

# POLI 471: Protest and Political Violence

Dogus Aktan

Spring 2025

HUM 120

M // 14:00-16:30

## Contact Information

**Instructor:** Dr. Dogus Aktan

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**Office Hours:** TR, 2:30 - 4:00 pm

## Course Overview and Learning Outcomes

This is a seminar class on the study of contentious politics. The study of contentious politics focuses on politics outside of the normal boundaries of institutionalized politics such as protests, social movements, and revolutions. Despite having differing labels, and reaching across various disciplines, these phenomena are often studied by a cohesive group of scholars.

This course examines key questions and insights in the study of contentious politics with a particular focus on protests and political violence. We start by exploring how and why people mobilize and the effect of various forms of collective action. We then explore government and citizen responses to mobilization. Finally we examine the outcome and legacies of protests by looking at the interaction of movement characteristics and responses.

This is a research seminar, so students will be conduct independent research on topics related to contentious politics as a final project. Readings and discussions will focus on scientific research on the study of protests and political violence. Students will be expected to read the material critically evaluating both their methodological and substantive merits.

Students who apply themselves will be have:

- **Substantive knowledge:** Students will be familiar with with a range of theories and empirical strategies used to study contentious politics. They will also be familiar with current and past social movements.

- **Critical thinking:** Students will be able to use the concepts and theories in the study of contentious politics to understand and explain episodes of contention. They will also gain proficiency in summarizing and evaluating academic writing in political science.
- **Informed Citizenship:** Students will be able to make informed arguments about social movements around the world with various goals. They will also become more apt in understanding responses to political protests, and better appreciate the prospects and challenges for extra-institutional political action.
- **Empirical analysis:** Students will learn how to interpret, conduct and evaluate political science research, including data collection and data analysis techniques and statistical software. They will also recognize and understand key challenges to conducting empirical research in social sciences.

## Course Readings

There are no required books to buy for this course. We will discuss a variety of readings from academic journals, excerpts from various textbooks. I am aware some of the readings can be challenging at a first glance, particularly if they include methodologies you are not familiar with it. Don't be discouraged. The readings (both individual readings and the overall load) are chosen so the main arguments will be accessible to you. I will give you specific instructions (such as what sections to focus on) about each reading when necessary. I propose you form reading groups and meet once a week outside the class.

This is a seminar, so I expect you be serious you to do the readings *before* the class and be prepared to discuss them. As a rule of thumb, you should expect to read somewhere between 50 to 75 pages for each session. I don't expect you to read every single word of every reading, but you should be able to extract key elements such as the author's goals, arguments, and the evidence they present.

## Class Format and Policy

The class structure will focus on discussions rather than lecture. I will start each seminar by providing a broad overview of the topic at hand and walking you through the technical aspects of the readings if necessary. The rest of class time will be devoted to discussion of readings, answering student questions, critiquing the material at hand, and proposing potential solutions to improve them. Each student will be required to take the lead in these discussions at least twice per semester.

## Policy on Student Questions and Emails

I am always happy to answer student questions during office hours or over e-mail. I will generally reply to e-mails within 24 hours but make sure you send your questions in a timely manner. If I don't respond to your email within 2 days, please feel free to remind me in person or send a reminder email.

Keep in mind that most questions you may have (about assignments, policies, etc. . . ) can be answered by simply taking a close look at the syllabus. Every student should read the entire syllabus carefully at the beginning of the class and before sending me a question. When you have finished reading the syllabus for the first time, send me an e-mail, telling me what your favorite animal is.

## Assignments and Grades

Participation	: 20%
Short Presentation and Discussion Leader	: 20%
Final Paper	: 60%

### Participation 20%

Students are expected to attend all class sessions, and to contribute to the class. Attendance is necessary but not sufficient. Participation entails reading the materials, coming to class prepared to ask and answer questions about them, and participating in in-class discussions.

### Short Presentation and Discussion Leader 20%, 10% each

Each student is required to be a discussion leader at least twice per semester. This will require that you read designated material of the day closely and do a brief presentation on the topic. You will also prepare questions for the class that will stimulate discussion.

### Final Paper: 60%

The major assignment is a research paper, where you will have the opportunity to do independent research on a topic related to contentious politics. This will either be the application of a formal model to your substantive topic or the rigorous empirical analysis of theoretical hypotheses. The paper should end up looking very much like the articles we

read from the professional journals. You should expect to consult with me early and often on this project. I am willing to help you a lot on these papers, and I expect to do so. The class structure and schedule have a number of checkpoints built-in to provide students with regular feedback and assistance.

## Assignment Calendar

	Assigned	Due
Research question and introduction		February 3
Literature review		February 17
Theory and hypotheses		February 24
Measurement, results, and conclusion		April 7
Final Paper Draft		April 22

## Grade Policies

All assignments and exams must be completed on time in order to pass this course. Make ups will only be granted under extraordinary circumstances such as documented and verified medical or family emergencies. All documentation corresponding to such emergencies should be forwarded to the professor. Personal reasons are insufficient excuses for making up missed assignments, exams, or quizzes.

All assignments must be submitted via Canvas. I do NOT accept assignments via e-mail.

