

POL 000: The Comparative Study of Contentious Politics

Class Location: TBD
Class Time: TBD

Instructor: Haley Daarstad
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Office Location: Kerr Hall 569
Office Hours: TBD

Course Description

Why do political parties attack each other? When does the state choose to shut down the internet to stop protests? What is the relationship between gender and electoral violence? When do criminal groups choose to attack a political actor rather than bribe them? The goal of the course is to examine the causes and consequences of attempts to make claims against states or elites outside of formal institutional channels. From protests and social movements to rebellions and revolutions, contentious politics have often led to major shifts in domestic political orders.

This course will examine some key questions in the study of contentious politics such as: why do people join protests? Under what conditions do social movements emerge? When are social revolutions successful? Why do groups choose to engage in political violence in some instances and non-violent action in others? Students will learn about the many ways of thinking and theorizing about contentious politics by examining the conflicts between groups and the ways groups seek to deescalate these conflicts through peace building or other avenues such as vigilantism.

Learning objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to...

- Demonstrate a critical understanding of what is contentious politics.
- Demonstrate an ability to articulate the how and when people and groups decide to engage in contentious politics.
- Demonstrate analytical knowledge of historical and contemporary topics and issues relating to contentious politics.
- Demonstrate an ability to develop and present persuasive oral and written arguments on contentious politics and the diverse ways it shapes institutions and behavior.

Study time

This is an approximate amount of time per week that should be dedicated to this course. Some weeks you will experience higher or less amount depending on assignments and readings.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Lectures</i>	3 hours/Week
<i>Private Study</i>	1.5 hours/Week
<i>Papers</i>	2 hours/Week
<i>Readings</i>	4 hours/Week
<i>Weekly Total</i>	10.5 hours/Week

Community and UC Davis Policies

Inclusive community

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated.

Please note that this is a political science course, and as such we will be discussing political issues. As each of us comes into the section with unique opinions about political issues, there may be disagreements. I insist we discuss our differences with respect, civility, and empathy. Please do your best to keep an open mind about your peers' perspectives as your peers will expect the same of you.

Note: This does not mean you should avoid participating if/when you have an alternative point of view just because you may not wish to provoke an argument. Be bold, and share what you think (respectfully).

- If I believe any of the discussion is becoming disrespectful or includes hateful or inappropriate speech, I hold the right to end the discussion.

Accessibility

If there is any portion of the course that is not accessible to you due to challenges with technology or the course format, please let me know so we can make appropriate accommodations.

It is the Professor's responsibility to help make this course accessible to all students. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation or would like additional information about the resources available for students with disabilities, please visit the UC Davis Student Disability Center website at sdc.ucdavis.edu.

- Students must contact me about any accommodations in advance.
- Outside Resources - The Student Academic Success Center is a campus wide resource assisting students by helping them improve in study skills, academic writing, and other specific topics.

Mandatory Reporter

In my role as faculty, I am required by policy to report concerns that come to my attention related to sexual harassment, sexual violence, discrimination, or harassment involving students. Please know you are still free to discuss these concerns with me, but I will need to pass along any information shared with me to the Harassment and Discrimination Assistance and Prevention Program (HDAPP) so they can reach out to you and talk to you about resources and possible resolution options. If you would prefer to speak to a confidential resource, who does not have the same responsibility to report, I can help you get connected.

Alternatively, here is a link to information about available resources on campus (including confidential resources): <https://hdapp.ucdavis.edu/resources>. Also, here is a link to information about reporting directly to HDAPP: <https://hdapp.sf.ucdavis.edu/report-incident>.

Counseling & Psychiatry Services

Life at Davis can be complicated and challenging. You might feel overwhelmed, experience anxiety or depression, or struggle with relationships or family responsibilities. UC Davis Counseling Services provide confidential support for students who are struggling with mental health and emotional challenges. Please do not hesitate to contact them for assistance—getting help is a smart and good thing to do.

Communication

What are office hours for?

