

POGO 750-DL3

Revolutions and Social Protest

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Fall 2025 Thursdays 4:30-7:10 pm ON-LINE SYNCHRONOUS COURSE (Zoom via Canvas)

Office Hours: by request by skype, phone or zoom

Course Description/Overview:

For the last two hundred and 243 years, revolutions have gradually spread across the globe. However, revolutions have generally caused surprises, both regarding their occurrence and their outcomes. This has raised several puzzles – what are the basic forces that drive revolutions? What leads to democratic or other outcomes? Are some political systems more stable than others? Can revolutions be predicted? Can they be affected by international interventions?

In this course, we will explore both the dynamics of revolutions, and the policy issues surrounding regime change. We will start with the classic social revolutions of history in France, Russia, and China, then turn to recent ‘color’ revolutions, then the 2010-2011 revolutions in the Arab world. In recent years, revolutions have arisen mainly through urban street protests; the line between revolutions and social protests has thus blurred a bit, and we will study the relationship between social protests and revolutions.

Course Learning Outcomes:

On completing the course, students should be able to discuss the major revolutions in world history; the impact that such revolutions have had on international relations and the development of democracy, and be able to present the main social science explanations for the causes of revolutions and their outcomes.

Grading Schema:

Your grade will be based on in-class oral presentations, a mid-term paper, and a final term paper. The in-class assignments will be presentations based on critical reading of course assignments. For the mid-term paper, you will be asked to do a critical study of one of the required course readings. For the final term paper, you will be asked to make an argument regarding a revolutionary or protest event *of your choice*. You may argue in favor or against, or give an account of why or why not, in regard to any element of the case you choose. These assignments will be further explained and demonstrated in class.

Letter grades will be given, unless you request otherwise. The term paper will be weighted 50% of your grade; the mid-term paper 20%; and class presentations will count for 30% of your grade (expect 3 discussion assignments for each student during the semester).

Classes:

Classes will be on-line, but will be conducted as if they were in person. That is, everyone shows up and talks to everyone else. No one's video or audio should be turned off, except for short stretches – frankly, on-line classes only work if we ALL work to stay engaged. Much

of each class will be a discussion of the readings. This is a *seminar*, meaning we push each other to think harder about the issues.

Grading Policy:

All assignments are expected to be completed and turned in on time. Students may request extensions *ahead of the due date*, if they have a significant work or family conflict, medical issues, or other obligations. Please email the instructor (jgoldsto@gmu.edu) if you think you might need an extension for any reason. We can usually work out an accommodation. However, work turned in late without a valid reason or extension will be downgraded one-half letter grade for every day it is late.

Use of AI:

You may use AI programs to help you put together your presentation and/or term paper. However, beware: I can tell whether you are submitting a canned paper or not. Besides, your grade will depend on ORIGINALITY and personal expression in your paper – if your paper does not sound like you, or makes arguments that I have seen many times before, your grade will suffer accordingly. The best use of AI is to develop an outline or set of key points, but then make the argument in your own words and expressing your own convictions.

Readings:

All required texts are available on-line as inexpensive e-books from Amazon.com or the publisher. *In order to reduce the carbon footprint of this class, I strongly encourage students to do all readings on-line and acquire all materials on-line through e-journal or e-book sources.* But of course you are free to purchase hard copies if you wish, although this will generally be more expensive. Books will be available at campus bookstores.

Beissinger, Mark. *The Revolutionary City* (Princeton U. Press)
 Chenoweth, Erica and Maria Stephan. *Why Civil Resistance Works*. (Columbia U. Press)
 Cook, Steven. *False Dawn: Protest, Democracy and Violence in the New Middle East* (Oxford U. Press)
 Goldstone, Jack A. *Revolutions: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford U. Press)
 Lawson, George. *Anatomies of Revolution* (Cambridge U. Press)
 Mako, Shamiran and Valentine Moghadam. *After the Arab Uprisings: Progress and Stagnation in the Middle East and North Africa*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
 Nepstad, Sharon, *Non-Violent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late 20th Century* (Oxford U. Press)
 Paine, Thomas, *Common Sense* (any edition, including on-line)
 Popkin, Jeremy. *A New World Begins: The History of the French Revolution* (Basic Books)
 Selbin, Eric. *Rebellion, Revolution, and Resistance* (Zed Books)
 Trotsky, Leon. *History of the Russian Revolution*, translated by Max Eastman, Vol. 1 Kindle Ed.
 Westad, Odd Arne. *Restless Empire: China and the World since 1750* (Basic Books)
 Wood, Gordon. *The Idea of America* (Penguin)

