

SYLLABUS

People Power in Global Politics

IR 519

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Spring 2015: Thursday 2-5pm, 154 Bay State Rd., #203
Office Hours: Tuesday/Wednesday, 1-2pm in 156 Bay State Rd., #403

“Everyday forms of resistance make no headlines. But just as millions of anthozoan polyps create, willy-nilly, a coral reef, so do the multiple acts of peasant insubordination and evasion create political and economic barrier reefs of their own. And whenever, to pursue the simile, the ship of state runs aground on such reefs, attention is usually directed to the shipwreck itself and not to the vast aggregation of petty acts that make it possible. For these reasons alone, it seems important to understand this quiet and anonymous welter of peasant action.”

—James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* (1985)

Course Description: While most international relations courses focus on the 1 percent of elites who hold power in formal political institutions, this course explores politics at the level of everyday people. How are power relations structured in a Malaysian village and how do the villagers affect economic development? How are social movements and digital activists transforming politics in Egypt? How have ordinary people exercised power in American politics? What role does digital technology play in advancing (or impeding) political change? Drawing on classic works of political anthropology, as well as more recent examples of transnational and digital activism, this course seeks to understand the deployment of power by everyday people.

Course Objectives: By the end of course students should possess an understanding of core concepts in international relations, a new perspective from which to theorize the mechanisms of political and social change, and a practical understanding of how transnational networks are influencing international affairs. Specifically, students will obtain:

- A critical perspective on core concepts in political anthropology and international relations.
- A broad understanding of the everyday practices that fortify important political outcomes including authoritarian rule, social revolutions, and democratic movements.
- A theoretical and empirical understanding of how global activist networks can effect political change.
- In-depth understanding of a single activist network, its accomplishments, and the ability to articulate strategies to increase the effectiveness of advocacy efforts.

A more general objective is to demonstrate that large-scale social and political forces can be productively analyzed from the bottom up.

Anatomy of the Class: A core component of the class (and making up a total of 55% of the grade) is student research on an advocacy network in international politics. In the initial part of the course, students will be exposed to examples of issue areas where individuals have built networks to disseminate information, mobilize political campaigns, raise funds, shape state

policies, build alliances, or engage in other types of activism. Students will learn to map these networks, describe their strategies for advancing social and political change, and assess their influence. Students will then choose an issue area for their research project. In this project, students will a) describe an issue-area in international relations, b) map the network of individuals and organizations that are working on this issue, c) describe the network's strategies for advancing social and political change, d) describe major accomplishments and failures of the activists in this network, e) drawing on international relations theory and other cases, strategize ways to improve activists' efforts. Students will be expected to share their research with their classmates through individual presentations during the final two weeks of class. In effect, the projects are a way for you to learn about people power through your own research as well as that of other students.

Required Texts (on reserve at Mugar Library):

- Clifford Bob, 2012. *The Global Right Wing and the Clash of World Politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Joseph Bock, 2012. *The Technology of Nonviolence: Social Media & Violence Prevention*. MIT Press
- Gabriella Coleman, 2014. *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous*. Verso.
- Jeffrey Rubin and Emma Sokoloff-Rubin, 2013. *Sustaining Activism: A Brazilian Women's Movement and a Father-Daughter Collaboration*. Duke University Press.
- Kurt Schock, 2004. *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements in Nondemocracies*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Sidney G. Tarrow, 2011. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Recommended Texts:

- Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. Columbia University Press.
- Wael Ghonim, 2012. *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People Is Greater Than the People in Power: A Memoir*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Margaret E. Keck and Katheryn Sikkink, 1998. *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Cornell University Press.
- Tracy Kidder, 2003. *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World*. Random House Trade.
- Frances Fox Piven, 2006. *Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America*. Rowman and Littlefield.

Course Requirements:

Participation (20%): The course will be run as a seminar. This format requires students to attend regularly, read diligently, and participate actively in class discussions.

Response Papers (3 x 5% = 15%): Student will write three short (1-2 pages, double-spaced, 1 inch margins) analytical response papers (RP) over the course of the semester. I will provide the paper prompts one week before the papers are due on **1/29, 2/19, 4/2**. All papers are due in class. A grade rubric is at the end of the syllabus.