- Office hours are when the professor sets aside two hours each week making themselves available to students. Office hours are often underutilized by all students in college. Consider this your time.
- You do not need an appointment to come by.
- My job as a Professor is to help each of you succeed; however, I can only help you if you ask. (PLEASE COME ASK ME!)
- I strongly encourage students to come to my office hours and chat about topics from the readings or lectures, talk over potential study strategies, or to simply converse.

What are Emails for?

- If your question cannot wait until office hours, section, or class, then students should/may use email to contact their Professor. However, please note that email should not be used as an alternative to direct conversation or an in-depth discussion.
- As a simple rule of thumb, emails should be used to address quick questions, not for requests to exhaustively review material from lecture or section.
- I will respond to emails within one business day, so between 9 am and 6 pm on weekdays. This means if you email me past 6 pm on a weekday you will not receive any email till the next day in the morning around 9 am. If you email me on the weekends or past Friday at 6 pm, I will respond promptly on Monday.
- I will not respond to emails that are rude, unintelligible, or inquiring about information readily accessible on the syllabus.

- I will typically communicate announcements through Canvas. Please make sure your Canvas information is up to date and that you check it frequently over the quarter.

Course Materials

All materials for this course are free and online. The readings for the course can be found on Canvas or accessed through the journals using a campus VPN. Other materials for the course can be found online or for free from the campus library resources.

Lectures

The goal of both the lectures is for them to be as interactive as possible. My role as instructor is to introduce you to new materials and perspectives, but it is up to you to take them and make use of them. I believe that is best learned by doing. Therefore, as much as possible, you will be working on a variety of tasks and activities throughout each lecture. A lot of what you do in this course will involve discussing readings, and using course materials to make arguments. You are expected to attend all lectures and meaningfully contribute to in-class discussion and activities. Additionally, some lectures will feature application exercises that will be graded; this will be counted as your attendance for participation.

Laptop Policy

Computers will not be allowed in the classroom for any purpose unless instructed by the professor or due to official accommodations. I understand that students use laptops for note taking purposes; however, many studies have shown that taking notes by hand leads to better recall. iPads are exempt, unless they become a disruption, then I hold the right to exclude those as well.

Furthermore, if a laptop is seen in class, I will ask that you kindly put it away. Please refer to the articles below for more information on research related to notetaking by hand compared to computers:

- Aragón-Mendizábal, E., Delgado-Casas, C., Navarro-Guzmán, J., Menacho-Jiménez, I., & Romero-Oliva, M. F. (2016). A comparative study of handwriting and computer typing in note-taking by university students. *Comunicar*, 24(48), 101-107.
- Horbury, S. R., & Edmonds, C. J. (2021). Taking class notes by hand compared to typing: Effects on children's recall and understanding. *Journal of research in childhood education*, 35(1), 55-67.
- Mueller, P. A., & Oppenheimer, D. M. (2014). The pen is mightier than the keyboard: Advantages of longhand over laptop note taking. *Psychological science*, 25(6), 1159-1168.

Grading

The final course grade will be calculated as follows:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Paper 1</i>	15 %
<i>Paper 2</i>	15 %
<i>Paper 3</i>	30 %
<i>Midterm</i>	25 %
<i>Participation</i>	15%

The final letter grade will be determined based on the following thresholds:

<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Final Course Grade</i>
<i>A</i>	≥ 93
<i>A-</i>	90 - 92.99
<i>B+</i>	87 - 89.99
<i>B</i>	83 - 86.99
<i>B-</i>	80 - 82.99
<i>C+</i>	77 - 79.99
<i>C</i>	73 - 76.99
<i>C-</i>	70 - 72.99
<i>D+</i>	67 - 69.99
<i>D</i>	63 - 66.99
<i>D-</i>	60 - 62.99
<i>F</i>	< 60

Papers (60%):

Papers will be assessed based on the quality of the argument and following the instructions in the assignment. Papers should effectively communicate an argument that follows the prompt, have a logical organization of ideas and structure, use evidence to support the argument, clearly and effectively analyze the evidence to support the argument, and engage with the course materials and topics. Please refer to the assignment for the paper for further instructions and prompt.

