

Contentious Politics: The Arab Uprisings of 2011-2012

CPO 4000
MWF 4th period
FAB 105

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The purpose of this class is to examine how well existing theories of contentious politics explain the events and non-events of the ongoing revolutions that began in December of 2010 in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). We will examine questions such as: Why did revolutions happen in some countries and not in others? Why were some protest movements met with violence while others were not? Why did some protest movements result in regime changes while others had more limited results?

A secondary purpose of this course is to develop a critical spirit in the consumption of news. Newspapers, TV stations, blogs and websites are not providing sterile, unmediated facts about the world around you. Individuals in the news business, like all individuals, are driven by a number of motives such as profit and prestige as well as various ideals. In an effort to provide students with the tools necessary to continue developing an understanding of political events long after this class has concluded, one of the major assignments for this course is a group project evaluating a Western media outlet's coverage of the events of the Arab Spring.

The course will be divided into four units. During the first phase of the course, we will evaluate how the Western media and Hollywood have portrayed Arabs. Such a foundation is necessary for this course since it is focused on events happening in real time, and it is essential to be aware of biases in the reporting of news related to the MENA. In the second unit, we will examine theories of contention from the literature of Comparative Politics focusing on the work of Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow. During the third phase of the course, we will examine the events of the Arab Spring and assess how well the theories of comparative politics studied during the second phase of the course explain these events. The final unit is dedicated to group presentations evaluating different Western media outlets' coverage of the Arab Uprisings.

Throughout the course, each student will be asked to develop a country expertise. Students are strongly encouraged to select a country with which they are not familiar. Over the course of the semester students will develop an in-depth understanding of the events of the Arab spring that happened in their country and will be expected to assess how well existing theories of comparative politics explain (or fail to explain) their country's experience in the final writing assignment for the course.

Course Requirements:

Successful completion of this course requires attendance at lectures, active participation in course discussions, completion of all reading assignments in a thoughtful and thorough manner, participation in a group project evaluating one Western news source's coverage of the Arab Uprisings, a final paper and a final exam.

Attendance Policy/Participation Grade:

Students are expected to attend all class sessions and participate actively in discussions in order to gain full participation credit. The professor will provide guidance on what types of comments in class discussions are acceptable and beneficial for fulfillment of the participation grade. Three unexcused absences are allowed before the student's grade is impacted.

Reading Assignments:

Students are expected to complete ALL reading assignments. Student progress toward this goal will be evaluated through class discussions as well as the final paper assignment. It is expected that students already possess the ability to read and understand scholarly-level publications. Those who are new to reading scholarly writing should consult with the instructor for further resources.

Required Text:

Tilly, Charles, and Sidney Tarrow. 2006. *Contentious Politics*. Paradigm Publishers.

Any edition is acceptable. Other required readings will be available on e-reserves.

Office Hours:

All students are required to visit professor office hours by the end of week four for a 15 minute consultation on the course.

Grade Breakdown:

20% Participation
5% Office Hours
20% Group Project
30% Final Paper
25% Final Exam

Grading Scale

94-100 A
90-93 A-
87-89 B+
84-86 B
80-83 B-
77-79 C+
74-76 C
70-73 C-
67-69 D+
64-66 D
65 E

Major Assignments

Group work:

Evaluate coverage of the Arab Uprisings by one Western media outlet.

Select one of the following news sources:

- CNN
- FOX
- NPR
- Huffington Post
- BBC
- ABC News
- Yahoo News
- MSNBC
- The New York Times
- Washington Post
- USA Today
- The Independent Florida Alligator and the Gainesville Sun

Suggested procedure:

1. Assign each group member a particular time period. As there are six members of every group, consider the following breakdown:
 - Member 1: December- January 2010
 - Member 2: February- March 2011
 - Member 3: April to August 2011
 - Member 4: Fall 2011
 - Member 5: Spring 2012
 - Member 6: Summer 2012
2. Each member should identify the ten most significant articles during their time period related to the uprisings.

3. Critically evaluate your articles. What events receive the most attention? Which countries? What arguments do the articles make? What is given more attention by your source, the human impact, political impact or economic impact? How much is the reporting influenced by American interests in the region? What is the relationship between the reporting and American national security concerns? What evidence is presented to readers? What pictures are used?
4. Look for examples of orientalism, “inventing the savage” or references to the Islam and compatibility debate in coverage.
5. As a group, prepare a 40-minute presentation discussing your findings and identifying general conclusions about your news source.
 - During the presentation, each group member must speak for at least 5 minutes.
 - Also consider showing clips or citing articles that are examples of your critiques.
 - The highest grades will go to presentations that are well-planned and well-organized and accompanied by visual aids such as power point presentations, video clips or images.

Individual Research Paper

1. Evaluate how well the theories of contentious politics from the Tilly and Tarrow text explain the events of the Arab spring in one country from the Middle East and North Africa. You may pick a country that had major protest movements such as Tunisia or Egypt, one in which protests were stifled, such as Bahrain, or one in which protests were small, co-opted, or seemingly insignificant such as Morocco.
2. Your paper should be 10 pages long (not including the bibliography), in 11 or 12 point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with page numbers.
3. Grammar, punctuation and spelling must be excellent. Read your papers outloud and take them to the writing center before turning them in.
4. A 2-page paper proposal is due Friday, September 14th. In this proposal identify your country of interest, briefly summarize its experience over the last two years, identify which theories from the required text you will evaluate and provide a bibliography with at least three peer-reviewed journal articles, three books and ten newspaper articles about your country of interest. Include your hypotheses about how well you think current theories of comparative politics will explain your case.
5. The final paper is due Wednesday, November 7th.

