

Wellesley College, Fall 2015

SOC 260: Dissent and Freedom of Expression in Global Context

Professor Thomas Cushman

Course Meets: Monday and Thursday, 11:10-12:20, Pendleton East 251

Office hours: Monday 10:00-11:00, Thursday, 9:00-11:00

Freedom of expression is considered one of the most fundamental human rights. Why is this the case? Why are people willing to suffer, fight, and die and to protect the right of freedom of expression? Why is freedom of expression so dangerous to those with political and social power? How do powerful elites mobilize against dissent and dissidents? This course examines sociological theories of communication and freedom of expression; dissent as a category of social action and dissidents as social type; and the fundamental importance of the idea of freedom of expression in human rights movements in the modern world. The course draws on the method of comparative-historical sociology -- looking across societies and different time periods in order to see basic patterns and social structures - in order to understand what sociologist Emile Durkheim might have called, "the elementary forms of dissident life." Our focus will be on case studies of dissent in authoritarian and totalitarian societies such as the USSR, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Burma, Iran and China, but we will also look at how dissent is expressed and controlled in liberal democratic societies.

Required Texts

Robert Darnton, *Censors at Work: How States Shaped Literature* (W.W. Norton, 2014)

John Rodden, *Dialectics, Dogmas and Dissent: Stories from East German Victims of Human Rights Abuse* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

Jonathan Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent: Charter 77, The Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism* (Harvard University Press, 2012).

Simon Cottee, *The Apostates: When Muslims Leave Islam* (Hurst and Co, 2015)

Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Teheran: A Memoir in Books* (Random House, 2008)

There will also be a number of articles on electronic reserve. Because many of the cases we will examine might be somewhat distant for the student in the early 21st century, the course will make active use of films in order to give the student a sense of the history and nature of the societies we will study, and how dissent and dissidents were (and are) treated.

Course Requirements:

1. **Attendance** at all classes is mandatory, as is class participation. In cases of absence due to religious observances, please note this to me in advance.
2. For each class period, students should come with a **question or issue** that they found most interesting for class discussion. These should be written in a paragraph and brought to class and turned in each week.
3. The emphasis on this class will be on **class discussions of cases**. Depending on the size of the class, students will take turns offering the class some very brief historical perspectives on the case under study that week and the professor will choose students in a rotational manner.
4. A **global conference** on “The Fate of Freedom of Expression in Liberal Democracies” will take place at Wellesley College from October 1-3, and will be integral to our course topics. Students are expected to attend at least one session of this conference as part of the course and write up a brief one page summary of what they learned and/found interesting.
5. The above **three participation activities** will constitute 35% of your grade
6. There will be **two essays of 6-7 pages**, and the due dates are specified in the course schedule below. Each paper will be worth 15 % of your grade.
7. The major project for the class is a **final term paper** that will be an extended case study of a dissident of your own choosing, using some of the methodological and conceptual insights from the class (I will actively assist you in choosing a topic, data sources, and interpretive strategies throughout the course of the semester). **A formal prospectus for this project is due by November 1, and should be a two-three page elaboration of your case, with an annotated bibliography.** The paper is a final paper that will be due on the last day of the final exam period in December. The term paper will be worth 35 percent of your grade. Sarah Barbrow, of the Clapp Library staff will offer research assistance and tutorials for all students in the class.
8. There are **no formal exams** of any kind in the class

Course Schedule

August 31: Overview of the course

September 3-7: Methodological Approaches:

- Comparative-Historical Sociology
- Biography and Society/The Life History Method

Read: C.W. Mills excerpt from “The Sociological Imagination” at:
http://sociology.morrisville.edu/readings/SOCI101/Mills-The_Promise_of_Sociology-Chp1.pdf

September 10: The Sociological View of Communication, Human Expressivity, and Identity

Read: Thomas Emerson, "Communication and Freedom of Expression" ®

September 14-17: Conceptual Dimensions: Conformity, Dissent, Dissidence, and Dissidents: Preliminary lectures by Thomas Cushman

Read: Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?" ®

Max Weber, excerpt on charisma from *Economy and Society*, ®

Film: "Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Pacifist, Nazi Resister"

September 21 - 25 : The Sociology of Civil Courage

Read: Jonathan Imber, "A Man After 60 Seasons" ®

Richard Swedberg, "Civil Courage (*Zivilcourage*): The Case of Knut Wicksell," can be found at

<http://www.soc.cornell.edu/faculty/swedberg/1999%20Civil%20Courage%20-%20The%20Case%20of%20Knut%20Wicksell.pdf>

Film: "A Man for All Seasons"

September 21-October 1: The State and Censorship in Comparative Perspective

Read: Robert Darnton, *Censors at Work: How States Shaped Literature*

(note: we will have a special class rescheduled on Wednesday, October 1, because of a conference on freedom of expression at Wellesley on October 1-2.

September 21: France

September 24: British India

September 27: East Germany

Paper One Due, October 5, by 5:00 in Sakai

October 5-9: The Totalitarian State and Dissent in the Soviet Union

Read: Carl W. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The General Characteristics of Totalitarian Dictatorship"; "The Nature of Total Ideology," excerpts from *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* ®

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Letter to The Soviet Leaders" ®

Roy Medvedev, "The Matrix of Dissent" and "On Being a Dissident" ®

Andrei Sakharov, "Introduction to *Sakharov Speaks*"; "Police Dictatorships"; "The Threat to Intellectual Freedom"; "Manifesto II" ®

Films: "The Life of Galileo", by Bertold Brecht, at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=074YKv7Owzs>

"The Sakharov Paradox" at:

<http://www.yourepeat.com/watch/?v=DjIKWxwdEls#!>

Fall Break, no class on October 12

October 16-22: Dissent in East Germany

Read: John Rodden, *Dialectics, Dogmas and Dissent: Stories from East German Victims of Human Rights Abuse*, in entirety

Film: "The Lives of Others"

October 26-29: Dissent in Czechoslovakia

Read: Vaclav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless" (sections to be assigned); "An Anatomy of Reticence," "Stories and Totalitarianism"

"Charter 77" ®

Jonathan Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent*, chapters T.B.A.

Guest Speaker (Oct. 29) : Jonathan Bolton, Harvard University, on the importance of the case of Czechoslovakia for understanding global dissent

November 1: Term Paper Prospectus Due on Sakai.

November 2-5: Apostasy as Dissent in Islam

Read: Simon Cottee, *The Apostates*, in entirety

November 9-12: Parallel Intellectual Culture as Dissent: The Case of Iran

Read: Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Teheran*, in entirety

November 19: Paper Two Due by 5:00 on Sakai

November 16-19: Dissent in Asia, Part I: Burma

Read: David Steinberg, "Globalization, Dissent, and Orthodoxy: Burma/Myanmar and the Saffron Revolution" ®

Excerpts from Aun San Su Kyi, "My Country and My People"; "In Quest of Democracy"; "Freedom from Fear"; "Speech to a Mass Rally at the Shwedagon Pagoda"; "Towards a True Refuge" ®

November 23-December 3: Dissent in Asia, Part II: China

Read: Perry Link, "Intro to No Enemies, No Hatred" and "Charter 08" ®

Excerpts from Liu Xiaobo, "The Spiritual Landscape of the Urban Young in Post-Totalitarian China"; "Using Truth to Undermine a System Built on Lies;" "To Change a Regime by Changing Society"; "Imprisoning People for Words and the Power of Public Opinion"; "Long Live the Internet"; "I have No Enemies"; "My Self-Defense" ®

N.B. : A few supplemental news articles and analysis on dissent in –present day China will be provided

December 7-10: Student presentations on term projects

