



## The Politics of Revolution

Stern College, Spring 2017

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Office hours: By Appointment

### Course Description:

Revolutions have wrought dramatic changes across the world from American independence from Britain to the rise of a theocracy in Iran. In addition to transforming social orders, these revolutions, and others over the last two centuries, have led to the death or injury of millions of people. To understand such crucial transformative phenomena, this course is organized around a set of critical questions: What causes revolution? Why do some succeed while others fail? What political, social, economic, and religious factors are most relevant in determining whether a country is headed for revolution? How important is statesmanship? Why do revolutions and war usually go together? What is the role of ideas and ideology? In considering these questions, this course aims to help students think about revolutions and other contentious political situations. Cases to be studied include the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Canadian Rebellion of 1837, the Russian Revolution, and the Iranian Revolution.

### Course Objectives:

This course should introduce students to the ways political thinkers and social scientists have understood revolutions. In doing so, it will help familiarize students with some major methodological approaches to the study of political phenomena, including rational choice, political economic analysis, and the question of ideology and ideas. It should also foster greater familiarity and understanding of the causes and political features of the major revolutions in modern times. With a heavy focus on writing, the course aims to strengthen students' writing, reasoning, and rhetorical skills.

### Disabilities:

Students with disabilities enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations should make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, (646) 592-4132, [rkohn1@yu.edu](mailto:rkohn1@yu.edu), during the first week of class. Once you have been approved for accommodations, please submit your accommodation letter to ensure the successful implementation of those accommodations.

**Requirements:**

Six 2 page response papers to weekly readings, presentation, attendance/participation: 40%

8-10 Page Term Paper: 30%

Take Home Final Exam: 30%

**Course Readings:**

Edmund Burke: *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Excerpt)

William Doyle: *The French Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*

Lord Durham: *Report on British North America* (Excerpt)

Ted Gurr: *Why Men Rebel* (Excerpt)

Allan Greer: *The Patriots and the People* (Excerpt)

Harry V. Jaffa: "Dred Scott Revisited"

William Kornhauser: "Revolutions"

Timur Kuran: "The Element of Surprise," "Sparks and Prairie Fires"

John Locke: *Two Treatises of Government*

Rosa Luxembourgh: *The Russian Revolution*

Karl Marx: "The Eighteen Brumaire of Louis-Napoleon," "The British Rule in India"

Barrington Moore: *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Excerpt)

Roy Mottahedeh: *The Mantle of the Prophet* [on Iran] (Excerpt)

Theda Skocpol: *States and Social Revolutions* (Excerpt)

Steve Smith: *The Russian Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*

Alexis de Tocqueville: *Democracy in America, The Old Regime and the Revolution* (Excerpt)

Gordon Wood: *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Excerpt)

Further Articles to be distributed

**Class Schedule:**

Week 1 (Jan. 24 & 26): **Introduction. Revolutions and Comparative Politics**

Readings: John Locke *Two Treatises of Government* Excerpts

Week 2 (Jan. 31 & Feb. 2): **General Theories of Revolution I**

Readings: Ted Gurr *Why Men Rebel*, Timur Kuran: "The Element of Surprise," "Sparks and Prairie Fires"

Week 3 (Feb. 7 & 9): **Social and Economic Theories of Revolution**

Readings: Barrington Moore: *Social Origins*, Theda Skocpol: *States and Social Revolutions*

Week 4 (April 4 & 6): **Marxist View of Revolution**

Readings: Karl Marx: "The 18<sup>th</sup> Brumaire of Louis-Napoleon," "The British Rule in India," Rosa Luxembourgh: *The Russian Revolution*

Week 5 (Feb. 14 & 16): **The French Revolution**



Readings: William Doyle: *A Short History*, Select primary texts

Week 6 (21 & 23): **Theorizing the French Revolution I**

Readings: Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and The Old Regime* Excerpts

Week 7 (28 & March 2): **Theorizing the French Revolution II**

Readings: Edmund Burke: *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Excerpts)

Week 8 (March 7, **No Class March 9, Ta'anit Esther**): **The American Revolution and the Role of Ideas**

Readings: Gordon Wood: *Ideological Origins*, Harry Jaffa: *Dred Scott Revisited*

Week 9 (March 14 & 16): **Canada's Failed Rebellion**

Readings: Allan Greer: *Patriots and People*, Lord Durham: *Report on British North America*

Week 10 (March 21, March 23): **The Russian Revolution**

Readings: Steve Smith: *The Russian Revolution*

Week 11 (March 28, **No class March 30**): **The Russian Revolution II**

Readings: Steven Smith: *The Russian Revolution*

Week 12 (April 20): **Iranian Revolution**

Readings: Roy Mottahedeh: *Mantle of the Prophet*

Week 13 (April 25 and 27): **Iranian Revolution II**

Readings: Roy Mottahedeh: *Mantle of the Prophet*

Week 14 (May 4): **Conclusion: The Causes of Revolutions**

Readings: William Kornhauser: "Revolutions," Alexis de Tocqueville: *The Old Regime* (Excerpts)  
(May 9): Review