Final Exam

All material from course lectures, reading and group presentations is fair game for the final exam. Take notes in class and form study groups to process material along the way rather than waiting until the last week to study. The final exam is on Tuesday, December 11th from 7:30am to 9:30am

Extra Credit

Several opportunities for extra credit will be offered throughout the semester. Students are highly encouraged to take advantage of such opportunities, particularly if participation is a challenge.

Reading Schedule:

All HMWK is due the following class unless otherwise indicated

Unit One: The Depiction of Arabs by the Western Media

Week One (Week of August 22nd)

Wednesday: Syllabus, Introductions

- HMWK: Davis, Muriam Haleh. 20 March 2012. The Invention of the Savage: Colonial Exhibitions and the Staging of the Arab Spring. Available online at: http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/4744/the-invention-of-the-savage_colonial-exhibitions-a

Friday (no office hours today)

- In Class lecture: Human Zoos and the Invention of the Savage
- HMWK: Orientalism (Available on e-reserves; due Wednesday, August 29th)

Week Two (Week of August 27th)

Monday:

- NO CLASS
- You are expected to meet with your group for 55 minutes to discuss your project. You are expected to decide what each person's role is, what your individual group deadlines will be, when you will meet to discuss group progress, how you will make sure each person contributes equally, how you will communicate.
- HMWK: to prove to me that your group met, please send me minutes from the group meeting and a picture of your group meeting by Tuesday, August 28th at 11:59pm.

Wednesday

- In class: discuss Said reading
- Break into groups and write an annotation for Said

Friday

- In class film: Reel Bad Arabs
- HMWK: Said, Edward *Covering Islam* (Available on e-reserves)

Week Three (Week of September 3rd)

Monday: NO CLASS (Labor Day)

Wednesday

- In class: discuss reading assignment

Friday

- In class: Said documentary
- HMWK: Tilly and Tarrow, Preface and Ch. 1

Unit Two: Contentious Politics

Week Four (Week of September 10th)

Monday: Making Claims

- HMWK: Tilly and Tarrow, Ch. 2

Wednesday: How to Analyze Contention

- HMWK: Tilly and Tarrow, Ch. 3

Friday: Regimes, Repertoires, and Opportunities

- HMWK: Tilly and Tarrow, Ch. 4
- **2 page paper proposal due**

Week Five (Week of September 17th)

Monday: Contentious Interaction

- HMWK: Tilly and Tarrow, Ch. 5

Wednesday: Mobilization and Demobilization

- HMWK: Tilly and Tarrow, Ch. 6

Friday: Social Movements

- HMWK: Tilly and Tarrow, Ch. 7

Week Six (Week of September 24th)

Monday: Lethal Conflicts

- HMWK: Tilly and Tarrow, Ch. 8

Wednesday: Contention in Composite Regimes

- HMWK: Tilly and Tarrow, Ch. 9

Friday: Contention Today and Tomorrow

- HMWK: IJMES February 2012 special issue comparing Iranian rev with Arab revolutions

Unit Three: Background and the Arab Spring

Week Seven (Week of October 1st)

Monday: The Iranian Revolution and the Green Movement

- HMWK: The Arab Spring: The End of Postcoloniality, *Introduction* (Available through UF library as an ebook)

Wednesday:

- In class: discuss reading
- HMWK: Bernard Lewis, The Roots of Muslim Rage, *The Atlantic* (available on the Atlantic webpage)

Friday: Islam and Democracy Compatibility Debate

Week Eight (Week of October 8th)

Monday: Introduction

Wednesday: Tunisia

- In class film: The Death of Fear (48 minutes)

Friday: Egypt, part I

- In class film: The End of a Dictator (48 minutes)

Week Nine (Week of October 15th)

Monday: Egypt, part II

- In class film: The fall of Mubarak (23 minutes)
- HMWK: John Wright, *A History of Libya*, Ch. 18

Wednesday: Libya, part I

- In class: discuss reading
- HMWK: Excerpts from Tripoli Witness, see: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14686402>

Friday: Libya, part II

- In class film: Libya: Through the Fire (48 minutes)
- HMWK: Excerpts from Wedeen 1999

Week Ten (Week of October 22nd)

Monday, Syria

- HMWK: Excerpts from Wedeen 2008

Wednesday, Yemen

- HMWK: POMEPS Bahrain briefing

Friday, Bahrain

- In class film: Bahrain burning

Unit Four: Presentations

Week Eleven (Week of October 29th)

Monday: Group 1

Wednesday: Group 2

Friday: Group 3

Week Twelve (Week of November 5th)

Monday: Group 4

Wednesday: Group 5 (**FINAL PAPERS DUE**)

Friday: NO CLASS (Homecoming)

Week Thirteen (Week of November 12th)

Monday: NO CLASS (Veteran's Day)

Wednesday: Group 6

Friday: Group 7

Week Fourteen (Week of November 19th)

Monday: NO CLASS (MESA)

Wednesday: Thanksgiving

Friday: Thanksgiving

Week Fifteen (Week of November 26th)

Monday: Group 8

Wednesday: Evaluation of your Research Papers

- Research papers handed back
- My thoughts on your papers
- In class: Discussing the findings of research papers
- HMWK: The Arab Spring: The End of Postcoloniality, Ch. 1

Friday: NO CLASS (ASA)

Week Sixteen (Week of December 3rd)

Monday: Final exam review session

Wednesday: What I tried to accomplish