RPOS 399  
Moral and Political Issues in Resistance  
Fall 2012  
August 27- December 11  
Tu-Th, 10:15-11:25  
HU 109  

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Office Hours: 11:30 am - 1:00 pm (Tu/Th), at HU B16  

Required Books [available on Amazon.com]:  
Plato, *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito* (The Library of Liberal Arts)  
John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (Hackett)  
Howard Zinn, *Disobedience and Democracy: Nine Fallacies on Law and Order*  

Additional Readings on E-Reserve (the class password: 3992012)  

Course Description:  
This course will start with addressing current debates on the conceptualization of resistance and then historically trace the ways in which disobedience is defined as morally and politically justifiable. In our historical comparative analysis of resistance, we will examine respectively the early renaissance literature on resistance to tyrants, the Lockean defense of resistance to the arbitrary rule of absolute monarchy, the shift in the meaning of political resistance in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the re-emergence of the notion of civil disobedience in the twentieth century social movements and, last but not least, the advent of post-structuralist accounts of resistance in the recent past.  

It is true that most of the canonical writings on government are primarily concerned with *political obedience*. That is, they seek to explore the bases of a legitimate political authority as well as the true nature of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. This is, however, only one side of the story. The other side is a bit darker. These writings also deal with some exceptional questions, i.e., what happens if the prevailing political authority held to be legitimate fails to keep its promise to the people and violate the mutually binding contract between the ruler and the ruled? How are the people supposed to act when government is no longer morally and politically justifiable?  

In short, the point of departure in this course will be the question concerning resistance, which appears to be two-fold: (1) what are the moral and political limitations to government and, if government cannot meet these criteria, (2) what is the course of action to be taken by the people?
Course Objective:
This course will introduce and critically examine some of the responses to these questions that were and are still influential in the Western political thought. On completion of the course, students should have become familiar with these classic readings in political thought, developed an understanding of the political and moral foundations of government, and finally, gained knowledge of the basic presuppositions underlying the idea of political disobedience in the modern and contemporary worlds.

Course Obligations: Exams, Attendance and Class Participation
You will have three quizzes and two exams (a mid-term and a final exam). The exams will be essay style and they will focus on lecture material and assigned readings. Aside from the exams, you will be given three (pop) quizzes, which will be graded U/S. Participation is an extremely important component of this course. Since our class time is valuable, students are also expected to come to class on time and prepared to begin promptly. Students are expected to have read the assignments closely and carefully, and be ready to engage in discussion and debate. Students are allowed 3 "free" absences. Each absence in addition to this will result in a deduction from your participation grade. Regular attendance and completion of readings is expected.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: “Students are the only people who can notify a professor about his/her disability. Be sure to discuss your accommodation letter with your professor and work out the details.” Participants with special needs are strongly encouraged to visit this website: http://www.albany.edu/disability/current.shtml.

Grading:
Quizzes (3): 10% (Unsatisfactory: 0 points; 1S:5p.; 2S:8p.; 3S:10p.)
Attendance/Participation: 20%
Mid-term: 30% (Oct. 16)
Final Exam: 40% (TBA)

Plagiarism:
Plagiarism is the use of someone else's work, words, or ideas without giving any reference or credit to the original author. Please be warned that should I find you have plagiarized, you will receive an immediate E in the course and further actions will be taken, including sending your case before a university committee. You can find a detailed description of what constitutes plagiarism in http://library.albany.edu/usered/plagiarism/

Class Schedule:
August 28, Tuesday: Introduction
August 30, Thursday: Different ways of defining resistance

The shift from “the duty to obey political authority” to “the right to resist”: What is meant by a good or a bad regime? When and how to resist a bad rule? Who is the
agent of resistance? Who is to lead resistance, the inferior magistrates or the people? Should political leadership be based on moral virtues or virtù? What is the goal of resistance, restoration of the ancient regime or constitution of a new one? Last but not least, if freedom is the state of nature, why do people give their consent to a tyrant?

September 4, Tuesday: the moral and political justification of the duty to obey or the doctrine of non-resistance
September 6, Thursday: non-violent resistance against tyrants (passive resistance)
September 11, Tuesday: the right to resist tyrants by force (active resistance); inferior magistrates as the leaders of resistant movement
September 13, Thursday: a new approach to political leadership; moral virtue vs. virtù
  - Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince (entire)
September 18, Tuesday: Class Suspended
September 20, Thursday:
  - Finish The Prince

The Lockean defense of resistance against absolute monarchies: what is property and why is it to be protected? What is the role of consent in the constitution of a legitimate authority? What is natural law? What does it mean to have natural rights, including the right of the people to resist political government?

