Civil Resistance and the Everyday

Sociology and Psychology 791R-01
UMass, Amherst, Fall Semester 2015, 09/14/2015 – 12/07/2015

Machmer Hall W-32
Mondays 6:00PM - 8:30 PM

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OVERVIEW

This course focus on what has sometimes been called ‘everyday forms of resistance’, ‘quite encroachments’ or political ‘lifestyles’ and ‘subcultures’. It applies sociological perspectives on the ‘resistance’ that is played out in the ‘everyday life’ of ‘ordinary’ people: a resistance that might be widespread and diffused, individual or small scale, implicitly political, disguised or even hidden. It brings to light how the ‘private’ or ‘personal’ can be political, and explores the creativity of ‘cultural resistance’. A special attention is turned towards the ‘intersectionality’ of both domination and resistance in the everyday life, and therefore the problematics of how resistance does not only liberate, but also recreate domination.

This kind of activity has often been made invisible by a mainstream understanding of what constitutes (real) ‘politics’, or has made itself disguised in order to provide space
for autonomous development and avoid screening and repression. Therefore this kind of political engagement is sometimes called ‘infrapolitics’. As such, the politics of the everyday constitute a special challenge for research, both in terms of access, and in terms of ethics. How do we study and publish the disguised or hidden without making it more vulnerable to domination and control? Is it possible to contribute to the empowerment of subjugated groups and activities through carefully crafted research processes?

The politics/resistance of the everyday is important to understand for many reasons. As part of the mundane routine life it constitutes the very arena in which subjectivity is formed, where dominant discourses are played out. Also, since we all, without exception, are participants in the everyday life, we are affected by, and do affect politics, in some way and to some degree. Furthermore, as a neglected area for research (except within gender and queer studies, ethnography, subaltern studies, etc.), much is still needed to explore. Also, as will be argued during the course, it is very likely to be a key social phenomenon to understand if we ever want to explain why sometimes large mass mobilizations happen, and sometimes not.

By the end of the course you should, based on your learning from the literature and class discussions:

- show ability to read a larger text material and extract the main points claimed by different authors.
- recognize key features of everyday forms of resistance/politics when you encounter it in various discourses or in your own life.
- understand the differences between key concepts such as hidden transcripts, public forms of resistance, everyday forms of resistance, quite encroachments.
- be familiar with several different theoretical frameworks that try to explain the everyday forms of politics/resistance.
- be able to apply at least one theoretical framework on a case of everyday resistance/politics.
- understand how it is possible to argue that this kind of activity constitute ‘politics’.
- recognize ethical and methodological questions to ask to research focused on everyday forms of politics/resistance.
- show ability to critically analyze and problematize a case involving everyday forms of resistance/politics (including critically show risks of recreation of power relations through resistance).

REQUIREMENTS

Participation in class discussions: This course is organized with a combination of different class meetings (lectures, text seminars, and paper seminars). During text seminars we discuss some key texts together, and during lectures and other types of seminars you will be given supplementary perspectives on the course theme. Therefore you must complete the required readings of some specified texts before the class meeting for which they are assigned (see schedule below), and it is expected that you actively participate in the discussion of the readings during seminar sessions. In addition to demonstrating an understanding of the main arguments and themes of the
readings, you are encouraged to think critically about the readings (i.e. identify strengths and weaknesses), compare and contrast them to other readings or literatures, and make connections to ongoing social processes and current events.

**Text seminar rapporteurs (oral and written):** For each of the seminars for which we have required readings, one or more students will be designated as rapporteurs, who are responsible for presenting to the class a concise summary of the main points and arguments of the readings (time limit: 20 minutes). This report also has to be written and copied to everyone in the class as a handout. It can be made in form of definitions of key concepts, quotes of main theses and bullet-points, but need page numbers for all main statements.

**Text seminar questions:** Each student will have to team up with another student and together hand in a paper with two questions to the seminar (i.e. 2 questions per pair of students). Based on the reading of the required reading for the seminar your question has to be well informed, and one that is *a problematizing* one. (It is not accepted to hand in a question that can be answered with a simple yes or no, or where the answer is to find on a certain page.) Make copies of your paper with questions to yourself and your student team member, as well as one copy to the professor to hand in before the meeting starts (i.e. three copies in total).

**Story Sharing** (optional choice): Accessing everyday forms of resistance or the politics of the ordinary is not easy. There are few good sources for this. Per definition we do not find it ‘news worthy’, as it looks like mundane life, as ‘non-events’. But we have all encountered such ‘small acts’ of bravery or dignity in our lives; conducted by ourselves or people we met. So, this class activity involves the opportunity for those that want the sharing of a short story from your own experience, something you encountered, observed or learnt of. We take turns and share a story of maximum 5 minutes, to make the class learn about the variations this kind of politics might articulate. At each occasion it is the storyteller that decides what deserves to be called ‘everyday resistance/politics’ (even if an informative discussion on the concept might follow an interesting story). There is no space for critical discussion since it is a sharing of experiences.

