

Political Science 2994
Special Topics: Nonviolent Resistance
Department of Political Science
George Washington University

Spring 2023

Time: Tuesdays, 6:10PM – 8:40PM

Room: Media and Public Affairs Building 305

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3:30PM – 5:30PM

Office Location: Monroe 462

Professor: Jonathan Pinckney

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Course Prerequisites

To enroll in this course, students must have completed PSC 1003: Introduction to International Politics

Course Description

How do people struggling with violence and oppression come together to achieve change? When do such struggles succeed and fail? Recent history has seen hundreds of major nonviolent resistance movements – from the civil rights movement of the United States to the Arab Spring movements in the Middle East – mobilize huge numbers of people and initiate major political transformations around the world. This course examines this phenomenon of nonviolent resistance: the application of force without the use of weapons to achieve political change. We will discuss the central ideas behind nonviolent resistance from diverse thinkers such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr, examine some of the most important historical cases of nonviolent resistance, dig into what scholars can tell us about how, when, and why nonviolent resistance works, and seek to understand the consequences of nonviolent resistance for our world today.

Objectives and Outcomes

- Students will gain a thorough understanding of the theory of nonviolent resistance.
- Students will be conversant with seminal examples of nonviolent resistance movements.
- Students will be familiar with key findings from the scholarly literature on the onset, dynamics, and outcomes of nonviolent resistance.

Average Minimum Amount of Independent Learning

Students are expected to put in an average of 5 hours of independent learning per week on average throughout the semester. This includes reading, taking notes, studying for exams, keeping up with current events related to course content, and working on writing assignments. Note that this is an average, not a minimum or maximum. In some weeks you may spend less than this (for instance if you do not have an assignment due), in some weeks you may spend significantly more.

Required Texts

The required text for this course is *Civil Resistance: What Everyone Needs to Know* by Erica Chenoweth. Copies of this book are available at the bookstore. You can also purchase very inexpensive copies online at [Bookshop](#) or directly from the publisher [Oxford University Press](#).

Additional readings will be assigned for most class sessions. These readings will all be available on the course Blackboard page. All readings listed in the class schedule below are required to be read before the class session where they are listed unless they are specifically listed as recommended.

I will add additional readings or change readings for future class sessions as the semester goes on. When I do so, I will give you at least one week's notice and change the version of the syllabus on Blackboard.

There are several excellent books on nonviolent resistance that we will be reading extensive selections from throughout the course. The required selections will be available on Blackboard, but if you are interested in this topic then I highly recommend you purchase your own copies. A few of these titles are:

- Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan. 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash. 2010. *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-Violent Action from Gandhi to the Present*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gene Sharp. 2005. *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential*. Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers.

In addition to the required and recommended readings listed on the syllabus, students should get into the practice of reading news stories on ongoing nonviolent resistance movements. We will discuss these periodically during our class sessions. General media sources such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* are good places to start. There are also a number of excellent media sources specifically focused on nonviolent resistance. Students should spend some time on *Nonviolent Conflict News* from the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict. The blogs *Waging Nonviolence* and *Minds of the Movement* are also good sources.

Class Schedule and Readings

1. January 17: Introducing Nonviolent Resistance

No required readings assigned for this first session. Students should review the syllabus, as well as news sources on ongoing nonviolent resistance movements.

Recommended

- Chenoweth: "Civil Resistance: A Brief Introduction" (pages 1-27)
- Kurt Schock: "Nonviolent Action and its Misconceptions."

2. January 24: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Resistance

Required

- Chenoweth from "How does civil resistance create change?" through "What are common nonviolent actions?" (pages 28-39) and from beginning of Chapter 2 through "How do civil resistance campaigns attract large followings?" (pages 81-90)
- Gene Sharp: *Waging Nonviolent Struggle* Chapters 2-4

Recommended

- Chenoweth pages 39-80.
- Raghavan N. Iyer. *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, Chapter 10: Satyagraha

3. January 31: How do Nonviolent Resistance Campaigns Start?

Required

- Chenoweth: “How do successful civil resistance campaigns get going?” through “Once people have the opportunity and motivation to mobilize, why do they choose nonviolent action rather than armed resistance?” (pages 90-94)
- Timur Kuran: “Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989.”
- Erica Chenoweth and Jay Ulfelder. “Can Structural Conditions Explain the Onset of Nonviolent Uprisings?”

