

Department of Political Science  
Rockefeller College  
University at Albany, SUNY

**RPOS 567/567R**  
**Contentious Politics**

Professor Meredith Weiss  
Fall 2015

Class: Tuesday 5:45-8:35pm, HS15

Office hours: Tuesday 4:30-5:30 or by appointment, Milne 213A  
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***Course Description***

This course explores approaches to and experiences of contentious politics, or (per Tarrow), “collective activity on the part of claimants—or those who claim to represent them—relying at least in part on noninstitutional forms of interaction with elites, opponents, or the state.” Such collective action by “people who lack regular access to institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities” may include “wars, revolutions, rebellions, social movements, industrial conflict, feuds, riots, banditry, shaming ceremonies, and many more forms of collective struggle.” Contentious politics may be episodic or long term, and runs the gamut of participants and organizational forms. So there’s a lot with which to work.

The class is structured primarily around major theoretical approaches to the study of contentious politics, in most cases using a single, often canonical work to allow an in-depth discussion of the *how* of the research. We begin, though, with a quick survey of the theoretical landscape, and shift at the end from theoretical lenses to forms of contention. Most of the works we will read rely on qualitative case studies (either single cases or compilations of them, in the case of edited volumes), allowing you to hone your skills in class discussions at comparative case study analysis. The goal throughout is not just to introduce you to some fascinating examples of political contention, but to leave you with tools you can use in your future scholarship. The assignments for the class are designed accordingly.

***Objectives***

By the end of the course, students should:

- Understand the major questions and theories guiding research into contentious politics.
- Have gained experience in at least one key method (qualitative case study analysis) in comparative politics and awareness of other methods available.
- Have collectively produced a comprehensive annotated bibliography of theories of contentious politics.
- Have written an original, potentially publishable article.

**Evaluation Criteria**

Class participation	35%
Class presentations (5% each)	10%
Critical summaries (5% each)	10%
Annotated bibliography	10%
Final paper	35%

(For those enrolled in 567R: You are not required to complete the bibliography, final paper, or final presentation. Class participation will comprise 85% of your grade, leading discussion 5%, and critical summaries 10%.)

You are expected to complete *all* readings, attend *all* classes, and participate meaningfully in class discussions. *Do not let yourself fall behind in the readings* and *do not miss class*. That said, there is a *lot* of reading. Skim judiciously! (When in doubt, focus on the argument rather than the details—but remember that the former is built upon the latter ...)

Lastly, you **must** ensure that your email address on Blackboard is correct.

*Class participation*

The class will be run as a seminar. Participation will be evaluated based on whether you voluntarily pose and respond to questions in each class session, *demonstrate that you have read and thought through the assigned reading*, and listen respectfully to what your peers say. Given the nature of the course and the fact that we meet only once per week, I will ask you to withdraw from the course if you miss more than one class session. (That does *not* mean you have one “freebie,” since participation is a core requirement.)

*Leading class discussion*

Each student will be expected to lead the class discussion on the reading for two weeks (solo or collaboratively, depending on the size of the class). The approach you choose is up to you, but this need not be a formal presentation. Your job is just to kick things off by suggesting what in the text you found especially intriguing or worth exploring in class, then facilitate such a conversation. You may find it helpful to circulate several discussion questions in advance, however, especially if you would like the class to focus on particular aspects while reading. We will divvy up texts/weeks on **September 1**.

*Critical summaries*

Each student will write a 2-3 page critical summary of the readings for the weeks he or she leads class discussion, to be distributed to the class (either hard copy in class or via Blackboard/email is fine). *Go beyond a descriptive overview*: critique the work in question and link it with other theoretical perspectives or cases we have discussed. Your model should be a published book review (although you need not specify aspects such as appropriate audience). These summaries are for your own benefit: you and your classmates can use them to help you study for your field exams.

### *Annotated bibliography*

In preparation for your final paper, you will create an annotated bibliography on your topic. It should include a comprehensive survey of articles related to your topic (including the theoretical lens or approach you are adopting) in germane disciplinary or area-studies journals, as well as relevant books. Since the bibliography is preparation for your final paper, it is to your advantage to be thorough. For the same reason, it is not only required, but to your benefit, to take the “annotation” seriously. The equivalent of a back-cover blurb is *not* sufficient; it should be clear that you have actually done some reading. Please clear the topic with me before you have done too much work (but after at least some preliminary probing) so I can be sure you are on the right track.

Annotated bibliographies are due in class on **November 3**. You will both submit a copy to me and post your bibliography on Blackboard for the class. These bibliographies will be a common property resource, on which any member of the class may draw for the final paper or for future coursework and research.

### *Final paper (20-30 pages, due via email or hard copy by 5:00pm, Friday December 11)*

The final paper will give you the opportunity not only for original research, but also to put the theories you are learning to the test. Your goal is to write a potentially-publishable article; use the articles you read in class or in the course of your research as a guide.

