

Sociology 203 **Revolutions and Social Change** Spring 2006

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Course description: The revolutionary attempts to change the world have been a central process that shaped modernity. We shall discuss why revolutionary imagery became possible in the first place and how the contemporary conservatives, liberals and Marxists thought about revolutions. In the last couple decades, a quite different understanding of “transgressive politics” was shaped by the work of historical sociologists like Charles Tilly. The course provides a lot of historically-grounded analysis relating to specific revolutionary waves of the last two hundred years and concludes with some speculations about the future of revolutions. Of course, these days we cannot avoid discussing political terrorism.

Method and evaluation criteria: Regular lectures, discussion sections, several films, and a lot of readings. You will be given three take-home assignments, each worth 25% of final grade, plus another 25% for the section participation.

Books:

- Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848*. Any edition.
- Charles Tilly, *CONTENTION & DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE, 1650-2000*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*. Verso, 1998 (This edition is very much favored) with the Introduction by Hobsbawm and the cover designed by Komar & Melamid.
- James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press, 1998.
- Robert Daniels, *Year of the Heroic Guerrilla*. Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.
- Immanuel Wallerstein, *Utopistics*, NY: The New Press, 1998.

Recommended:

- Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, any edition.
- Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Schedule of Classes and Readings.

March 28 Introductions. The idea of Re-public, Demo-cracy, and Re-volution. Start reading Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* Ch. 1.

March 30 **How in the 1770s-1790s the English (and a few former Englishmen in certain colonies) and the French in the heart of Europe made revolution a viable idea.** Continue reading Hobsbawm, Chs. 2, 3 and 4.

April 4 **No Restoration! Capitalism Becomes Modern.** Hobsbawm, Chs. 6-7 Read how socialism and nationalism became the twin radical traditions.

April 6 **The first world-wide revolution: 1848.** In principle, you really would benefit from reading the whole masterpiece of Eric Hobsbawm. But realistically, concentrate on Hobsbawm, Chs. 9, 10, and especially the concluding ch. 16.

April 11 A joint session with the alumni class, tentatively at Louis room at Norris Center
It will be on the origins of Islam as a great medieval revolution.

April 13 **Karl Marx: The First Theory of Modern World.** Read the *Communist Manifesto*. Watch *Germinal* (France, 1994) inevitably starring Gerard Depardieu

THE FIRST PAPER IS DUE AFTER CLASS ON APRIL 18.

It will be on Hobsbawm.

April 18 **The resource-mobilization theory of Charles Tilly: transgressive POLITICS which grew along with modern states.** Read Tilly, *CONTENTION & DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE*, pp 1-70 (the first two chapters, trying to grasp Tilly's main theoretical concepts: with what words does he analyze the making of European politics).

April 20 **Tax revolts, religious movements, riots, conspiracies — and failed rebellions matter, too. How states provoked revolutions and revolutions shaped democracy.** Read Tilly, Ch. 3.

April 25 **The classical (France and Britain) or “deviant” (=Swiss) roads to democracy.** Read Tilly, Chs. 4, 5 and 6.

April 27. **Socialism and Democracy.** Read Tilly, Ch. 7 and 8. Highly recommended (the short and excellent survey by a leading historian) Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*.

Film: *October* (Sergei Eisenstein, USSR, 1927)

May 2 **Neat Visions of Future.** Read James Scott, *Seeing Like a State*. Especially the Introduction, then get a sense of what are the key arguments and examples in Parts 1 and 2 (chapters 1 through 5), pay special attention to Ch. 5.
Recommended: Charlie Chaplin's film *Modern Times*.

May 4 **What, in the big picture of things, really was the USSR?** Read James Scott, Chs. 5 and 6, also try ch. 7.

Recommended (it takes you one evening to read) is the classic anti-totalitarian novel by Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*.

Film: *Land and Freedom: a story from the Spanish revolution* (Ken Loach, UK, 1996)

THE SECOND PAPER IS DUE ON MAY 9.

It will be on States and Revolutions (Tilly, Scott).

May 9 **The second world-wide revolution of 1968: rebelling against the bureaucratic “Big Daddy”**. Read Robert Daniels *Year of the Heroic Guerrilla*. Presumably you know something about America, but pay attention to Paris, Peking, Prague (these are chs. 7-9).

May 11 **The lessons of 1968**. Come to class *having already read* Daniels, ch. 11 “The World Social Revolution”. Compare it to Hobsbawm’s argument on the first Romantic generation of the 1830s and the demands of opening “Road to talent”. *And read attentively James Scott’s short Ch. 10 “Conclusions”*.

May 16 **Terrorism: Weapons of the Organizationally Weak**. Read Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*. Chapters one and two are important but do not get bogged down in Arabic names; Chs. 3,4, 5 explain in more sociological terms how terrorist networks function. The Conclusion sums up Sageman’s argument.
Film: *The Battle of Algiers* (Gino Pontecorvo, Italy, 1966)

May 18 **Has anything changed in the world? Were revolutions worth the sacrifices?**
Start reading Immanuel Wallerstein’s *Utopistics*.

May 23 **The next turn in world history**. Finish reading Wallerstein’s *Utopistics*.
Also read Charles Tilly, Ch. 7 “Revolutions Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” and re-read James Scott’s Ch. 10 “Conclusions”.

May 25 **The concluding lecture and discussion**.
Film: *Fierce Creatures* (John Cleese, UK, 1997)

THE THIRD AND LAST PAPER (on Utopistics and future directions of change) IS
DUE AT YOUR TA’S OFFICE NO LATER THAN MONDAY, May 29,
BEFORE 5PM. NO ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS, PLEASE.

A Luta Continua! A Vitória é (un)Certa!