Recommended

- Wendy Pearlman. “Mobilizing from Scratch: Large-Scale Collective Action Without Pre-existing Organizations in the Syrian Uprising.”
- Jonathan Pinckney and Babak RezaeeDaryakenari. “When The Levee Breaks: A Forecasting Model of Violent and Nonviolent Dissent.”
- Charles Butcher and Isak Svensson. “Manufacturing Dissent: Modernization and the Onset of Major Nonviolent Resistance Campaigns.”
- Peter White, Dragana Vidovic, Belen Gonzalez, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and David E. Cunningham. “Nonviolence as a Weapon of the Resourceful: From Claims to Tactics in Mobilization.”

4. February 7: Campaign Deep Dive 1: The American Civil Rights Movement

Required

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. “Letter From a Birmingham Jail.”
- Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall: “The American South: Campaign for Civil Rights” in *A Force More Powerful* (pages 460-502)

Recommended

- David Garrow. *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (not on Blackboard, available from the library)
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (not on Blackboard, available from the library)
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. *Why We Can't Wait* (not on Blackboard, available from the library)
- Karuna Mantena. “Showdown for Nonviolence: The Theory and Practice of Nonviolent Politics.” In *To Shape a New World: Essays on the Political Philosophy of Martin Luther King, Jr.*

5. February 14: Repression and Backfire

Required

- Chenoweth chapter 4 (pages 182 – 221)
- Erica Chenoweth, Evan Perkoski, and Sooyeon Kang. “State Repression and Nonviolent Resistance.”
- David Hess and Brian Martin. “Repression, Backfire, and the Theory of Transformative Events.”

Recommended

- Jonathan Sutton, Charles Butcher, and Isak Svensson. “Explaining Political Jiu-Jitsu: Institution-Building and the Outcomes of Regime Violence Against Unarmed Protest.”

6. February 21: Violence Within Nonviolent Movements

Required

- Chenoweth chapter 3 (pages 142-180)
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- Ali Kadivar and Neil Ketchley. “Sticks, Stones, and Molotov Cocktails: Unarmed Collective Violence and Democratization.”
- Luke Abbs and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. “Ticked Off, but Scared Off? Riots and the Fate of Nonviolent Campaigns.”

Recommended

- Sirianne Dahlum, Jonathan Pinckney, and Tore Wig: “Moral Logics of Support for Nonviolent Resistance: Evidence From a Cross-National Survey Experiment.”

7. February 28: The International Context of Nonviolent Resistance

Required

- Chenoweth: “Have governments of one country provoked civil resistance campaigns in other countries?” and “Can civil resistance work without at least some international support?” (pages 135-138)
- Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan. *The Role of External Support in Nonviolent Campaigns: Poisoned Chalice or Holy Grail?*
- Daniel Ritter. *The Iron Cage of Liberalism: International Politics and Unarmed Revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa* (Chapter 1: Toward a Theory of Unarmed Revolution.”

Recommended

- Jaime Jackson, Jonathan Pinckney, and Miranda Rivers: “External Support for Nonviolent Action: An Evidence Review.”
- Jaime Jackson, Belgin San-Akca, and Zeev Maoz. “International Support Networks and the Calculus of Uprising.”
- Ilker Kalin, Marie Olson Lounsbury, and Frederic Pearson. “Major Power Politics and Non-Violent Resistance Movements.”
- Daniel Ritter. *The Iron Cage of Liberalism: International Politics and Unarmed Revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa* (rest of the book)

8. March 7: Campaign Deep Dive 2: The “Arab Spring” in Egypt

Required

- M Cherif Bassiouni. “Egypt’s Unfinished Revolution.” In *Civil Resistance in the Arab Spring: Triumphs and Disasters*
- Chapter 7 “Uncharted Waters” in Ashraf Khalil: *Liberation Square: Inside the Egyptian Revolution and the Rebirth of a Nation.*

Recommended

- Wael Ghonim. *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People is Greater Than the People in Power* (not on Blackboard, available from the library)
- Neil Ketchley. *Egypt in a Time of Revolution: Contentious Politics and the Arab Spring* (not on Blackboard, available from the library)
- The rest of Ashraf Khalil: *Liberation Square: Inside the Egyptian Revolution and the Rebirth of a Nation*
- Sharon Erickson Nepstad. “Mutiny and Nonviolence in the Arab Spring: Exploring Military Defections and Loyalty in Egypt, Bahrain, and Syria.”

9. March 21: The Crucial Role of Women

Required

- Chenoweth: “How are Women Involved in Civil Resistance?” (pages 96-100)
- Selina Gallo-Cruz. “More Powerful Forces? Women, Nonviolence, and Mobilization.”

