

# FROM GANDHI TO THE ARAB SPRING: THEORY AND PRACTICE OF NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE

*Fall Semester 2014*

Ches Thurber, Ph.D. Candidate, The Fletcher School, Tufts University  
[Richard.thurber@tufts.edu](mailto:Richard.thurber@tufts.edu) | (617) 710-2617

Ben Naimark-Rowse, Ph.D. Candidate, The Fletcher School, Tufts University  
[Benjamin.naimarkrowse@tufts.edu](mailto:Benjamin.naimarkrowse@tufts.edu) | (917) 696-9424

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

From colonial America to colonial India, the Berlin Wall to Tahrir Square, nonviolent resistance movements have proven capable of toppling regimes and recasting the geopolitical landscape. But what exactly constitutes “nonviolent resistance?” Why do some groups employ it while others turn to arms? Why and when is it effective? What, if anything, can the international community do to help nonviolent movements succeed? This seminar is intended to provide a broad, interdisciplinary overview of the study of what has been interchangeably called civil resistance, nonviolent direct action, and strategic nonviolence. It will explore questions surrounding the ethics of nonviolent action, when and where civil resistance is used, the conditions under which it is more or less effective, and its consequences for local communities, state politics, and the international system. The course will draw from seminal philosophical texts, historical accounts, and cutting-edge social science research. Students will gain an understanding of both the normative and empirical debates surrounding the practice of civil resistance and a familiarity with key cases in which it has been used.

## ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTORS

CHES THURBER: I am a Ph.D. candidate in international relations at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and a Research Fellow at Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center. My dissertation, *Between Mao and Gandhi: Strategies of Violence and Nonviolence in Revolutionary Movements*, examines how and why some groups seeking to overthrow the state adopt a strategy of civil resistance while others choose armed insurgency. I draw upon my own field research in Nepal where I interviewed leaders of violent and nonviolent movements. I have taught courses in international relations and research methodology as a lecturer at the University of Alaska and as a teaching assistant in Tufts University's Department of Political Science. Before coming to Tufts, I worked as a foreign and defense policy aide in the U.S. House of Representatives.

BEN NAIMARK-ROWSE: I am a Ph.D. candidate in international relations at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and a Truman National Security Fellow. My dissertation research examines the relationship between mixed methods of resistance and repression. During the summer of 2012, I participated in the Fletcher Summer Institute for the Advanced Study of Nonviolent Conflict; and during the summer of 2011, I conducted field research in Egypt about the Egyptian Revolution. Prior to enrolling at Fletcher, I spent three years co-directing *Darfurian Voices*, the first public opinion survey of Darfurian refugees on issues of peace, justice, and reconciliation, which entailed interviewing 2,152 refugees along the Chad/Sudan border. I also served for three years as a Program Officer with the Open Society Justice Initiative managing human rights-based security sector reform projects in new democracies. And I've served as an electoral observer with The Carter Center, an Assistant Editor of the *Journal of Public and International Affairs*, and an expert review group member for U.N. Office on Drugs and Crimes.

## **COURSE MATERIALS**

We will be reading from a variety of sources in this course, most of which are available to the public online. In addition, we will be showing the documentary films *Bringing Down a Dictator*, *Budrus*, *The Square*, *Eyes on the Prize*, and *Taking on the Mafia*.

However all students should purchase the following game and texts:

1. Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall, *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict*. (Palgrave MacMillan, 2001).
2. Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. (Columbia University Press, 2011).
3. *People Power: The Game of Civil Resistance*. Available for download at <http://www.peoplepowergame.com>

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION**

### *1. Writing Assignment #1 (20%)*

Your first writing assignment is to write a memo in which you attempt to convince the leader of a political resistance movement to make a change in the strategy and/or tactics currently being used. There are multiple possibilities: you may try to encourage the leader of an insurgency to switch to nonviolent resistance, the leader of a movement engaged in civil resistance to adjust or expand the methods of nonviolent direct action being used, or other with the instructor's permission. You should work with a real, not hypothetical case, and draw upon the literature you have read to date to include assessments of moral and/or strategic considerations. The memo should not exceed 1000 words.

