

## **Resistance: Disobedience, Violence, Exit**

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Spring 2022, Political Science, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

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### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

The idea that citizens are obliged to obey the laws under which they live is an old one, but it is not clear on what basis this obligation rests. Indeed, examining the history of democracy seems to reveal that illegal, disruptive, and sometimes violent movements have played a significant role in contesting injustice, confronting inequality, and democratizing institutions. Yet, history also reveals to us how the upheaval of collective resistance can sometimes give way to authoritarian developments, white supremacy and populist resentment. This seminar examines different forms of resistance, from civil and uncivil disobedience to violent dissent, the politics of non-violence and practices of refusal and exit. Are citizens morally obligated to obey unjust laws? What are the possibilities of political resistance? How do acts of protest influence public opinion and policy? And what are the conditions of success and failure? This course engages with these questions conceptually from an interdisciplinary perspective that includes political science, social thought, anthropology, and literature.

### **Course Objectives:**

The first goal of the course is to teach students to be comfortable reading, interpreting and discussing texts in political and social thought. The second goal is to evaluate and become familiar with the central questions of the course. Through weekly writing assignments and active participation, students should (a) possess a comprehensive grasp of the debate of the course, (b) be able to critically evaluate arguments and methods in relevant texts, (c) construct persuasive interpretations of materials discussed, (d) and be able to produce original writing on central questions of the course.

### **Requirements and Evaluation:**

**A) Participation (20%):** Regular attendance, preparation, and participation in seminar discussion, which includes the paper feedback in the final session (see below). In addition, each student is responsible for starting the conversation in class once this semester. *To prepare:* During your week as Conversation Starter, take a little extra time while you are reading and prepare a one-page handout with quotations, ideas, and reflections that you like

to discuss in class. *In class:* As a Conversation Starter, you will use this preparatory work to open the class conversation by talking through your ideas in a 5-10 minute presentation. Your handouts are due by midnight the night before your assigned date.

**Attendance:** While one absence from class is understandable, more absences than that will affect your ability to learn as much as you can from the course and from your classmates. If illness or problems with your health hinder your ability to attend class, please contact me directly. If you need to arrive late or leave early, please let me know in advance.

**B) Response Papers (20%):** Starting during Week Two, each student is responsible for contributing short weekly reading reflections on the assigned reading material for 5 of the 13 weeks (you may pick which weeks you skip; first and last weeks are excluded). Reflections should be between 2-3 paragraphs (350-500 words) in length. Please do not summarize the reading but record your own thoughts evoked by the reading. You might want to highlight certain arguments of the text and offer your reflections about them or analyze one specific point in a critical manner. You can also relate the reading to earlier or other texts that help you contextualize this week's discussion. In any case, be sure to ground your reflection by citing page numbers and passages rather than simply outlining broad contours of the reading. Reading responses must be emailed to me ([carmend@vanleer.org.il](mailto:carmend@vanleer.org.il)) by **12.00pm on Sundays** before all seminar meetings.

**C) Two essays (20% and 40%):**

- 1) Students write a short article (600-1000 words) on a social movement or actions of resistance. It should be in the style of an op-ed or a blog post, intended for a public audience, and describe the movement's background, claims, tactics, and general perception. The first essay is due after Pesach, on **Sunday, April 24**.
- 2) The second essay (2500-4000 words) will be on a topic related to the course. There will be a paper presentation in the final session and students will comment on each other's research paper ideas. You should present your central claim or question, its motivation, and how you plan to go about developing it into a paper (also known as the *what*, the *why*, and the *how* of your research paper). The final draft of the paper is due two weeks after the last class on **Monday, July 4**.

As with any seminar, much of the work of this class will take place in our discussions of the material. Everyone has a place in this classroom, and everyone has something valuable and unique to contribute. It is up to all of us, as a group, to cultivate the kind of safety and trust within the classroom that open intellectual inquiry requires. With acknowledgment of the fact that all of us come to this material with different experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds, it is expected that you bring to class a willingness to engage with the material and one another with respect, integrity, sincerity, and generosity.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### ***Week 1 (March 7): Introduction – Dissent in the News***

Select and read 5 news articles posted on Moodle: Prepare lists of the nouns and verbs used to describe and denominate the resistance (e.g., march, riot, protest, hack, terrorism, occupation, rally, petition, insurrection, campaign, etc.), as well as notable descriptors (e.g., violent, nonviolent, spontaneous, festival-like, shocking, etc.). Indicate the source of each denomination and descriptor, who used that word or phrase (e.g., the author, those in protest, counter-protesters, commentators, or those quoted). Print your notes & bring them with you to the first day of class.