- Leymah Gbowee. Chapters 13 and 14 of *Mighty Be Our Powers: How Sisterhood, Prayer, and Sex Changed a Nation at War*

Recommended

- Erica Chenoweth. “Women’s Participation and the Fate of Nonviolent Campaigns.”
- Christine Mason. “Women, Violence and Nonviolent Resistance in East Timor.”
- Jonathan Pinckney and Miranda Rivers. “Precarity and Power: Reflections on Women and Youth in Nonviolent Action.”
- Marie Príncipe. “Women in Nonviolent Movements.”

10. March 28: Nonviolent Resistance and Deeply Divided Societies

Required

- Chenoweth: “Can Civil Resistance Work in Deeply Divided Societies?” (pages 133-134)
- Ches Thurber. “Ethnic Barriers to Civil Resistance.”

Recommended

- Devorah Manekin and Tamar Mitts: “Effective for Whom? Ethnic Identity and Nonviolent Resistance.”
- Constantino Pischedda: “Ethnic Conflict and the Limits of Nonviolent Resistance.”

11. April 4: The Internet’s Impact on Nonviolent Resistance

Required

- Chenoweth: “How do social media and digital technology affect nonviolent campaigns?” (pages 110-114)
- Zeynep Tufekci: *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest* (read the Preface and the Introduction)
- Matthew Cebul and Jonathan Pinckney. “Nonviolent Action in the Era of Digital Authoritarianism: Hardships and Innovations.”

Recommended

- Nils Weidmann and Espen Geelmuyden Rød. “Empowering Activists or Autocrats? The Internet in Authoritarian Regimes.”
- The rest of Zeynep Tufekci: *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*

12. April 11: Campaign Deep Dive 3: #MeToo Campaign

Required

- Lauren Collier Hillstrom. *The #metoo Movement*, Chapter 1

Recommended

- Anna Brown. “More Than Twice as Many Americans Support Than Oppose the #MeToo Movement.”
- Myunghye Lee and Amanda Murdie. “The Global Diffusion of the #MeToo Movement.”
- Cass Sunstein. “#MeToo as a Revolutionary Cascade.”

13. April 18: The Long-Term Impact of Nonviolent Resistance

Required

- Jonathan Pinckney. *From Dissent to Democracy* (Introduction: When the Revolution Doesn’t Deliver)
- Judith Stoddard. “How do Major Violent and Nonviolent Opposition Campaigns Impact Predicted Life Expectancy at Birth?”

Recommended

- Daniel Lambach, Markus Bayer, Felix S. Bethka, and Veronique Dudouet. *Nonviolent Resistance and Democratic Consolidation*
- Soumyajit Mazumder. “The Persistent Effect of U.S. Civil Rights Protests on Political Attitudes.”
- Aaron Reeves and Laura Sochas. “When do Democratic Transitions Reduce or Increase Child Mortality? Exploring the Role of Non-Violent Resistance.”
- Mauricio Rivera Celestino and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch: “Fresh Carnations or All Thorn, No Rose? Nonviolent Campaigns and Transitions in Autocracies.”

14. April 25: The Future of Nonviolent Resistance

Required

- Chenoweth Chapter 5 (pages 222 – 252)

Recommended

- Erica Chenoweth. “The Future of Nonviolent Resistance.”

Quote: “Nonviolent soldiers are called upon to examine and burnish their greatest weapons – their heart, their conscience, their courage and their sense of justice.” – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Class Format

The majority of our class sessions will be structured as *discussion-based seminars* rather than lectures. After we do our reading quiz (discussed in the assignments section below) I will typically give a brief lecture introducing the day’s topic, after which we will spend the bulk of the class time discussing the most central ideas in the readings for that day, as well as relevant current events. Because of this class format, it is absolutely crucial that students have done the reading before the class session. In some class sessions we will also have more structured exercises or simulations.

The conversations we have in class may be particularly emotional or politically charged for students. I encourage lively debate, but demand that all students treat one another with dignity and respect. Critique ideas, not people. Disrespecting other students will not be tolerated, and students who engage in it may be asked to leave the class.

Non-class related use of laptops, cell phones, or other electronic devices is not allowed during class time.