Your final paper can be **either**:

- A completed, original research project testing two or more rival hypotheses or theoretical lenses, within the realm of contentious politics. Your methods should be appropriate and clearly specified, and you should engage with some subset of the theories and approaches covered in class. (This paper *must* be theoretically, and not just descriptively, oriented.) The paper may be based on primary or secondary sources, including field work, but should *not* be based on work you have already written up for another purpose.
- A “state-of-the-field” article based on a comprehensive review of the literature on a variable related to political inclusion or engagement. Bear in mind that a publishable literature review (which is what this paper option represents) is a very different beast from an annotated bibliography, and requires both comprehensive scope and true mastery of the subject matter.

### *Final presentation*

On the last day of class, each student will give a conference panel-style presentation of their final paper, both for feedback and to show off what you have learned. Presentations should be no more than 15 minutes. Visual aids are optional. Plan to present your paper for this class at an actual conference, and treat this exercise as a dry run!

### *General guidelines*

All written assignments must be double-spaced, with 1” margins, in Times New Roman or a comparable font. Late papers will incur a non-negotiable penalty of **one letter grade for each day late**. Papers should be thoroughly proofread, to avoid aggravating the reader.

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are inexcusable under any circumstances and will be dealt with severely. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the university's guidelines on academic integrity (in the Undergraduate Bulletin or online at [http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate\\_bulletin/regulations.html](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html)). Ignorance is NOT an excuse. **If found to have plagiarized or otherwise cheated, you will fail the course.**

Reasonable accommodation will be made for students with any documented physical, learning, or other disabilities. To ensure equitable and fair treatment of all students, such matters should be brought to my attention *within the first two weeks* of the semester. If you believe you have such a disability, you are encouraged to register with the Disability Resource Center (Campus Center 137, <http://www.albany.edu/disability/DRC/>); they will provide you with a letter to me, confirming documentation of your need for the academic accommodations requested.

### **Required readings**

Eleven (!) texts are available for purchase from the UA bookstore. All are also available from the UA library or via interlibrary loan. You might consider purchasing only those books you think you will want to keep and checking the others out of the library.

- Michiel Baud and Rosanne Rutten, *Popular Intellectuals and Social Movements: Framing Protest in Asia, Africa, and Latin America*, New York: Cambridge UP, 2004; ISBN 978-0-52161-348-4
- Vince Boudreau, *Resisting Dictatorship: Repression and Protest in Southeast Asia*, New York: Cambridge UP, 2004; ISBN 978-0-52110-961-1.
- Dennis Chong, *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement*, University of Chicago Press, 1991; ISBN 978-0-226-10441-6
- Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005; ISBN 978-0-26257-222-4
- Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-70* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999; ISBN 978-0-226-55553-4
- Jo Reger, Daniel Myers, & Rachel Einwohner (ed.), *Identity Work in Social Movements*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008; ISBN 978-0-8166-5140-5
- James C. Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1992; ISBN 978-0-30005-669-3
- Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, New York: Cambridge UP, 1979; ISBN 978-0-52129-499-7
- Sidney Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism*, New York: Cambridge UP, 2005; ISBN 978-0-52161-677-5
- Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2006; ISBN 978-1-59451-246-9
- Gerry van Klinken, *Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia: Small Town Wars*. New York: Routledge, 2009 [2007]; ISBN 978-0-415-49397-0

All the articles listed are available electronically.

**Schedule** (Readings are due on the date under which they are listed. Unless otherwise indicated, books are to be read in their entirety.):

## I. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

### 1 Sept: Introduction

- *Sign up to lead discussion*
- No reading beyond the syllabus – but read the syllabus carefully!
- If this is your first course with me, drop by sometime in the first two weeks of the semester to introduce yourself.

### 8 Sept: **Theoretical Overview:** What is meant by “contentious politics”? How is this framing different from prior scholarship on violent or nonviolent political engagement and protest? What are the major approaches to studying political contention?

- Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*
- Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, Charles Tilly, “To Map Contentious Politics,” working paper, Center for Studies of Social Change (on Blackboard).

*For further reading:*

- Jack A. Goldstone, “Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001), 139-87.
- Sydney Tarrow, “Paradigm Warriors: Regress and Progress in the Study of Contentious Politics,” *Sociological Forum* 14 (1999), 71-77.

### 15 Sept: **Comparative Case Study Analysis:** How does comparative case study analysis differ from other methods in comparative politics? How and what does case study research contribute to theory-building and knowledge accumulation? Does qualitative case study research permit causal analysis?

- Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*

*For further reading:*

- Henry Brady and David Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.
- James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, New York: Cambridge UP, 2002.
- Stephen van Evera, *Guide to Methodology for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997).
- Harry Eckstein, “Case Study and Theory in Political Science,” in Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby (ed.), *The Handbook of Political Science*, Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1975, pp. 79-138.

- Stanley Lieberson, “Small Ns and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases.” *Social Forces* 70 (1991), 307-20.
- Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, “Qualitative Research: Recent Developments in Case Study Methods,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 9 (June 2006), 455-76.