Students must complete ALL mandatory assignments to be able to receive a passing grade.

I do not grade on a curve. Each student's work will be evaluated independently based on its quality. It is possible for every student in the class to get an A. However, getting such high marks will require hard work on your part.

If a student wishes to dispute their grade on an assignment, they must contact me within 48 hours of receiving their grade and set an appointment to discuss it. At this appointment they must bring a typed summary of the reasons why they believe the grade is unfair. I will then reevaluate the assignment on the basis of these reasons. All revised grades are final, and they may be lower than the original grade.

## Absence Policies

I expect you to attend all scheduled classes. An absence will be considered unexcused unless you give me documentation of the absence. You should also check out the Rice University absence policies [here](#).

## **AI Policies**

Students are not allowed to use advanced automated tools (artificial intelligence or machine learning tools, such as ChatGPT) on assignments in this course. Each student is expected to complete each assignment without substantive assistance from others, including automated tools. If you are found to have used AI for an assignment, this will be treated as a violation of the Rice Honor Code. In my experience, automated tools are not great at writing political science papers. They can make up sources that don't exist and produce relatively low quality analysis. Using AI will not only result in a poor assignment, but it also undermines the whole reason why you are taking this course – to build writing and analytical skills that will help you understand and critically evaluate current events!

## **Rice Honor Code**

In this course, all students will be held to the standards of the Rice Honor Code, a code that you pledged to honor when you matriculated at this institution. If you are unfamiliar with the details of this code and how it is administered, you should consult the Honor System Handbook at <http://honor.rice.edu/honor-system-handbook/>. This handbook outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of your academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process.

## **Disability Resource Center**

If you have a documented disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Disability Resource Center (Allen Center, Room 111 / [adarice@rice.edu](mailto:adarice@rice.edu) / x5841) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

## **Mental Health Statement**

If you are having trouble completing your coursework, please reach out to the Wellbeing and Counseling Center. Rice University provides cost-free mental health services through the Wellbeing and Counseling Center to help you manage personal challenges that threaten your personal or academic well-being. If you believe you are experiencing unusual amounts of stress, sadness, or anxiety, the Student Wellbeing Office or the Rice Counseling Center may be able to assist you. The Wellbeing and Counseling Center is located in the Gibbs Wellness Center and can be reached at 713-348-3311 (available 24/7).

## **Title IX Responsible Employee Notification**

Rice University cares about your wellbeing and safety. Rice encourages any student who has experienced an incident of harassment, pregnancy discrimination or gender discrimination or relationship, sexual, or other forms interpersonal violence to seek support through The SAFE Office. Students should be aware when seeking support on campus that most employees, including myself, as the instructor/TA, are required by Title IX to disclose all incidents of non-consensual interpersonal behaviors to Title IX professionals on campus who can act to support that student and meet their needs. For more information, please visit [safe.rice.edu](http://safe.rice.edu) or email [titleixsupport@rice.edu](mailto:titleixsupport@rice.edu).

## **Syllabus Change Policy**

This syllabus is only a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

# Course Schedule

## Module 1: Introduction, Overview, and Building Blocks

### Week 1: Introduction, Overview

- Monday, January 13, Introduction, Logistics, Overview of Contentious Politics
  - Syllabus
  - Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, Chapters 1 & 2
  - David A. Snow et. al, *Social Movements*, Introduction
  - Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, Chapter 1

### Week 2: NO CLASS

- Monday, January 20 - NO CLASS
  - Martin Luther King Jr, *Letter from Birmingham Jail*

## Module 2: Understanding Contentious Mobilization and Social Movements

In this module we focus on the movement and protests characteristics. We begin by an overview of different models of collective action to understand the mobilization phase. We then examine how participants frame or express their movement and demands. Afterwards we turn to strategic use of non-violence, and violence by protesters. We finish the module by looking at how organizational structure and leadership helps or hinders protests.

### Week 3: Logics of Collective Contention

- Monday, January 27,
  - Pamela Oliver, Formal Models of Collective Action, *Annual Review of Sociology*
  - Mark Lichbach, Rethinking Rationality and Rebellion, *Rationality and Society*
  - Susanne Lohmann, The Dynamics of Informational Cascades: The Monday Demonstrations in Leipzig, East Germany, 1989–91, *World Politics*

### Week 4: Forms, Frames of Contention

- Monday, February 3,

- Clarissa Rile Hayward, Disruption: What Is It Good For?, *The Journal of Politics*
- Robert D. Benford and David Snow, Framing Processes and Social Movements, *Annual Review of Sociology*
- Kevin O’Brien, Rightful Resistance, *World Politics*
- **Optional:** LaGina Gause, Revealing Issue Salience via Costly Protest, *British Journal of Political Science*

### **Week 5: Violence, Nonviolence, and Civil Resistance**

- Monday, February 10,
  - Erica Chenoweth, *Civil Resistance: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Introduction and Chapter 1
  - Robin Celikates, Learning From the Streets: Civil Disobedience in Theory and Practice
  - Mohammed Ali Kadivar and Neil Ketchley, Sticks, Stones, and Molotov Cocktails: Unarmed Collective Violence and Democratization, *Socius*
  - Peter White et al, Nonviolence as a Weapon of the Resourceful, *Mobilization*

### **Week 6: Leadership, Organization, and Resources**

- Monday, February 17
  - Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas*, Introduction and Leading the Leaderless
  - Sean Campbell, The BLM Mystery, *Intelligencer*
  - Elisabeth S. Clemens and Debra C. Minkoff, Beyond the Iron Law: Rethinking the Place of Organizations in Social Movement Research, *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*

## **Module 3: Understanding Responses to Protests**

In this module we look at the reaction to the protests by the state, the media, and the broader public. We pay special attention to the use of violence against protesters by the state.

