars we discuss some key texts together, and during lectures and other types of seminars you will be given supplementary perspectives on the course theme. Therefore you must complete the required readings of some specified texts before the class meeting for which they are assigned (see schedule below), and it is expected that you actively participate in the discussion of the readings during seminar sessions. In addition to demonstrating an understanding of the main arguments and themes of the readings, you are encouraged to think critically about the readings (i.e. identify strengths and weaknesses), compare and contrast them to other readings or literatures, and make connections to ongoing social processes and current events.

**Text seminar rapporteurs (oral and written):** For each of the seminars for which we have required readings, one or more students will be designated as rapporteurs, who are responsible for presenting to the class a concise summary of the main points and arguments of the readings (time limit: 20 minutes). This report also has to be written and copied to everyone in the class as a handout. It can be made in form of definitions of key concepts, quotes of main theses and bullet points. It is not supposed to be a full review paper, although it has to be comprehensive and understandable. It is helpful if it has references to page numbers or chapters, making it possible to follow the summary.
**Text seminar questions:** Each student will have to team up with another student and together hand in a paper with two questions to the seminar (i.e. 2 questions per pair of students). Based on the reading of the required reading for the seminar your question has to be well informed, and one that is *a problematizing* one. (It is not accepted to hand in a question that can be answered with a simple yes or no, or where the answer is to find on a certain page.) Make copies of your paper with questions to yourself and your student team member, as well as one *copy to the professor* to hand in *before* the meeting starts (i.e. three copies in total).

**News rapporteurs for “Here are the news”:** News about activism within mainstream media is generally sporadic, misguided, distorted and incomplete. In order to counter that we have at each class meeting a short news report of about 5 minutes with a selection of highlights relevant to the course theme. Students, according to a rotating schedule, conduct this report function. Making the news report is normally only possible if you have actively searched for news from activist sites and alternative media outlets using Internet (for some suggested outlets to begin with, see below). Once the report is done you *hand in your notes* to the professor (as plain text or keywords in a bullet list). Only when the notes, with full name stated at the top of the paper, is handed in is the assignment complete.

**Text readings** *(of course literature):* This course applies some more texts to read than normal, since one of the course aims is to learn to read extensive: to learn and understand the main concepts, models, claims and theoretical frameworks – without reading everything equally careful. The emphasis is not on remembering details in a smaller collection of texts, rather on your ability to compare, criticize, problematize and discuss differences within the literature, and to form your own positions in relation to that literature. To secure that kind of learning you will be given guidance of how to read early on in the course, and furthermore we apply the learning form of seminars with discussions, and lectures that bring in perspectives that supplement the readings.

**Discussion/reading groups** *(optional choice):* In order to facilitate both the reading before the class, and discussions during meetings you will have the option to join a discussion/reading group. It is a general recommendation to meet before and/or after class and read together, since it facilitates self-discipline and collaboration, but that is fully optional. Those that join a group are responsible to form their own meeting schedule and inform all students in the group about activities.

**Review essay:** Each student is required to choose one recent scholarly book (published the last three years) that falls within the substantive domain of this course, such as a social movement organization, contentious political event (e.g. a regime change) or a relevant theoretical issue, and to make a review essay of the book. The book needs approval from the professor before you start to write. Since each student need to choose a book someone else has not yet chosen, it is good to be quick in reporting which book you choose. This essay should consist of 3 double spaced pages, and the text shall be evenly distributed with 1/3 of the text (1 page) per section: (1) Summary of the main content and points of the chosen book, (2) Analytical comparison with the mandatory literature at this course, and (3) Your critical reflection of the strengths and weakness of the chosen book. The review is due on Oct 26.
Course Paper and presentation, and peer-review: A paper is required on a topic of your choice that falls within the substantive domain of this course, such as a social movement organization, contentious political event (e.g. a regime change) or a relevant theoretical issue. You have the opportunity to get direct feedback on your choice if you have one idea to present on the class Sep 28 (see schedule). You must get approval from the professor of your topic before starting to write. To get an approval you need to send an email with the title and an abstract of the content to your professor. After getting approval, submit a 2-page paper that describes your topic (similar to an abstract) and includes a preliminary bibliography with at least 10 scholarly sources. This is due at the beginning of class on Oct 13. Include your email on this submission, and you will get written feedback from the professor.

A draft version of the paper is due at the beginning of class on Nov 18 in a printed copy. Note that you also will have to upload your paper at the class page at Moodle. The paper should be between 4000 to 5000 words on double-spaced pages (including references), with a consistent style of specific referencing to the literature throughout. All course literature that is relevant for the chosen topic should be discussed. It is absolutely necessary to follow conventional principles of academic honesty and not use any concepts or text (even shorter sections) from other sources without referring to the source. Failure to follow this basic principle of academic honesty might have severe consequences (see specifications below). Presentations will be scheduled for some of the last classes (more information later). The length of presentations depends on how many will be presenting, but count on no more than 10 minutes in length. We will utilize a comprehensive written peer-review of papers from within the class (which will only be presented in summary in class, but shared in detail with the author). That means each student will read one paper carefully and give peer-review comments. Details will be provided in a separate handout.