Paper #1 – Collective Action

Present an argument for when people decide to engage in collective action and when they do not. Use the readings from week 2 to make your argument.

Requirements:

- 12 pt font in Times New Roman
- Citations in APA format
- Works Cited page not included in page count
- 2 pages, 10 points will be deducted for each page over the 3-page limit.
- Use at least 2 of the course readings.

Paper #2 – Contentious Politics in Film Assignment

Step 1: Watch one of these documentaries on protests:

- *Uprising: Revolution in Egypt (2012)*
- *Maidan: Uprising in Ukraine (2014)*

- *The Monopoly of Violence: Un pays qui se tient sage (2020)*
- *The Socialist Dream: President Lázaro Cárdenas and the Socialist Ideals he inspired in Mexico*
- *#ReGENERATION: Social Activism*

Step 2: Write a 2 – 3-page paper arguing what the film reveals about contentious politics.

Requirements:

- 12 pt font in Times New Roman
- Citations in APA format
- Works Cited page not included in page count
- 2-3 pages, 10 points will be deducted for each page over the 3-page limit.
- Use at least 3 of the course readings.

Paper #3 – When and how does the state, individual, or party engage in contentious politics?

Using the materials from this course, make an argument for how the state, individual, or party (choose one) engages in contentious politics. You may focus on one form such as protests or you can use multiple.

Requirements:

- 12 pt font in Times New Roman
- Citations in APA format
- Works Cited page not included in page count
- 4 pages, 10 points will be deducted for each page over the 4-page limit.
- Use at least 5 of the course readings.

In-Person Midterm (25%):

The midterm tests will take place in-person on DAY 00 MONTH. The full class time will be used for the completion of the exam. If you need accommodations, please contact the UC Davis Student Disability Center, so we can accommodate.

The midterm will not be rescheduled; students are expected to take this exam as scheduled and will cover the topics from weeks 1 through 4. The exam will include multiple choice, short answers, and 1 – 2 long answer questions.

Participation (15%):

Active participation of all students is essential to a successful class; thus participation will be assessed. The participation grade will be based on the following:

- Regular attendance
- Engagement in the course through readings, prepared questions for lecture, etc.
- Active participation in the course activities

Attendance will be randomly taken throughout the course, engagement can be shown through attendance of office hours or talking in lecture, and course activities will be done at least once a week.

Furthermore, an individual can earn an “A” if they regularly have attended courses, participated in lecture with relevant comments and questions, attended a few office hours to ask questions that showed critical engagement with the texts and course materials, and actively participated, engaged, and contributed with the course activities.

Course policies

Academic integrity

Cheating and plagiarism will be evaluated and disciplined according to University policy. For information on academic integrity, please read: <http://cai.ucdavis.edu/aip.html>. You are responsible for understanding and following all aspects of University policy on academic integrity; ignorance is not an excuse. All suspected violations will be referred to the Office of Student Support and Judicial Affairs (OSSJA) for evaluation. You will be notified promptly by email if a referral is made.

Policy on AI

AI is not allowed for usage in this classroom. You may not use artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Grok, etc. to complete academic work being submitted for credit in the UC Davis Department of Political Science. The Office of Student Support and Judicial Affairs (OSSJA) considers the unauthorized use of content generated by artificial intelligence (AI) to be academic misconduct and/or plagiarism (see: <https://ossja.ucdavis.edu/code-academic-conduct>).

This includes taking credit for any work not created by the student; work includes, but is not limited to, books, articles, experimental methodology or results, compositions, images, lectures, computer programs, internet postings, and content generated by software or artificial intelligence.

Late work policy

The due dates for assignments are there to help you keep up with the course material and to ensure the teaching team can provide feedback within a timely manner. We understand that things come up periodically that could make it difficult to submit an assignment by the deadline.

- Papers may be submitted up to 3 days late. There will be a 5% deduction for each 24-hour period the assignment is late.
- The late work policy for the project will be provided with the project instructions.