If you wish to delve into the current academic literature on revolutions, you will find most of the relevant articles in the following journals:

Journal of Democracy; American Journal of Political Science; American Political Science Review; American Journal of Sociology; Perspectives on Politics; Theory and Society; Comparative Politics; Comparative Political Studies; World Politics.

Weekly Assignments

1. August 28: Introduction to the Class – No Reading assignment
 2. September 4: Overview: Revolutions in History
Readings: **Goldstone**, *Revolutions VSI* Chapters 1-5.
 3. September 11: Let's get serious about Revolutions: Causes and Processes
Readings: **Lawson**, Introduction and Chapters 1-3. **Goldstone**, **Grinin & Korotayev**: Changing Yet Persistent: Revolutions and Revolutionary events (Handout).
 4. September 18: Revolutions: Ideology and Narrative:
Readings: **Selbin** (all)
 5. September 25: The American Revolution
Readings: **Goldstone** *VSI* Chapter 6 section on American Rev; **Paine** (all) and **Wood**, *Idea of America* Introduction and Chaps. 1-7
 6. October 2: The French Revolution
Readings: **Goldstone** *VSI* Chapter 6 section on French Rev; **Popkin**, *France* (all)
 7. October 9: The Russian Revolution I: Rise of Communism
Readings: **Goldstone** *VSI* Chapter 7 section on Russian Rev; **Trotsky** Volume 1, Chapters 1-11 (up to and including DUAL POWER).
 8. October 16: Russian Revolution II: Rise and Fall of Communism
Readings: **Goldstone** *VSI*, Chapter 9, sections on Eastern Europe and the USSR; **Goldstone**, "The Soviet Union" (Email handout).
- FIRST PAPER DUE BY MIDNIGHT OCT. 16**
9. October 23: China's 150 years of revolution
Readings: **Goldstone** *VSI* chap. 7 section on China; **Westad** Intro (Empire), Chaps. 6,7,8 and Conclusion (Modernities).
 10. October 30: Color Revolutions
Readings: **Goldstone** *VSI* chapter 9 (all); **Nepstad** (all)
 11. November 6 (Halloween!): The Iranian Islamic Revolution
Readings: **Goldstone** *VSI* chapter 8, section on Iran, **Mako and Moghadam** (all)
 12. November 13: The Arab Uprisings
Readings: **Goldstone** *VSI* chapter 10 (all), **Cook** (all)

13. November 20: The new urban Revolutions
Readings: **Beissinger** Chapters 2-4

NOVEMBER 27: THANKSGIVING WEEK – NO CLASS

14. December 4: The Future of Revolutions
Readings: **Lawson**, Chapters 7 and 8

ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

The Writing Center

GMU's Writing Center at the Arlington Campus (Original Building, Room 311) offers both online and in-person services to aid you throughout the writing process. At the center, you'll find everything from discipline-specific writing resources and brainstorming help to more in-depth, one-on-one time with tutors from a range of disciplines and work experiences. Visit the [Writing Center website](#) to schedule an appointment or to sign up for the Online Writing Lab (OWL) services.

Academic Standards

Academic Standards exist to promote authentic scholarship, support the institution's goal of maintaining high standards of academic excellence, and encourage continued ethical behavior of faculty and students to cultivate an educational community which values integrity and produces graduates who carry this commitment forward into professional practice.