Always remember to identify yourself: Remember to state your full name and class when you communicate with the professor via email, handing in papers or in any other way hand in material for the grading of the course. The only exception is the written evaluations that are done anonymously.

Grading:
- Participation in class discussions.......................... 10 %
- Text Seminar rapporteur .................................... 15 %
- Text Seminar questions................................. 15 %
- News rapporteur......................................... 5 %
- Review essay ......................................... 15 %
- Paper, presentation and peer-review of other paper.......................... 40 %

Higher grading of your performance demands an ability to show – both verbally and in written format – a critical understanding and application of the core ideas formulated in the course literature and the key themes of the course. What that means will be explained with illustrating examples during class.

Accommodation Statement
The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements.

**Academic Honesty Statement**

Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent (http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/).

**REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS**

**Required extensive readings: books**


**Required extensive readings: articles**

**Seminar 1:**


Seminar 2:


Seminar 3:


**NOT REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS**
Relevant extra readings
These texts are not part of the required course-literature but they are useful suggestions for your own choice of literature. When you chose your own literature you need to choose a minimum of scholarly texts, but you are encouraged to also, in addition, choose other literature. That could be more "popular" literature as novels, poetry, or “activist” literature, as activist biographies, collections of stories from movements, etc.

Classical examples of activist literature:

Here are some suggestions of relevant scholarly literature:
- Jo Freeman’s *The Politics of Women’s Liberation* (1975)
- The Rebellious Century (1975) by Charles, Louise, and Richard Tilly;
- The Strategy of Social Protest (1975) by William Gamson; Jeffery Paige’s Agrarian Revolution (1975);
- Poor People’s Movements (1977) by Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward;
- Charles Tilly’s From Mobilization to Revolution (1978);
- Theda Skocpol’s States and Social Revolutions (1979);
- The Whole World Is Watching (2003 [1980]) by Todd Gitlin;
- John Gaventa’s Power and Powerlessness (1980);
- Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency (1999 [1982]) by Doug McAdam;
• Hardiman, David (2003) Gandhi in his time and ours, Delhi: Permanent Black.

Some recommended activist news outlets to start with when preparing “Here are the news”:
http://revolution-news.com
http://wagingnonviolence.org
http://roarmag.org
http://www.indymedia.org/or/index.shtml (not very active nowadays, but there are 50+ sites from different countries and cities with updates)
http://www.theguardian.com/world/protest
http://peacenews.info
http://zcomm.org/zmag/
http://www.earthtribe.co
http://newsactivist.com
http://www.trueactivist.com
SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

More details on class meetings will be provided during the course.

This schedule may be modified. If so, changes will be announced in class.

Note: The schedule for your assigned discussion/reading group might involve some meetings outside of this schedule.

Wednesday, September 9 Course introduction

September 14: Civil Resistance and Social Change
Introduction of the thematic and its guiding problems and questions.

Lectures on key concepts/frameworks
September 16 (Social movements, part 1),
September 21 (Social movements, part 2),
September 23 (Revolution),
September 28 (Transformation) (Time for collection of ideas for Course Paper) NOTE: this class is at 3 PM-4 PM (replacing Sep 30 which is cancelled).
September 28 (Nonviolent action and Civil resistance, part 1) (normal time: 4-5:15)
October 5 (Nonviolent action and Civil resistance, part 2),
October 7 (Direct action and protest),
October 13 (Civil disobedience) (Time to hand in the 2-page summary of your planned course Paper)

Text seminars on mandatory literature (see above):
(Note: Seminar questions must be handed in at the start of each seminar, see above)
Text seminar rapporteurs present (20 min.) and then we discuss the rest of the time.
October 14: Articles Seminar 1
October 19: Keck and Sikkink.
October 21: Articles Seminar 2

October 26: Midterm evaluation and (if there is time) a short Case example of Civil Resistance (Time to hand in the Review essay)
The course so far is evaluated. What have been good, and what could be improved?

Text seminars on mandatory literature (see above):
October 28: Tilly and Tarrow.
November 2: Nepstad NOTE that this class is at 3-4 PM and replaces the previous class on Nov 4 (which is cancelled).
November 2: Schock (normal time: 4-5:15)
November 9: Articles Seminar 3

Case stories of civil resistance (movies, narratives and discussions): November 11, 16 and 18 (On November 18 you must hand in the draft version of the course Paper).

Paper seminars: November 23, 25, 30 and December 2
Paper seminars with examination of individual student papers based on chosen problems and literature. 10 minutes per paper. Details will be provided in a separate handout.

**Summary discussion seminar: What have we learnt? December 7.** NOTE that this class is at 3-4 PM and replaces the previous class on Dec 9 (which is cancelled).

**Course evaluation: December 7. (At normal time 4-5:15)**
The theme of the course is evaluated in an end-of-semester teaching evaluation, both in terms of its content and course form, as well as other practical issues (examinations, information, administration, student service, etc.). NOTE: This is the absolute deadline for the final version of your course Paper.