Using laptops to check social media or engage in other non-class activities not only distracts you but is also highly distracting to the students around you. If I observe that you are using your electronic devices for anything other than note-taking or looking up references for class exercises I may ask you to leave the class, and **you will be marked as absent for that day.**

While it is a good idea to have a phone or laptop handy to look up information for class exercises, I strongly recommend that you take notes using a pen and notebook. There is a lot of research showing that taking notes using an electronic device makes it much harder for your brain to retain information – you’ll get a lot more out of the class if you use a pen.¹

Assignments and Evaluation

¹ Pam A. Mueller and Daniel M. Oppenheimer. 2014. “The Pen is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand over Laptop Note Taking.” *Psychological Sciences* 25(6), pp. 1159-1168. Rakefet Ackerman and Morris Goldsmith. 2011. “Metacognitive Regulation of Text Learning: On Screen Versus on Paper.” *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 17(1), pp. 18-32.

1. **Attendance:** You are required to attend class. You are allowed to have only one unexcused absence with no penalty. For each additional absence you will lose 2% of your total final grade. Any student with five unexcused absences (over a third of the class) or more will automatically fail. Any exceptions to this rule for religious reasons, sports team schedules, family emergencies, etc... must be approved by me before the class session that will be missed.
2. **Participation (20% of final grade):** I expect you to participate actively in class. A significant portion of our class time will be used for discussion and other interactive activities, as described in the class format session. I will evaluate your participation grade based on genuine engagement with the topics based on having completed the readings and spent a reasonable amount of time attempting to understand them. Not knowing all the answers is fine as long as you can demonstrate that you have made a significant effort to understand.
3. **Reading Response Quizzes (40% of final grade):** At the beginning of each class we will devote a short period of time to a short-answer quiz (either hand-written or completed on Blackboard) on one or more of the readings for that class session. Your answers on that short quiz will then inform our discussion during that week's class. You are only required to complete ten reading response quizzes. Your ten highest graded reading responses will make up 40% of your final grade. You may get up to two points of extra credit for each additional reading response quiz that you complete (up to three additional quizzes). Students may also complete a reading response quiz as an in-person oral exam during office hours on the day of the class in question upon request.
4. **Campaign Strategic Analysis:** Each student will select a nonviolent resistance campaign to focus on for the semester. Students may select one of the primarily nonviolent campaigns from the "List of Nonviolent and Violent Revolutionary Campaigns, 1900 – 2019" in *Civil Resistance: What Everyone Needs to Know* or they may select a currently ongoing nonviolent resistance campaign (with my approval). Throughout the semester I will call on students in class to report how the ideas from that week's material applies to their selected campaign. In addition, students will turn in the following assignments about their chosen campaign:
 - a. **Origins of the campaign (5% of final grade):** A 500 to 1000 word summary of the origins of the campaign, linking events from that campaign to the readings on the origins of nonviolent action campaigns and our discussion in class. The summary should offer both factual information on the origins of the campaign and the student's analysis of how well the theoretical frameworks discussed in class apply to their chosen campaign. Due no later than **Friday, February 3rd**.
 - b. **Campaign Dynamics 1 (violence) (7.5% of final grade):** A 1000 to 1500 word summary of the dynamics of violence both within the student's chosen campaign and violence directed at the campaign, building on the course content in weeks five and six. Summaries should include both factual information on repression and internal movement violence as well as analysis of the impact of violence on the campaign that shows conversance with the course material. Due no later than **Friday, March 10th**.
 - c. **Campaign Dynamics 2 (society) (7.5% of final grade):** A 1000 to 1500 word summary of the gender, identity group, and technological dynamics of their chosen campaign, including both factual information on these characteristics and analysis of their impact that builds on and shows conversance with the course material. Due no later than **Friday, April 14th**.
 - d. **Final Strategic Estimate (20% of final grade):** An analysis of the selected campaign that draws on material from throughout the course, including the three previous strategic analysis assignments. Students have two options of how to put this strategic analysis together. You may write up the analysis as a 2000-2500 word paper, or you may give a short (5-minute) presentation during our final exam period at the end of the semester. For either option, students

should roughly follow the framework given in Gene Sharp’s “Preparing a Strategic Estimate for Nonviolent Struggle.” This assignment will be due no later than our scheduled final exam period on **Tuesday, May 9th, from 7:40 – 9:40PM.**

For any of the elements of the strategic analysis, I am also happy to provide students with the option to be evaluated in an oral examination. In an oral examination rather than turning in a written assignment students will attend a short 1-1 session where I will ask them questions about the assignment and grade them based on the same rubric I would use in evaluating a written assignment. This may be an attractive option for students who feel less comfortable with their written work. If you wish to have any of your assignments done as an oral examination you must contact me via e-mail no later than a week before the deadline for the assignment in question to schedule a time for the oral exam.