As members of the George Mason University community, we are committed to fostering an environment of trust, respect, and scholarly excellence. Our academic standards are the foundation of this commitment, guiding our behavior and interactions within this academic community. The practices for implementing these standards adapt to modern practices, disciplinary contexts, and technological advancements. Our standards are embodied in our courses, policies, and scholarship, and are upheld in the following principles:

- **Honesty:** Providing accurate information in all academic endeavors, including communications, assignments, and examinations.
- **Acknowledgement:** Giving proper credit for all contributions to one's work. This involves the use of accurate citations and references for any ideas, words, or materials created by others in the style appropriate to the discipline. It also includes acknowledging shared authorship in group projects, coauthored pieces, and project reports.
- **Uniqueness of Work:** Ensuring that all submitted work is the result of one's own effort and is original, including free from self-plagiarism. This principle extends to written assignments, code, presentations, exams, and all other forms of academic work.

Violations of these standards—including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating—are taken seriously and will be addressed in accordance with university policies. [The process for reporting, investigating, and adjudicating violations is outlined in the university's procedures here.](#) Consequences of violations may include academic sanctions, disciplinary actions, and other measures necessary to uphold the integrity of our academic community.

The principles outlined in these academic standards reflect our collective commitment to upholding the highest standards of honesty, acknowledgement, and uniqueness of work. By adhering to these principles, we ensure the continued excellence and integrity of George Mason University's academic community.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for understanding how these general expectations regarding academic standards apply to each course, assignment, or exam they participate in; students should ask their instructor for clarification on any aspect that is not clear to them.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit the [Disability Services website](#) for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu. Phone: (703) 993-2474.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for registering with Disability Services and communicating about their approved accommodations with their instructor in advance of any relevant class meeting, assignment, or exam.

FERPA and Use of GMU Email Addresses for Course Communication

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) governs the disclosure of education records for eligible students and is an essential aspect of any course. **Students must use their GMU email account** to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. Instructors will not respond to messages sent from or send messages regarding course content to a non-GMU email address.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for checking their GMU email regularly for course-related information, and/or ensuring that GMU email messages are forwarded to an account they do check.

Title IX Resources and Required Reporting

As a part of George Mason University's commitment to providing a safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and working environment for all members of the University community, the University does not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender in any of its

education or employment programs and activities. Accordingly, **all non-confidential employees, including your faculty member, have a legal requirement to report to the Title IX Coordinator, all relevant details obtained directly or indirectly about any incident of Prohibited Conduct** (such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, gender-based stalking, dating/domestic violence). Upon notifying the Title IX Coordinator of possible Prohibited Conduct, the Title IX Coordinator will assess the report and determine if outreach is required. If outreach is required, the individual the report is about (the “Complainant”) will receive a communication, likely in the form of an email, offering that person the option to meet with a representative of the Title IX office.

For more information about non-confidential employees, resources, and Prohibited Conduct, please see University Policy 1202: [Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence](#). Questions regarding Title IX can be directed to the Title IX Coordinator via email to TitleIX@gmu.edu, by phone at 703-993-8730, or in person on the Fairfax campus in Aquia 373.

Student opportunity: If you prefer to speak to someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential employees in [Student Support & Advocacy \(SSAC\)](#), Counseling and [Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#), [Student Health Services \(SHS\)](#), and/or the [Office of the University Ombudsperson](#).

Citations for Research Papers

The purposes of scholarly citations are several:

- 1) To show the source for a direct quote or fact not commonly known.
- 2) To give credit for an idea to the author of a work
- 3) To show the reader that you are familiar with other scholarship on your topic or to indicate where further information or analysis can be found.
- 4) You may also use endnotes to explain something in the text or comment on the source.

The intention is to give the reader enough information to find the source you are using so that he or she can see if you have quoted it correctly, interpreted it soundly, done justice to the author cited, or do further research on the topic in question themselves.

Format: use the standard [Chicago Manual of Style](#) format. Examples and guidance available on-line.

You may use either the “Notes and Bibliography Style” or the “Author-Date Style.” But be consistent: choose one citation style and stick with it.

[To improve your writing, read The Elements of Style.](#)