September 25, Tuesday: the state of nature; the state of war; the limitations to property acquisition
  - Locke’s Second Treatise of Government, (chps. 1-5)
September 28, Thursday: the beginning and the end of civil society; active/passive resistance
  - Selections from P. Hunton’s A Treatise of Monarchy (1643) [E-reserve],
  - Finish Locke’s Second Treatise of Government (chps. 7-11, 13, 18,19)
  - Also read the Declaration of Independence [available over the internet]: “That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government…” (IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776)

The modern meaning of resistance and revolution: Who is the agent of revolution? What is the agenda of revolution?

October 2, Tuesday: the old and modern meanings of revolution.
October 4, Thursday: History as a class struggle and the working class as the agent of revolution:

- Marx’s “Communist Manifesto” in Marx-Engels Reader, pp. 469-501 [E-reserve]

October 9, Tuesday: The agenda of revolution

- Marx’s “Critique of the Gotha Program” in Marx-Engels Reader, pp. 525-541 [E-reserve]

October 11, Thursday: Discussion and Review

October 16, Tuesday: **Mid-term**

**Debates on civil disobedience:** Can individual conscience tell us the difference between “what is right” and “what is wrong”? Is individual conscience a sufficient cause for political action or positive change?

October 18, Thursday: what does individual conscience have to do with civil disobedience? Can government be permitted to overrule individual conscience?

- Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience” [E-reserve]

October 23, Tuesday: on the banality of the evil: what if individual conscience fails?

- Milgram’s “The Dilemma of Obedience” [E-reserve]
- Selections from Arendt’s Eichmann in Jerusalem [E-reserve]

October 25, Thursday: **Thoreau vs. Arendt.** Whether the statements of individual conscience are “passive and negative” (as Arendt claims) or “active and positive” (as Thoreau would argue)? Whether political action requires more than individual conscience?

- Arendt’s “Civil Disobedience” in Crises of the Republic, pp. 49-103 [E-reserve]

October 30, Tuesday: civil disobedience and civil rights movement. Whether civil disobedience is to be nonviolent? Why do people in the U.S and India engage in nonviolent resistance? Selections from A Testament of Hope: The Essentials Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr. [Group presentations and discussion]

- “Our Struggle” (1956), pp.75-82
- “Non-violence and Racial Justice” (1957), pp.5-10
- “My Trip to the Land of Gandhi” (1959), pp.23-31
- “The social Organization of Nonviolence” (1959), pp.31-35
- “The Ethical Demands for Integration” (1963), pp.117-126
- “Showdown for nonviolence” (1968), pp.64-72
- “Letter from Birmingham City Jail” (1963), pp.289-303

November 1, Thursday: civil disobedience and antiwar movements. Whether acts of civil disobedience, such as those committed by the Camden 28, are appropriate means of bringing about positive change. Is civil disobedience right or wrong?

- The Camden 28: This documentary film “recalls a 1971 raid on a Camden, N.J., draft board office by "Catholic Left" activists protesting the Vietnam War and its effects on urban America. Arrested on site in a clearly planned sting, the protesters included four Catholic priests, a Lutheran minister, and 23 others. The Camden 28 reveals the story behind the arrests — a
A provocative tale of government intrigue and personal betrayal — and the ensuing legal battle, which Supreme Court Justice William Brennan called "one of the great trials of the 20th century." is a documentary film on the opposition to Vietnam War.” (http://www.pbs.org/pov/camden28/)

November 6, Tuesday: **Fortas vs. Zinn.** Are democracy and civil disobedience reconcilable?
- Read Howard Zinn’s *Disobedience and Democracy: Nine Fallacies on Law and Order* [entire]

November 8, Thursday: Are democracy and civil disobedience reconcilable?
- Finish Zinn’s *Disobedience and Democracy*

November 13, 15: **Get ready for in-class discussion:** whether Socrates was a civil disobedient or not? Why or why not?
- Read Plato’s *Apology* and *Crito*

**Some contemporary accounts of power and resistance:** How is resistance defined in the “post-modern” world? Who is the new agent of resistance? Where to look at in everyday life to see an act of resistance? Whether everyday forms of resistance are political or not?

November 20, Tuesday: Foucault: Power, Subject and Resistance
- “Panopticism” from *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 195-231[E-reserve]

November 22, Thursday: **Class Suspended**

November 27, Tuesday: Laclau and Mouffe: Is Foucauldian understanding of resistance political? What is an alternative way of understanding resistance? Is their discursive account persuasive?
- “Hegemony and Radical Democracy” in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, pp. 149-195 [E-reserve]

November 29, Thursday: Hardt and Negri: Selections from *Empire* and *Multitude*. [E-reserve]
- “Resistance, Crisis, Transformation” in Empire, pp. 260-280
- “Resistance” in *Multitude*, pp. 63-97

December 4, Tuesday: Everyday [hidden] forms of resistance. [E-reserve]

December 6, Thursday: Everyday forms of peasant resistance (EFPS) in comparative perspective.

December 11, Tuesday: **Final Review, Q-A**