2. *Writing Assignment #2 (20%)*

For this writing assignment, you should either 1) participate in a local nonviolent action; or 2) interview someone who has participated in a nonviolent resistance campaign. Write a response paper (of no more than 1000 words) in which you discuss your experience or interview. Pay specific attention to participant motivations, the organizational structure of the movement, and the response of local authorities. If you choose option 1, you must consult with the instructors prior to participating in any nonviolent action.

3. *Final Paper (40%)*

The final assignment is a research paper (approximately 4000-6000 words). Your paper should evaluate an important theoretical aspect of nonviolent resistance (either normative or empirical) through an analysis of two resistance movements. Do these cases shed light on a relevant debate about the ethics or efficacy of nonviolent resistance? Or do they raise some new, previously unaddressed questions? Students with a quantitative inclination who wish to tackle a theoretical topic through the analysis of relevant datasets may do so with the instructor's permission.

4. *Class attendance, preparation and participation: (15%)*

This class is structured as a discussion-oriented seminar. Students are expected to come to every class having completed all the readings and to actively contribute to class discussion. In addition, students will pick one week in which they will circulate to the instructors and fellow students a one-page memo of discussion questions and reflections on that week's readings. The memo must be circulated 24 hours before the start of class and discuss all of that week's assigned readings.

5. *People Power: The Game of Civil Resistance: (5%)*

Over the course of the semester we will play the simulated game, *People Power: The Game of Civil Resistance*. We will introduce the game during week three. Students will be expected to play it at home and with each other throughout the semester. A portion of each class will be dedicated to updates and reflections on the game. At the end of the semester we will dedicate time to discuss lessons drawn from this interactive learning experience. Students will be asked to draw connections between concepts studied in class and the virtual learning in the game.

6. *Extra Credit*

Extra credit may be awarded for participation in the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation seminar on violence/non-violence at the Mahindra Humanities Center at Harvard, or related talks/presentations.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

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### Week 1: Conceptualizing Resistance

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#### Readings:

- Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, Ch. 1
- Conser Jr., "The United States: Reconsidering the Struggle for Independence, 1765-1775," in Bartkowski, ed., *Recovering Nonviolent History*
- Schock, "The Practice and Study of Civil Resistance," *Journal of Peace Research* 50:3 (2013): 277-290.

#### Key Questions:

- *How do we define "nonviolent resistance?" What are its boundaries? Can it be clearly distinguished from other forms of political contention?*
- *What are the origins of the concept of nonviolent resistance? How much comes from practice versus philosophy?*
- *For what goals can civil resistance be used and who can use it?*
- *What relationship does civil resistance have with human rights, political violence, institutional politics, and geopolitics?*

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### Week 2: Philosophy of Nonviolent Action | Gandhi and Indian Self-Determination

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***Class to take place at Walden Pond in Concord, MA.  
Logistics to be discussed in the first class.***

#### Readings:

- Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience*
- Gandhi, "Satyagraha" and *Hind Swaraj* (pp. 1-38)
- Howes, *Toward a Credible Pacifism*, Ch. 1
- Ackerman and Duvall, *A Force More Powerful*, Ch. 2

#### Key Questions:

- *Is nonviolent resistance morally superior to its alternative(s)? (What is its alternative(s)?)*
- *Is the moral basis for nonviolent resistance predicated on its effectiveness? Who gets to decide?*
- *Is violence justifiable if nonviolent resistance is ineffective?*
- *Was Gandhi's practice consistent with his philosophy?*
- *Does the moral basis for nonviolent resistance change if it is used for anti-democratic purposes? If so, how?*

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### **Week 3: The Strategic Logic of Civil Resistance**

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#### ***Introduction to People Power: The Game of Civil Resistance***