### **Week 7: Responses to Protests**

- Monday, February 24,
  - Graig R. Klein and Patrick M. Regan, Dynamics of Political Protests, *International Organization*



- Devorah Manekin and Tamar Mitts, Effective for Whom? Ethnic Identity and Nonviolent Resistance, *American Political Science Review*
- Kenneth T. Andrews and Neal Caren, Making the News: Movement Organizations, Media Attention, and the Public Agenda, *American Journal of Sociology*
- **Optional:** Peter Lorenzen, Designing Contentious Politics in Post-1989 China, *Modern China*

### Week 8: Iron Fists: Policing and Repression

- Monday, March 3,
  - Jennifer Earl, Political Repression: Iron Fist, Velvet Gloves, and Diffuse Control, *Annual Review of Sociology*
  - Christian Davenport, State Repression and Political Order, *Annual Review of Political Science*
  - Jacqueline DeMeritt, The Strategic Use of Repression and Political Violence, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*
  - Donatella Della Porta and Olivier Fillieule, Policing Social Protests, *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*

### Week 9: Velvet Gloves: Censorship, Propaganda, and Co-optation

- Monday, March 10,
  - Myra Marx Ferree, Soft Repression: Ridicule, Stigma, and Silencing in Gender-Based Movements, *Repression and Mobilization*
  - Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Robert, How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression, *American Political Science Review*
  - Alexa J. Trumpy, Subject to Negotiation: The Mechanisms Behind Co-Optation and Corporate Reform, *Social Problems*

### Week 10: Break

- Monday, March 17 - NO CLASS

## Module 4: From Responses to Outcomes and Legacies

In this module we look at both the outcomes and legacies of contentious. How does the interaction of movements and responses play out? What happens to protests after they get repressed? What are the lasting affect on the participants, the state, and the bystanders?

### Week 11: Responses to Repression

- Monday, March 24,
  - Jonathan Sutton, Charles Butcher, and Isak Svensson, Explaining Political Jiu-Jitsu: Institution-Building and the Outcomes of Regime Violence Against Unarmed Protest, *Jornal of Peace Research*
  - Erdem Aytac, Luis Schiumerini, and Susan Stokes, Why do People Join Backlash Protests? Lessons from Turkey?, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*
  - Zachary C. Steinert-Threlkeld, Alexander M. Chan, and Jungseock Joo, How State and Protester Violence Affects Protests Dynamics, *The Journal of Politics*
  - **Optional:** Mehdi Shadmehr and Raphael Boleslavsky, International Pressure, State Repression, and the Spread of Protest, *The Journal of Politics*

### Week 12: • Monday, March 31, Agents of Repression

- Cullen S. Hendrix and Idean Salehyan, A House Divided: Threat Perception, Military Factionalism, and Repression in Africa, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*
- Yanhua Deng, Kevin O'Brien, Relational repression in China: Using social ties to demobilize protesters, *The China Quarterly*
- Christian Davenport,, Sarah A. Soule, and David A. Armstrong,Protesting While Black?: The Differential Policing of American Activism, 1960 to 1990, *American Sociological Review*
- **Optional:** Joe Soss, and Vesla Weaver, Police Are Our Government: Politics, Political Science, and the Policing of Race-Class Subjugated Communities, *Annual Review of Political Science*

### Week 13: • Monday, April 7, Consequences and Outcomes Contention

- Christian Davenport et al. The Consequences of Contention: Understanding the Aftereffects of Political Conflict and Violence, *Annual Review of Political Science*
- Adam Meirowitz and Joshua A. Tucker, People Power or a One-Shot Deal? A Dynamic Model of Protest, *American Journal of Political Science*

- Andreas Madestam et al., Do Political Protests Matter? Evidence from the Tea Party Movement?, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*

**Week 14:** • Monday, April 14, Consequences and Outcomes Contention

- Rory McVeigh, David Cunningham, and Justin Farrell, Political Polarization as a Social Movement Outcome: 1960s Klan Activism and Its Enduring Impact on Political Realignment in Southern Counties, 1960 to 2000, *American Sociological Review*
- Omar Wasow, Agenda Seeding: How 1960s Black Protests Moved Elites, Public Opinion and Voting, *American Political Science Review*
- Yuri Zhukov and Roya Talibova, Stalin's terror and the long-term political effects of mass repression, *Journal of Peace Research*

## **Module 5: Student Presentations**

**Week 15:** Presentations

- Monday, April 21