Grading Scale and Policies

I do not grade on a curve. Each student’s work will be evaluated independently. It is possible for every student in the class to get an A. However, getting such high marks will require hard work. Here is how grades should be interpreted, as well as how a letter grade translates to a 0-100 numeric scale.

A	94 and higher	The student performed far beyond my expectations, displaying a grasp of the analytical and empirical material as well as creativity or insight beyond the material.
A-	93-90	I was impressed by the student’s performance. The student has strong analytical, theoretical, and empirical skills.
B+	89-87	The student met all my expectations in the course.
B	86-84	The student met most expectations, but demonstrated weakness in either analytical or empirical skills.
B-	83-80	The student demonstrated weakness in analytical and empirical skills, but clearly attempted to prepare for assignments.
C	79-70	The student demonstrated disregard for the course requirements.
D	69-60	The student demonstrated negligence or disrespect in their assignments.
F	Below 60	The student violated a class policy, did not attend class, or did not perform to a level that I knew they were attending.

If a student wishes to dispute their grade on an assignment they must contact me within 48 hours of receiving their grade and set an appointment to discuss it. At this appointment they must bring a typed summary of the reasons why they believe the grade is unfair. I will then reevaluate the assignment based on these reasons. All revised grades are final, and they may be lower than the original grade.

All assignments must be turned in by the due date on the syllabus. An assignment turned in late at all will receive an automatic half-letter grade point deduction. Assignments turned in more than three days late may receive heavier penalties, at my discretion.

Tips on Reading and Writing

All written assignments should be turned in on Blackboard. I have no preferences regarding font, margin-size, etc... (within reason). However, you should make your submissions double-spaced to make my comments easier. I give all guidelines on appropriate paper length in terms of words, not pages.

Clear and professional writing can be a challenge, particularly for those first entering college, however, it is one of the most useful life skills you can get from your higher education. To that end, I evaluate

written assignments both on content and the clarity and style of the writing. Written work should be clear and not have grammatical and spelling errors.

If you wish to improve your writing, I am happy to help you think through how to do so. GWU's Writing Center (which opens on Monday, September 12th) also provides free, one-on-one sessions where you can learn how to improve your writing. You can find more information at <https://writingcenter.gwu.edu/>.

Students may find completing all the reading for this class challenging. There are a few tricks that you can use to make the reading load easier and ensure that you are prepared to discuss the readings in class.

1. Always read the introductions and conclusions of articles carefully. These will typically have the most important points for you to remember.
2. Always ask yourself: "what are the one or two main things the author is trying to say in this piece?" It can often be helpful to write this down and have it with you to refer to in class.
3. If necessary, skim the central parts of articles, particularly if the introduction gives you a clear sense of the core argument. If, after skimming, you're not sure what the article was about, you may need to re-read in a little more depth.

Accommodations for Disability

Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact **Disability Support Services Program** located in Suite 102 of Rome Hall: 801 22nd St. NW, to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations, and bring the letter you receive from DSS to me. Their phone number is 202-994-8250. Information is also available online at <https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/>.

Policy on Academic Integrity

Cheating ("using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids, etc..."), plagiarism ("misrepresenting words, ideas, or a sequence of ideas as original or one's own, etc..."), and fabrication ("falsifying any data, information, or citation in an academic exercise") are serious academic offenses and violate GWU's code of academic integrity. Penalties for these offenses will be determined following the procedures laid out in the code of academic integrity. Possible penalties range from a failing grade for the assignment, for the course, or in suspension or expulsion from the university. Refer to the GWU code of academic integrity for further detail: <https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity>.

Note that the use of AI-based writing aids such as ChatGPT does constitute plagiarism if the student does not disclose the use of such tools.

Religious Observances

In accordance with University policy, students should notify me during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on the day(s) of religious observance. Please consult [the university policy on religious holiday observance](#) for further information.

Policy on Student Questions

I am always happy to answer student questions during office hours or over e-mail. However, keep in mind that most questions you may have (about assignments, policies, etc...) can be answered by simply taking a close look at the syllabus. Every student should read the entire syllabus carefully at the beginning of the class and before sending me a question. When you have finished reading the syllabus

for the first time, send me an e-mail containing the quote that is written on the syllabus immediately after the class schedule and a picture of the person who said it.