##### Readings:

- Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, Chs. 2-3
- Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, Vol. 1
- Gelderloos, *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, Chs. 1 and 5

##### Key Questions:

- *What are the key points of leverage through which civil resistance movements challenge the state?*
- *How is this strategically different from alternative strategies?*
- *What role do skills and conditions play in determining the nature of and success of a civil resistance movement?*
- *How is defection a key mechanism in the success of civil resistance movements?*
- *Is nonviolent resistance more effective than violent resistance? Under what conditions?*

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### **Week 4: Bringing Down a Dictator: Mobilization and Organization in Serbia**

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##### Readings:

- *Bringing Down a Dictator* (Film, watch at home)  
Film trailer: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJfE\\_KCtbug](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJfE_KCtbug)

##### Key Questions:

- *Who participates in civil resistance campaigns? Why do they do so?*
- *How does the organization of a resistance movement affect its behavior, effectiveness, and resilience?*
- *How were Serb youths able to mobilize an organization strong enough to topple one of Eastern Europe's "strongest" dictators?*
- *What role, productive or counter-productive, did NATO intervention play in overthrowing Milosevic?*

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**Week 5: Repression and Backfire | The Arab Spring**

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***Extracurricular Film Showing: The Square***

**Film Trailer:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twB2zAOzsKE>

Readings:

- Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*, Ch. 1
- Martin, *Justice Ignited: The Dynamics of Backfire*, Ch. 1
- Davenport and Moore: "The Arab Spring, Winter, and Back Again: (Re)Introducing the Dissent-Repression Nexus with a Twist," *International Interactions* 38(5): 2012.
- Anderson, "Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Differences Between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2011.

Key Questions:

- *When does repression deter protest and when does it spark backfire?*
- *Does repression make nonviolent movements turn violent?*
- *Are there bounds on the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance?*
- *What role did social media and other communication technologies play in facilitating the Arab Spring movements?*
- *What differentiates the successful Arab Spring civil resistance movements from the failed movements? How do we define failure?*

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**Week 6: Civil Resistance and a Ruthless Opponent |  
Nonviolent Resistance Against Hitler?**

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Readings:

- Summy, "Nonviolence and the Case of the Extremely Ruthless Opponent"
- Ackerman and Duvall, *A Force More Powerful*, Ch. 5
- Johanson, "Hitler and the Challenge to Nonviolence"
- Stratford, "Can Nonviolent Defence Be Effective If the Opponent Is Ruthless? The Nazi Case"
- Martin, "A Response to Stratford"

Key Questions:

- *Is nonviolent resistance possible against an extremely ruthless regime? Why?*
- *To what degree was nonviolent resistance successful against a regime as powerful and as ruthless as the Nazis?*

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**Week 7: Nonviolent Resistance, Democracy, and Race | The Civil Rights Movement**

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## Readings:

- King, *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*
- McAdam: *The U.S. Civil Rights Movement*
- Ackerman and Duvall, Ch. 8, *The American South*

## Key Questions:

- *Is nonviolent resistance possible when the actors and target come from different racial, ethnic, religious, societal groups?*
- *Have we rewritten the history of nonviolent movements in a way that papers over their use of arms?*
- *How are the dynamics of civil resistance different when carried out in a state with functioning democratic institutions compared to a non-democratic state?*

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**Week 8: Legacies of the Civil Rights Movement: Boston, Atlanta, Ferguson**

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***In Class Film: Eyes on the Prize, The Keys to the Kingdom, 1974-1980***

***Film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHZoa4tLmEE>***

## Readings:

- *Boston Globe: History Rolled in on a Yellow School Bus*
- *Boston Globe: Oral Histories*
- *Boston Globe: If Segregation Ended 60 Years Ago, Why is It Getting Worse?*
- Browne: *The Front Lines of Ferguson*
- Jones: *Self-Segregation*