Waiver for Extenuating Circumstances

If there are circumstances that prevent you from completing a lab or project assignment by the stated due date, you may email me before the deadline to waive the late penalty. In your email, you only need to request the waiver; you do not need to provide explanation. This waiver may only be used once in the quarter, so only use it for a truly extenuating circumstance.

Try Three Things Rule

Before you reach out to the teaching team with a question, you must try three things:

- Read the Syllabus
 - Can your question be answered by the syllabus?
- Check the lectures or readings
 - Was this already discussed in the lecture material?
- Ask a classmate
 - Does my classmate know this information?

Regrade Request Policy

Regrade requests must be submitted within a week of when an assignment is returned. A regrade request will be considered if there was an error in the grade calculation or if you feel a correct answer was mistakenly marked as incorrect. Requests to dispute the number of points deducted for an incorrect response will not be considered. Note that by submitting a regrade request, the entire question will be graded which could potentially result in losing points.

No grades will be changed after the final paper has been submitted.

Attendance Policy

Responsibility for class attendance rests with individual students. Since regular and punctual class attendance is expected, students must accept the consequences of failure to attend. Participation will be 15 percent of your grade.

If you are absent due to illness, religious reasons, etc. please email me directly. Please note, that work conflicts are not considered an excused absence.

Policy on Photos and Video Recording Course Content

If you feel that you need to record or take pictures of the lectures yourself, you must get permission from me ahead of time and these recordings should be used for personal study only, not for distribution. Unauthorized distribution is a cause for disciplinary action by OSSJA.

Note: If you've read this far in the syllabus, email me a picture of your pet if you have one or your favorite meme for extra credit!

Copyright

My lectures and course materials, including presentations, essay questions, outlines, exams, and similar materials, are protected by U.S. copyright law and by University policy. I am the exclusive owner of the copyright in those materials I create. You may take notes and make copies of course materials for your own use. You may also share those materials with another student who is enrolled in or auditing this course. You may not reproduce, distribute or display (post/upload) lecture notes or recordings or course materials in any other way (whether or not a fee is charged) without my express prior written consent. You also may not allow others to do so. Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Support and Judicial Affairs and may be subject to student conduct proceedings under the UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct.

Credits

This course draws on content, ideas, inspirations and much more from work by Lauren Peritz, Juan Tellez, Lauren Young, Megan Bradley, and many more individuals whose materials were public and contributed to the formation of the syllabus.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Assignments
1	Introduction to the Course & What is Contentious Politics	
2	Logics of Collective Contention	
3	Forms, Frames of Contention	Paper #1
4	Consequences and Outcomes Contention	
5	Polarization	Midterm
6	Protests	
7	Vigilantism and Extrajudicial Violence	
8	Repression	Paper #2
9	Non-State Actors and the State	
10	Technology and Contentious Politics	
Finals		Paper #3

Week 1: Introduction to the Course & What is Contentious Politics?

- *No Readings*

Week 2: Logics of Collective Contention

- Olson, M. (1971). *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Harvard University Press.
- Bates, R. (1981). *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies*. University of California Press.
- Camerer, C. F. (2004). Prospect theory in the wild: Evidence from the field. *Advances in Behavioral Economics*, 148–161.

Week 3: Forms, Frames of Contention

- Hayward, C. R. (2020). Disruption: What is it good for? *The Journal of Politics*, 82(2), 448-459.
- Benford, R. D., & Snow, D. A. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual review of sociology*, 26(2000), 611-639.
- O'Brien, K. J. (1996). Rightful resistance. *World politics*, 49(1), 31-55.
- Gause, L. (2022). Revealing issue salience via costly protest: How legislative behavior following protest advantages low-resource groups. *British Journal of Political Science*, 52(1), 259-279.

