Course Description:

Political revolutions are very powerful historical events that shape states in which they happen. They also have a profound influence on the international system. The relevance and the importance of those states which do experience revolutions often is magnified exponentially as it was the case with France, Russia, China, Cuba, and Iran. The recent wave of revolutions in the successor states of the former Soviet Union but also in Latin America and Middle East has forced theorists and policymakers to increasingly pay more attention to this social phenomenon.

When it comes to the international system, more often than not, a state that experiences a revolution will shift alliances and thus it will upset the delicate alliance system and the balance of power. A disrupted international system is engulfed by wars that often could have devastating consequences for the region and the world. Furthermore, revolutionary states will seek to export their revolution and their ideology creating major problems for great powers and for other states in the system. Also, revolutions lead to the formation of new states that, as it was the case with the United States, could evolve from colonies to become the hegemonic power in the system. After experiencing a revolution, old decaying empires likes France, Russia, or China became central players in the international system. Often, revolutions transform status quo states into revisionist powers, a mutation that will have severe consequences on the international system.

In this course, we begin by exploring the major causes of revolution. Then, we will explore some of the effects that revolutions have on the international system and vice-versa. For the purposes of this class, we will not focus on coup d’états, civil wars, rebellions, and genocide. However, we will spend some time studying contemporary revolutionary movements that are based on a distinct ideology such as Islamism, Marxism, Nationalism, or Liberalism.

The course is organized in three sections. In the first section we examine major theories of revolution and how they treat such profound changes in the domestic politics of a given state. We also examine here why revolution and international conflict are linked and explore how that
does happen. In the second section we will focus on the effects that revolutions have on the international system. A major concern to us here is to examine how revolutionary states become ‘normalized’ and how these states are ‘socialized’ in the system. Finally we examine some contemporary patterns of revolutions that have been inspired and support by forces outside the control of the state in which they happen. By the end of this course, you should have a good grasp of the theoretical debates about revolutions and their international dimensions.

Requirements:

Given the very intensive nature of the course schedule you are expected to keep up with the assigned readings and to be prepared to discuss them in a knowledgeable way. This means dedicating substantial time to careful reading and thoughtful reflection before coming to class. If you fail to keep up with the readings you will not be able to contribute to and learn from the class interactions. Be prepared to ask questions and participate. Open discussion provides you with an important opportunity to wrestle with, criticize and engage the ideas presented in this course.

You are expected to write three midterm papers (about 6 pages in length). You also are required to make one presentation of the assigned readings for one class. The presentation should summarize the main points of the readings assigned and it should not exceed 10 minutes. Copies of the presentation must be prepared and distributed a day in advance to the classmates via email.

Required Readings:

The following books are required. In addition, a course-pack could be picked up at the New University Copy Center between the Mercer and Green streets. Selected articles could be downloaded from the web through JSTOR, Ingenta, Factiva, Project Muse etc.

Books:


**CLASS SCHEDULE:**

*Week 1: Introduction to the Course*


**Comparative Theories of Revolution**

*Week 2: Revolutions as the Result of Class Struggle*


*Week 3: Revolution: Debates on Patterns, Modernization, Meaning, and the Political*


**Week 4: Revolution: Structural and Non-Structural Factors: Elites, Demography, Culture and Agency**


**Week 5: Social Revolutions, The State, and the International System**


**Week 6: Revolutions: Values, Religion, and Ideology**


**Revolutions and the International System**

**Week 7: International Causes of Revolution**


(TBA)


**Week 8: Revolutionary States and the International System**


**Week 9: Revolutions and War**


**Week 10: Revolutions and Foreign Policy**


Ely Karmon, “Iran's Policy on Terrorism in the 1990s” September 8, 1998

**Week 11: Sponsored Civil Society Revolutions: ‘Flora and Color’ Revolutions**


**Week 12: Engineering Revolutions**

Readings on Arab Spring (Lybia, Syria, Egypt)

**Week 13: Revolution and Foreign Intervention**


**Week 14: The End of Revolution?**