**II.**           **KEY APPROACHES:** When reading each of these texts, focus on the methods, perspective, and assumptions of the author(s), bearing in mind the theoretical frameworks we’ve surveyed thus far. While the empirical details are also important, our emphasis is more on the “how” than the “what.” You may want at least to skim some of the more theoretical “further reading” (at least one such piece is suggested per topic, along with more applied works), especially if you are not clear about what some of the approaches entail.

**22 Sept:**       **No class**

**29 Sept:**       **Structure**

- Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*

*For further reading:*

- Mark I. Lichbach, “Contending Theories of Contentious Politics and the Structure-Action Problem of Social Order,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 1 (1998), 401-24.
- Theda Skocpol, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World* (New York: Cambridge, 1994).

**6 Oct:**           **Political Process/Opportunities**

- Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*

*For further reading:*

- David Meyer, “Protest and Political Opportunities,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (2004), 125-45.
- Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Free Press, 1984).
- Kevin O’Brien and Lianjiang Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

**13 Oct:**       **Framing**

- Michiel Baud and Rosanne Rutten, *Popular Intellectuals and Social Movements: Framing Protest in Asia, Africa, and Latin America*

*For further reading:*

- Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow. “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000), 611-39.

- James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements* (University of Chicago Press, 1999).
- Jane Mansbridge and Aldon Morris (ed.), *Oppositional Consciousness: The Subjective Roots of Social Protest* (University of Chicago Press, 2001).

**20 Oct: Resources and Rationality**

- Dennis Chong, *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement*

*For further reading:*

- John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82:6 (May 1977), 1212-41.
- Elinor Ostrom, "A Behavioral Approach to the Rational Choice Theory of Collective Action," *American Political Science Review* 92:1 (Mar. 1998), 1-22
- Steven E. Finkel and Edward N. Muller, "Rational Choice and the Dynamics of Collective Political Action: Evaluating Alternative Models with Panel Data," *American Political Science Review* 92:1 (Mar. 1998), 37-49.
- Elizabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

**27 Oct: Identity and New Social Movements**

- Jo Reger, et al. (ed.), *Identity Work in Social Movements*

*For further reading:*

- Francesca Polletta & James M. Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001), 283-305.
- Steven Buechler, "New Social Movement Theories," *Sociological Quarterly* 36:3 (Summer 1995), 441-64.
- Claus Offe, "New Social Movements: Changing the Boundaries of Institutional Politics," *Social Research* 52 (Winter 1985), 817-68.
- Hanspeter Kriesi, Ruud Koopmans, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and Marco G. Giugni, *New Social Movements in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
- Cathy J. Cohen, *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics* (University of Chicago Press, 1999).

**3 Nov: Discourse and Hegemony**

- *Annotated bibliographies due*
- James C. Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*

*For further reading:*

- William Gamson, "Political Discourse and Collective Action," in Bert Klandermans, Hanspeter Kriesi, and Sidney Tarrow, *International Social Movement Research: From Structure to Action*, vol. 1, 1988, pp. 219-44.

- Paul R. Brass, *Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997).
- James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987).

**III. FORMS OF CONTENTION:** These works are chosen not for highlighting a particular theoretical paradigm, but for their focus on a particular form or strategy of contentious politics. Think about repertoires of contention (among all relevant actors) in reading these works, but also consider the methods and lenses these authors bring to their cases.

**10 Nov: Repression**

- Vince Boudreau, *Resisting Dictatorship: Repression and Protest in Southeast Asia*

*For further reading:*

- Christian Davenport, Hank Johnston, and Carol Mueller (ed.), *Repression and Mobilization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).
- Christian Davenport (ed.), *Paths to State Repression: Human Rights Violations and Contentious Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).
- Jules Boykoff, "Limiting Dissent: The Mechanisms of State Repression in the USA," *Social Movement Studies* 6:3 (2007), pp. 281-310.

**17 Nov: Violence**

- Gerry van Klinken, *Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia: Small Town Wars*

*For further reading:*

- Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2003).
- Austin Turk, "Sociology of Terrorism," *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (2004), 271-86.
- Paul Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003).
- Edward Aspinall, "Ethnic and Religious Violence in Indonesia: A Review Essay," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 62:4 (2008), pp. 558-72.
- Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- Elizabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (Cambridge University Press, 2003)

**24 Nov: No class**

**1 Dec: Transnational Activism**

- Sidney Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism*

*For further reading:*



- Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1998).
- Donatella della Porta and Sidney Tarrow (ed.), *Transnational Protest and Global Activism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).
- Audie Klotz, "Transnational Activism and Global Transformations: The Anti-Apartheid and Abolitionist Experiences," *European Journal of International Relations* 8:1 (2002), 49-76.

**8 Dec: Final presentations**

**Friday 11 Dec, 5pm: Final papers due** (via email or hard copy)