## Key Questions:

- *In which ways did the civil rights movement impact schooling and bussing in Boston?*
- *Why did the experiences of Boston and Atlanta in the 1970s differ?*
- *How has the evolution of American political institutions changed the goals and strategies of nonviolent movements?*

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**Week 9: Mixed Strategies and Radical Flanks | Nelson Mandela  
and the African National Congress**

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Readings:

- Schock, “Radical Flank Effect”
- Ackerman and Duvall, *A Force More Powerful*, Ch. 9
- Lodge: “The Interplay of Violent and Nonviolent Action in the Movement Against Apartheid in South Africa,” in *Civil Resistance and Power Politics*

Key Questions:

- *How has the simultaneous use of violent and nonviolent tactics helped and/or harmed the movements that have attempted it?*
- *Why did the ANC return to violence in the 1980s? Did it help or delay the overthrow of Apartheid?*

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**Week 10: Transnational Dimensions of Nonviolent Conflict | Nepal’s Maoists**

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Readings:

- Nepstad, *Nonviolent Revolutions*, Ch. 8
- Johanson: “Analyzing Support to Nonviolent Revolutions” in *Experiments with Peace*, pp. 103-114.
- Dudouet, “Dynamics and Factors of Transition from Armed Struggle to Civil Resistance” in *Journal of Peace Research* (May 2013)
- Muni, “Bringing the Maoists Down from the Hills: India’s Role” in *Nepal in Transition*, Ch. 12

Key Questions:

- *Why did the Maoists switch from violent to nonviolent resistance?*
- *How do international actors influence civil resistance campaigns?*
- *Can international assistance “backfire?”*

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## Week 11: Post-Conflict Dynamics

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### Readings:

- Chenoweth and Stephan, *How Civil Resistance Works*, Chs. 8-9
- Johnstad, "Nonviolent Democratization: A Sensitivity Analysis of How Transition Mode and Violence Impact the Durability of Democracy" in *Peace and Change* 35(3) (July 2010).
- Finnegan and Hackley, "Negotiating Nonviolent Transitions," *Negotiation Journal* (January 2008)
- Bartkowski and Kurtz, "Egypt: How to Negotiate the Transition. Lessons from Poland and China"

### Key Questions:

- *What are the long-term consequences of civil resistance campaigns in terms of return to conflict and democratization?*
- *What "commitment problem" challenges to nonviolent movements face when negotiating with a regime?*
- *How does political engagement in a nonviolent resistance movement differ from political engagement in institutionalized politics such as elections?*

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## Week 12: Nonviolent Resistance Against Non-State Actors

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### Readings:

- Beyerle, "Civil Resistance and the Corruption/Violence Nexus" in *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* (June 2011)
- Kaplan, "Protecting Civilians in Civil War: The Institution of the ATCC in Colombia" in *Journal of Peace Research* (May 2013)
- "Mexican Town Revolts, Waging Own Battle Against Drug Cartels," *Homeland Security Newswire* (May 23, 2011)
- *Italy: Taking on the Mafia* (Frontline Documentary, watch at: <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/italy801/>)

### Key Questions:

- *How do the dynamics of civil resistance change when taking on a non-state actor as compared to a state regime?*
- *How did these movements overcome the "collective action problem?"*

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**Week 13: Nonviolent Resistance in Protracted Conflicts | Palestine**

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## Readings:

- Ackerman and Duvall: Ch. 11, The Intifada
- Newton, "The Changing Face of Palestinian Resistance"
- Al-Saafin, "How Obsession with Nonviolence Harms the Palestinian Cause"

## Key Questions:

- *How has the simultaneous employment of violent and nonviolent tactics helped and/or harmed the Palestinian cause?*
- *How have international actors supported and/or harmed the Palestinian cause?*
- *How do the conditions in Israel / Palestine differ from those in other cases we've studied? Can nonviolent resistance succeed under these conditions?*

## Wrap Up Questions:

- What do you think are the most important takeaways from the course?
- Unresolved questions from the course?
- Others TBD