Midterm Paper (1 x 15% = 15%): In a short essay (4-6 pages), students will a) describe an issue-area in international relations, b) map the network of individuals and organizations that are working on this issue, c) describe the network's strategies for advancing social and political change. **Due February 26.** Students must meet with me the week of **March 16** to discuss their projects.

Presentations (2 x 10% = 20%): Each student will be assigned to a two-person group, which will be responsible for one 10 minute presentation on a social movement, NGO, or advocacy network of their choosing. Students will choose presentation dates on the first day of class. Each presentation should follow the same basic structure as their research project: a) describe individuals and organizations that are working on an issue international relations, b) describe their strategies for advancing social and political change.

Then, in the final two weeks of class, each student will be responsible for one 10-minute presentation on his or her research project, with another five minutes devoted to questions. Final presentations are on **4/23** and **4/30**. Students using PowerPoint or other presentation software must email their presentation to the instructor at least 3 hours prior to class, or bring the file to class on a flash drive. A grade rubric for the presentations is at the end of the syllabus.

Final Paper (30%): One long essay (15 pages) building on the midterm, but extending the analysis to d) describe major accomplishments and failures of the activists in this network, e) drawing on international relations theory and other cases, strategize ways to improve activists' efforts. **Due 5/7 by 5pm.**

Late Work: Late submission of assignments will result in your grade incurring an automatic half-point deduction per day beginning with the assignment deadline.

Explanation of Letter Grades: <http://www.bu.edu/reg/grades/explanation-of-grades/>

Academic Misconduct: Plagiarism and cheating are serious offences and will be punished in accordance with BU's Academic Conduct Code for undergraduate students: <http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/> and for graduate students: <http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/graduate/grs-forms-policies-procedures/academic-discipline-procedures/>

Electronic Communications in Class: Please close all email accounts, cell phones, instant messaging programs, homing pigeons, and any other communication devices for the duration of class. These are serious distractions to the instructor and your fellow students.

Special Needs: If you have any special needs or circumstances, such as a learning disability or health concern, please do not hesitate to speak with me and we can discuss suitable accommodations and assistance.

Dates and Readings:

Week One Introduction (Jan 22)

- Martin Luther King, Jr. 1963. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail."

Part I: Domestic Activism

Week Two Theories of People Power (Jan 29) [RP1]

- Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement* [Introduction and ch. 1]
- Jim Scott, 1986. "Everyday forms of peasant resistance," *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 13:2, pp. 5-35.
- Kenneth T Andrews, Michael Biggs, 2006. "The Dynamics of Protest Diffusion: Movement Organizations, Social Networks, and News Media in the 1960 Sit-Ins." *American Sociological Review* 71, pp. 752-777.

Recommended:

- Theda Skocpol, 1976. "France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 18:2, pp. 175-210.

Week Three The Birth of the Social Movement (Feb 5)

- Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement* [ch. 2- 8]

Week Four People Power in Nondemocracies (Feb 12)

- Kurt Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections* [read ch. 1, 2, 3, and 6 / skim ch. 4, or ch. 5]

Part II: Transnational Activism

Week Five Theories of Transnational People Power (Feb 19) [RP2]

- Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement* [ch. 12 + conclusion]
- Richard Price, 1998. "Reversing the Gun Sights: Transnational Civil Society Targets Land Mines," *International Organization*. 52:3, 613-644.

Week Six Networks (Feb 26) *Midterm Due*

- Brad Simpson, 2004. "Solidarity in an Age of Globalization: The Transnational Movement for East Timor and U.S. Foreign Policy." *Peace & Change*, 29, pp. 453-482.
- Joshua Busby, 2007. "Bono Made Jesse Helms Cry: Jubilee 2000, Debt Relief, and Moral Action in World Politics," *International Studies Quarterly* 51:2, 247-275.
- R. Charli Carpenter, 2011. "Vetting the Advocacy Agenda: Networks, Centrality and the Paradox of Weapons Norms." *International Organization* 65, 69-102.

