Political Change: Evolution and Revolution

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MA course (4 credits), Winter semester, 2020.
Monday and Wednesday, 11.00 – 12.40
Office hours: TBA

This course is designed to discuss different forms of political change from theoretical and historical-comparative perspective.

In the first part of the semester we examine general evolutionary forms of social change i.e. theories of modernization and development, which might precede political restructuration. Old and new modernization studies will be contrasted to old and new approaches in development, underdevelopment and dependency.

In the second part, we shall discuss revolutions in theoretical, historical, and comparative perspective. Comparative politics includes relational analysis of abrupt, violent, unexpected changes in the political structure of a society. We will discuss the major understandings and theories of the state in order to help conceptualizing revolution. Constitutionalist, Marxist, psychological, and functionalist approaches, just as mobilization, structuralist, and political culture theories of revolution will be analysed. The course will allow to focus on some case studies as well. We will use the opportunity of student presentations to discuss some empirical cases of revolutions or revolutionary movements.

Finally, in the third part of the semester, we shall cover non-violent forms of political change, and their social consequences. Transition and consolidation approaches will be critically discussed, together with the ideas of democracy promotion. Tendencies of deconsolidation and the rise of hybrid regimes will also be analyzed together with various forms of civil resistance.

Teaching philosophy and methods:
- Just like all of my other courses are characterized by low student-faculty ratio, high interactivity and student-centeredness. Extra consultation opportunities are provided.
- Teaching methods are displayed in interactive seminars which include lecturing, interactive seminar-style classroom discussions, individual and group presentations, independent research, written assignments (position papers, handouts, final essay).

Learning outcome:
- Students will be able to understand and analyze different political arguments in their ideological context and they will be more sophisticated in dealing with cultural and social embeddedness of political actions, discourses, and rhetorics.
- The course will enhance key academic transferable skills, such as critical writing, summary writing, oral communication.
- It helps multidisciplinary approach to social phenomena, value awareness, integration of research into learning and critical thinking.
GRADING will be based on
– participation, activity, presentation (30%);
– periodic assignments, including an in-class test (30%);
– a final essay of 3000 words on a topic agreed upon with the professor (40%).

Topics and readings

WEEK 1. January 6, 8. Theories of Modernization and Development

Mandatory readings


Further readings
Samuel P. Huntington (1968), Political Order in Changing Societies. New Haven: Yale University Press
Alvin Y. So (1990), Social Change and Development. London: Sage
Klaus Müller (1992), “‘Modernising’ Eastern Europe: Theoretical Problems and Political


**WEEK 2.** January 13, 15. **Theories of Dependency and World System**

**Mandatory readings**


**Further readings**


**WEEK 3. January 20, 22.**  
**Revolution I. – Natural History, Relative Deprivation and Psychological Approaches**

**Mandatory readings**


**Further readings**


Mandatory readings


Further readings


WEEK 5. February 3, 5. Revolution III. – Mobilization Theory and Structural Theories

Mandatory readings
Theda Skocpol (1979), *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3-43.


**Further readings**


**WEEK 6.** February 10, 12. **Revolution IV. – Structure vs Agency Debate**

**Mandatory readings**


**Further readings**


**WEEK 7. February 17, 19. Theories of Transition I.**

**Mandatory readings**


**Further readings**


**WEEK 8. February 24, 26. Theories of Transition II.**

**Mandatory readings**


**Further readings**


WEEK 9. March 2, 4. Approaches to Democratic Consolidation

Mandatory readings


Further readings


WEEK 10. March 9, 11. Deconsolidation and De-democratization

Mandatory readings

Further readings

WEEK 11. March 16, 18. The Rise of Hybrid and Authoritarian Regimes

Mandatory readings

Further readings
Jennifer Gandhi (2008), Political Institutions under Dictatorship. Cambridge: C. U. P.
William J. Dobson (2012), The Dictator’s Learning Curve, New York: Doubleday
Handing the final essays

Mandatory readings


Further readings

Gene Sharp (1973), *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. Boston: P. Sargent Publisher