**Text readings** (of course literature): This course applies some more texts to read than normal, since one of the course aims is to learn to read extensive: to learn and understand the main concepts, models, claims and theoretical frameworks – without reading everything equally careful. The emphasis is not on remembering details in a smaller collection of texts, rather on your ability to compare, criticize, problematize and discuss differences within the literature, and to form your own positions in relation to that literature. To secure that kind of learning we apply the learning form of seminars with discussions, and lectures that bring in perspectives that supplement the readings.

**Discussion/reading groups** (optional choice): In order to facilitate both the reading before the class, and discussions during meetings you will have the option to join a discussion/reading group. It is a general recommendation to meet before and/or after class and read together, since it facilitates self-discipline and collaboration, but that is fully optional. Those that join a group are responsible to form their own meeting schedule and inform all students in the group about activities.
**Review essay:** Each student is required to choose one recent scholarly book (published the last three years) that falls within the substantive domain of this course, such as an everyday form of resistance, a political lifestyle/subculture, or a relevant theoretical issue, and to make a review essay of the book. The book needs approval from the professor before you start to write. Since each student need to choose a book someone else has not yet chosen, it is good to be quick in reporting which book you choose. This essay should consist of 3 double spaced pages, and the text shall be evenly distributed with 1/3 of the text (1 page) per section: (1) Summary of the main content and points of the chosen book, (2) Analytical comparison with the mandatory literature at this course, and (3) Your critical reflection of the strengths and weakness of the chosen book. The review is due on **Oct 26**.

**Course Paper and presentation, and peer-review:** A paper is required on a topic of your choice that falls within the substantive domain of this course. The aim is to make something that could be submitted to a journal article (it does not have to be submitted, but it is recommended. If you do not submit let the professor know, and you will be informed about other options, as for example Working Papers, or blog postings). You have the opportunity to get direct feedback on your choice if you have one idea to present on the class **Sep 29** (see schedule). You must get approval from the professor of your topic before starting to write. To get an approval you need to send an email with the title and an abstract of the content to your professor. After getting approval, submit a 2-page paper that describes your topic (similar to an abstract) and includes a preliminary bibliography with at least 10 scholarly sources. It is also part of the assignment to search, find and name a possible academic journal that tentatively could be interested in your paper. This is due at the beginning of class on **Oct 13**. Include your email on this submission, and you will get written feedback from the professor.

The draft version of the paper is due at the beginning of class on **Nov 16**. The paper should be double spaced, with between 7 000 and 8 000 words in total, including references (which is a common limit for journals), with a consistent style of specific referencing to the literature (preferably you use the style of the journal you have in mind). Remember to discuss and refer to the course literature when relevant. It is absolutely necessary to follow conventional principles of academic honesty and not use any concepts or text (even shorter sections) from other sources without referring to the source. Failure to follow this basic principle of academic honesty might have severe consequences (see specifications below). Presentations will be scheduled for some of the last classes (more information later). The presentations should be no more than 15 minutes in length.

All students are expected to read all papers before the seminars, and have comments to share.

Finally, the papers will go through a peer-review process in which each student will comment on one paper written by someone else. The written peer-review, which will be copied and given to the author, shall follow either the format of the journal in question, or a standard format of some journal you know of (including recommendation for publishing or not, and detailed comments for editing). The peer-reviewing student will also give a 5-10 minutes oral review with the main points during the seminar. More details will be provided in a separate handout.
Always remember to identify yourself: Remember to state your full name and class when you communicate with the professor via email, handing in papers or in any other way hand in material for the grading of the course. The only exception is the written evaluations that are done anonymously.

Grading:
- Participation in class discussions: 15 %
- Text Seminar rapporteur: 15 %
- Text Seminar questions: 15 %
- Review essay: 15 %
- Paper, presentation and peer-review of other paper: 40 %

Higher grading of your performance demands an ability to show – both verbally and in written format – a critical understanding and application of the core ideas formulated in the course literature and the key themes of the course. What that means will be explained with illustrating examples during class.

Accommodation Statement
The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements.

Academic Honesty Statement
Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent (http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/).

REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS
Required extensive readings: books

**Book Seminar 1:**

**Book Seminar 2:**

**Book Seminar 2:**

Required extensive readings: articles

**Article Seminar 1: Fundamental theoretical perspectives**

**Article Seminar 2: Empirical cases**


**Article Seminar 3: Critique and other perspectives**


**NOT REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS**

**Relevant extra readings**

These texts are not part of the required course-literature but they are useful suggestions for your own choice of literature. When you chose your own literature you need to choose a minimum of scholarly texts, but you are encouraged to also, in addition, choose other literature. That could be more “popular” literature as novels, poetry, or “activist” literature, as activist biographies, collections of stories from movements, etc.

Classical examples of activist literature:


Here are some suggestions of relevant scholarly literature:


• Stevpheen Shukaitis (2012) Below the Perceptible, the Political?, Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society, 24:3, 424-427


• Jo Freeman’s The Politics of Women’s Liberation (1975)
• The Rebellious Century (1975) by Charles, Louise, and Richard Tilly;
• The Strategy of Social Protest (1975) by William Gamson; Jeffery Paige's Agrarian Revolution (1975);
• Michael Schwartz’s Radical Protest and Social Structure (1988 [1976]);
• Poor People's Movements (1977) by Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward;
• Charles Tilly's From Mobilization to Revolution (1978);
• Theda Skocpol’s States and Social Revolutions (1979);
• The Whole World Is Watching (2003 [1980]) by Todd Gitlin;
• John Gaventa’s Power and Powerlessness (1980);
• Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency (1999 [1982]) by Doug McAdam;
• Hardiman, David (2003) Gandhi in his time and ours, Delhi: Permanent Black.

Some recommended outlets to get inspiration for storytelling:
http://www.palestine-family.net/index.php
http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1609-1865/essays/slavenarrative.htm
http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/10-everyday-acts-of-resistance-that-changed-the-world
http://www.everydayrebellion.net/related/
SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

More details on class meetings will be provided during the course.

This schedule may be modified. If so, changes will be announced in class.

You are encouraged to join/form discussion/study group and create your schedule of meetings in relation to the class meetings. This will facilitate your studies of the texts.

The meetings are always on Mondays in Thompson Hall Machmer Hall W-32 between 6:00PM - 8:30 PM (if not otherwise announced during class and mail).

Monday September 14: Course introduction: Syllabus and intro of the theme of 'Resistance'

Lectures

September 21: ‘Everyday forms of resistance’ and Scott,
September 28: African and Afro-American resistance cultures (Guest lecture by Matt Meyer, educator-activist-author from New York)
September 29: ‘Constructive resistance’, ‘culture’ and politics as a ‘way of life’, (Time for collection of ideas for Course Paper)

Text seminars on mandatory literature (see literature lists above):
(Note: Seminar questions must be handed in at the start of each seminar, see above)
Text seminar rapporteurs present (20 min.) and then we discuss the rest of the time.
October 13: Book Seminar 1: Scott. (Time to hand in the 2-page summary of your planned course Paper)
October 19: Articles Seminar 1
October 26: Book Seminar 2: Bayat. And, Midterm evaluation (Time to hand in the Review essay)
The course so far is evaluated. What have been good, and what could be improved?
November 2: Articles Seminar 2
November 9: Book Seminar 3: Portwood-Stacer and Katsiaficas
November 16: Articles Seminar 3 (The draft version of the course Paper is due).

Draft Paper seminars: November 23 and 30 (Note: there might be extra seminar dates depending on the number of students that will present their draft papers)
The seminars discuss the draft versions of individual students’ course papers. All students are supposed to read all papers and have comments to give during the discussion time. Every student will also be responsible to comment in detail both written and orally on one other paper each. Strictly a maximum of 30 minutes will be used per paper: 5 min presentation by the author, 10 peer-review by a student, and 15 discussions with comments from all students, and finally the professor. Depending on the number of students the allocation of time per paper might change. The seminars of draft papers happen before the examination by the professor, since the idea is that the seminar comments will facilitate the development of a paper with better quality. More information will be provided during class meetings.
December 7: Summary discussion seminar: What have we learnt?, and Course evaluation (The final version of the course Paper is due)
We sum up together what we have learnt about everyday forms of resistance/politics, and what kind of research questions that is outstanding. And, the theme of the course is evaluated in an end-of-semester teaching evaluation, both in terms of its content and course form, as well as other practical issues (examinations, information, administration, student service, etc.). During this last seminar we bring snacks and something to drink in order to celebrate the work done.
Civil resistance and the everyday, graduate course 2014-. Civil resistance and social change, undergraduate course. At University of Gothenburg: Tutor - of B.A. & Masters thesis work in Peace and Development Studies, and Global Studies, University of Gothenburg. 2000-. Senior Lecturer (Högskolelektor) in Peace and Development Studies, at SGS.