Week Seven Networks, Technology, Violence Prevention (March 5)

- Bock, *The Technology of Nonviolence* [read the intro and ch. 1 - 9 / skim ch. 10-12]

*** Spring Break ***

Week Eight The Global Right Wing (March 19) *Project Meetings*

- Clifford Bob, *Global Right Wing* [read ch. 1, 2, 7, and either 3 + 4, or 5 + 6]

Week Nine Women's Movements and Engaged Ethnography (March 26)

- Rubin and Sokoloff-Rubin, *Sustaining Activism* [entire]

Part III: Digital Activism

Week Ten Liberation Technology? (April 2) [RP3]

- Larry Diamond, 2010. "Liberation Technology." *Journal of Democracy* 21:3, 69-83.
- Ronald Deibert and Rafal Rohozinski. 2010. "Liberation Vs. Control: The Future Of Cyberspace." *Journal of Democracy* 21:4, 43-57.
- Malcolm Gladwell. "[Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted](#)," *The New Yorker* October 4, 2010.
- Terry Gross interview with Wael Ghonim, "Creating a 'Revolution 2.0' in Egypt," February 9, 2012, <http://n.pr/AzaTRO>
- Marc Lynch, 2011. "After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State," *Perspectives on Politics* 9:2, 301-10.

Week Eleven Hackers (April 9)

- Coleman, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy* [specific chapters TBD]

Week Twelve Pathologies of Digital Activism (April 16) [RPX]

- #Kony2012 at <http://youtu.be/Y4MnpzG5Sqc>, and some responses:
 - Teju Cole, "[The White-Savoir Industrial Complex](#)" *Atlantic Monthly*, March 21, 2012.
 - Kate Cronin-Furman and Amanda Taub, "[Solving War Crimes With Wristbands: The Arrogance of 'Kony 2012'](#)," *Atlantic Monthly*, March 8, 2012.
 - Outreach Council of the African Studies Association, "[React and Respond: The Phenomenon of Kony 2012](#)."
- Megan Hershey and Michael Artime, 2014. "Narratives of Africa in a Digital World: Kony 2012 and Student Perceptions of Conflict and Agency in Sub-Saharan Africa." *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 47, pp. 636-641.
- Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts, 2013. "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression." *American Political Science Review* 107:2, pp. 1-18.
- Seva Gunitsky, forthcoming 2015. "Corrupting the Cyber-Commons: Social Media as a Tool of Autocratic Stability." *Perspectives on Politics* 13.1.

Week Thirteen Student Presentations (April 23)

Week Fourteen Student Presentations (April 30)

*** Final Papers Due by 5pm on May 7 ***

Grading Rubric – Response Papers

5 Answers the prompt in a coherent manner. Makes creative *links* between the reading, authors and concepts. Goes *beyond* the assigned content to draw fresh insights and analysis. Demonstrates *mastery* of the material and engages in independent thinking. Avoids making claims unsupported by evidence and/or reasonable judgment, or making fallacious claims including equivocation. Writing is exceptionally lucid.

4.5 Answers the prompt in a coherent way. Makes *links* between the cases, concepts or authors. Demonstrates a *solid* understanding of the material and goes beyond simple regurgitation, even if all claims are not convincingly established. Avoids being vague, making claims unsupported by evidence and/or reasonable judgment. Writing is clear and concise.

4 Answers the prompt in a coherent way although lacks creativity and depth. Demonstrates more than cursory understanding of the material. Tends toward vagueness but does not make claims unsupported by evidence and/or reasonable judgment. Writing is good.

3.5 Answers the prompt. Provides examples of cases, concepts or authors but fails to effectively connect evidence to the prompt. Makes claims unsupported by evidence and/or reasonable judgment. Writing itself is acceptable but needs improvement.

3 Unclear answer to the prompt. Fails to lay out the answer with evidence from the cases concepts, and/or fails effectively connect evidence to the argument. Tends toward vagueness, makes claims unsupported by evidence and/or reasonable judgment. Writing itself is poor.

2.5 - States an unclear claim. Fails to lay out the argument with evidence from the texts and fails to demonstrate knowledge of the material itself. Vague, makes claims unsupported by evidence and/or reasonable judgment. Writing itself is unacceptable or incoherent.

Grading Rubric –Presentations

- 1 pt.** Clear and concise
- 1 pt.** Relevant to course material
- 1 pt.** Accurate
- 1 pt.** Uses scholarly sources
- 1 pt.** Engaging
- 5 pt.** Total