PAPER #1 DUE 00/00

Week 4: Consequences and Outcomes Contention

- Davenport, C., Mogleiv Nygård, H., Fjelde, H., & Armstrong, D. (2019). The consequences of contention: Understanding the aftereffects of political conflict and violence. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 22(1), 361-377.
- Madestam, A., Shoag, D., Veuger, S., & Yanagizawa-Drott, D. (2013). Do political protests matter? evidence from the tea party movement. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 128(4), 1633-1685.
- Zhukov, Y. M., & Talibova, R. (2018). Stalin's terror and the long-term political effects of mass repression. *Journal of Peace Research*, 55(2), 267-283.
- Wasow, O. (2020). Agenda seeding: How 1960s black protests moved elites, public opinion and voting. *American Political Science Review*, 114(3), 638-659.

Week 5: Protests

- Bursztyjn, L., Cantoni, D., Yang, D. Y., Yuchtman, N., & Zhang, Y. J. (2021). Persistent political engagement: Social interactions and the dynamics of protest movements. *American Economic Review: Insights*, 3(2), 233-250.
- Hager, A., Hensel, L., Hermle, J., & Roth, C. (2022). Group size and protest mobilization across movements and countermovements. *American Political Science Review*, 116(3), 1051-1066.
- Pearlman, W. (2018). Moral identity and protest cascades in Syria. *British Journal of Political Science*, 48(4), 877-901.
- Steinert-Threlkeld, Z. C. (2017). Spontaneous collective action: Peripheral mobilization during the Arab Spring. *American Political Science Review*, 111(2), 379-403.

IN-PERSON MIDTERM 00/00

Week 6: Repression

- Christian Davenport 2007. "State Repression and Political Order" *Annual Review of Political Science* 10: 1-23.
- LeBas, A., & Young, L. E. (2023). Repression and dissent in moments of uncertainty: Panel data evidence from Zimbabwe. *American Political Science Review*, 1-18.
- Jan Pierskalla (2009). "Protest, Deterrence and Escalation: The Strategic Calculus of Government Repression" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54(1): 117-145.

Week 7: Non-State Actors and the State

- Charles Tilly "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime" in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169-87.

- Lessing, B. (2021). Conceptualizing Criminal Governance. *Perspectives on Politics*, 19(3), 854–873.
- Phillips, B. J. (2015). What Is a Terrorist Group? Conceptual Issues and Empirical Implications. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 27(2), 225–242.

Week 8: Vigilantism and Extrajudicial Violence

- Gutiérrez-Sanín, F., & Wood, E. J. (2017). What should we mean by “pattern of political violence”? Repertoire, targeting, frequency, and technique. *Perspectives on Politics*, 15(1), 20–41.
- Bailey, A. K., & Tolnay, S. E. (2015). *Lynched: The victims of southern mob violence*. UNC Press Books.
- Baron, H., García-Ponce, O., Olmos Camarillo, J., Young, L. E., & Zeitzoff, T. (2025). Moral reasoning and support for punitive violence after crime. *Journal of Peace Research*, 62(3), 660–674.

PAPER #2 DUE 00/00

Week 9: Polarization

- Iyengar, S., Lelkes, Y., Levendusky, M., Malhotra, N., & Westwood, S. J. (2019). The origins and consequences of affective polarization in the United States. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 22(1), 129–146.
- Gidron, N., Adams, J., & Horne, W. (2022). Who dislikes whom? Affective polarization between pairs of parties in western democracies. *Comparative Political Studies*.
- Şaşmaz, A., Yagci, A. H., & Ziblatt, D. (2022). How Voters Respond to Presidential Assaults on Checks and Balances: Evidence from a Survey Experiment in Turkey. *Comparative Political Studies*.

Week 10: Technology and Contentious Politics

- Larson, J. M., Nagler, J., Ronen, J., & Tucker, J. A. (2019). Social Networks and Protest Participation: Evidence from 130 Million Twitter Users. *American Journal of Political Science*, 63(3), 690–705.
- Paluck, E. L., & Green, D. P. (2009). Deference, dissent, and dispute resolution: An experimental intervention using mass media to change norms and behavior in Rwanda. *American Political Science Review*, 103(4), 622–644.
- Miner, M. (2025). Strategic disruptions: The subnational targeting of internet shutdowns in India. *Journal of Peace Research*, 62(6), 2033–2051.

PAPER #3 DUE 00/00