

POL 350 Comparative Political Revolutions

Instructor: Dr. Mikhail Beznosov

Office: 307 School of Sociology

Course Description

The general objective of this course is to provide students with a theoretical and comparative overview of political revolutions over the last 200 years. Students will be introduced to specific theories and case studies in which institutions, processes and structures constitute factors of divergence or convergence between revolutions.

The course will have a dual approach to comparison:

- 1) Comparative assessment of theories on the origins, causes, process, and consequences of political revolutions.
- 2) Case-study comparison of major or significant revolutions. Special attention will be given to the French, Russian, Chinese, Cuban, Iranian revolutions, Post-Communist as well as Colored Revolutions.

Course Policy

You are not expected to be familiar with theories of political revolutions and with the countries that will be studied during the semester. Nevertheless, you are expected to have an introductory knowledge of comparative politics and be familiar with basic political science concepts and theories.

Class Dynamic

Student exchanges are strongly encouraged in the class. In the first half of a class period, we will discuss the readings assigned for the class and integrate them to specific class material. During the second half of a class period, discussion groups will be formed and asked to answer a question (or set of questions) or to expose their views on a specific issue/debate in relation to the lecture and to present their results to the rest of the class.

Course Structure

Our focus will be mostly on gaining theoretical knowledge about the comparative study of revolutions. We will thus ask the following questions. Why do revolutions happen? How do they differ or are similar to each other? Are there different types of revolutions? What are the consequences of revolutions? While asking these questions, we will refer to empirical examples, but without specific case analysis.

Later during the semester, we will apply our theoretical knowledge to understanding specific revolutions.

Attendance

Attendance at all class meetings is required. I anticipate lively and informed class discussions, with all course participants sharing thoughts. Students are allowed two unexcused absences during the semester.

Course Evaluation

The course grade shall be determined on the basis of the following graded components:

2 Short papers (40% each)

Participation (20%)

Books and Materials (provided to students):

- 1) Fairbank, John King (1986) *The Great Chinese Revolution (1800-1989)*
- 2) Fitzpatrick, Sheila (1994) *The Russian Revolution*
- 3) Goldstone, Jack A. (2003) *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*
- 4) Goodwin, Jeff (2001) *No Other Way Out: State and Revolutionary Movements (1945-1991)*
- 5) Lefebvre, Georges (1947) *The Coming of the French Revolution.*

All readings are mandatory. Since this is an upper level class, you are expected to master the readings and be able to refer to them in your exams. The reading load is not excessive, but as a preparation to further studies, it is close to graduate level standards and you should see this as an opportunity and not as a deterrent. The reading load should allow you to go beyond standard undergraduate textbook materials by providing you the time to get a good look at scholarly material some of you might expect later.

Topical Course Outline

Theme I: Theories on Revolutions

Introduction (no reading assigned)

Presentation of the comparative study of revolutions

Approaches to the study of revolutions

The origins and outcomes of Revolutions

Republican Revolutions

Marxist Revolutions

Revolutions against Dictatorships

Theme II: The Mother of all Revolutions: France 1789-1815

Sources of the French Revolution

The Consequences of the French Revolution

Theme III: The Socialist Revolution: Russia 1905-1929

Origins of the Russian Revolution

The aftermaths of the October Revolution

Theme IV: The Peasant Revolution: China 1912-1966

The first Chinese Republic

The Consolidation of the Communist Revolution

Theme V: The Theocratic Revolution: Iran 1979- today

The rejection of Dictatorship and Imperialism

Theme VI: “Colored revolutions”

Contemporary problems in the study of revolutions

The information contained in the course syllabus may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.