### ***What Is Civil Disobedience?***

### ***Week 2 (March 14): Civil Disobedience as Conscientious Objection***

- Henry David Thoreau, “On Civil Disobedience”
- Hannah Arendt, “Civil Disobedience”

*Secondary Reading: Michael Walzer, “Conscientious Objection”*

### ***Week 3 (March 21): Civil Disobedience as Fidelity to Law***

- John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (selections)
- Erin Pineda, *Seeing Like an Activist* (selections)

*Secondary Reading: Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”*

*Other Sources: Documentary “13<sup>th</sup>”; Erin Pineda with Robin Celikates on “Seeing Like an Activist.”*

### ***Week 4 (March 28): Civil Disobedience as Disruption and Direct Action***

- William Smith, “Disruptive Democracy: The Ethics of Direct Action”
- Andreas Malm, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* (selections)

*Secondary Reading: Clarissa Hayward, “What Is Disruption Good For?”; Guy Aitchison, “Domination and Disobedience: Protest, Coercion, and the Limits of an Appeal to Justice”*

### ***Week 5 (April 4): The “New” Civil Disobedience Debates***

- William Scheuerman, “Recent Theories of Civil Disobedience: An Anti-Legal Turn?”
- Robin Celikates, “Democratizing Civil Disobedience”

*Secondary Reading: William Scheuerman, “Political Disobedience and the Climate Emergency”*

## **Beyond Civility: Incivility, Riot, Armed Struggle**

### ***Week 6 (April 11): Uncivil Disobedience***

- Candice Delmas, *A Duty to Resist: When Disobedience Should be Uncivil*
- Cristina Beltrán, “Undocumented, Unafraid, and Unapologetic: Dream Activists, Immigrant Politics, and the Queering of Democracy”

### ***Week 7 (April 25): Anger, Rage, and Resentment***

- Amia Srinivasan, “The Aptness of Anger”
  - Agnes Callard, “Why Am I Being Hurt?”
- Secondary Reading: Audre Lorde, “The Uses of Anger”*

### ***Week 8 (May 2): Violence & the Politics of Human Weapons***

- Banu Bargu, “The Silent Exception: Hunger Striking and Lip-Sewing”
- Secondary Reading: Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (selections)*

## **The Power of Nonviolence**

### ***Week 9 (May 9): Gandhi’s Nonviolent Struggle***

- M.K. Gandhi, “The Theory and Practice of Passive Resistance
- M.K. Gandhi, “The Secret of Satyagraha in South Africa
- M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (selections)

*Secondary Reading: Karuna Mantena, “Another Realism: The Politics of Gandhian Non-Violence.”*  
*Other Sources: Uprising 5/13 at Columbia University: “Satyagraha: A Conversation with Karuna Mantena, Uday Metha, Banu Bargu, and Bernard Harcourt.”*

### ***Week 10 (May 23): Rethinking Nonviolence***

- Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (selections)
- Judith Butler, *The Force of Nonviolence* (selections)

*Secondary Reading: Faisal Devji, “The Return of Nonviolence”*

## **Beyond Mobilization: Exit, Refusal and Silence**

### ***Week 11 (May 30): Refusal***

- Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (selections)

*Secondary Reading: Glen Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Grounded Normativity/Place-Based Solidarity"*

***Week 13 (June 6): Steadfastness***

- Lena Meari, "*Sumud: A Palestinian Philosophy of Confrontation in Colonial Prisons*"

*Secondary Reading: Adel Mann, "Resistance and Survival in Central Galilee, July 1948 – July 1951"*

***Week 14 (June 13): Silence***

- Kevin Quashie, *The Sovereignty of Quiet: Beyond Resistance in Black Culture* (selections)

*Secondary Reading: James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time*

***Wrapping Up***

***Week 15 (June 20): Reflections & Research Paper Presentations***

Research paper presentations in class. Research papers are due on **Monday, July 4.**