

*Nonviolence in Theory and Practice*  
Professor Dustin Howes  
POLI 4090.01  
213 Tureaud  
T TH 10:30am-11:50am

Office Hours in 219 Stubbs  
3:00-4:30pm on Tuesday and  
Thursday or by appointment.



Filipino Nuns confront soldiers, 1986



Egypt's Tahrir Square, 2011



Occupy Times Square, October 2011

## Course Description

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Amidst all of the war, exploitation, degradation, slavery and violence of human history some people have forwarded the idea that there is another way. The primary and most consistent critics of violence have been pacifists. In contrast to other political ideologies – including liberals, communists, just war theorists and conservatives – pacifists reject the idea that physical violence can play a legitimate role in politics. Derided as unrealistic utopians, impractical dreamers, or traitors to the nation, pacifists have usually rejected violence on the basis of moral principles. However, pacifists have also worked hard over the last couple centuries to develop a variety of techniques for confronting violence without using violence in return. These practices have been brought together under the heading “nonviolence.” Empirical evidence suggests that both the frequency and effectiveness of nonviolence has been increasing and that nonviolence is generally more effective than violence even in extreme circumstances. This has recently led some thinkers to advocate for a new brand of pacifism that rejects violence not only on the basis of moral principles but political principles and a distinctive understanding of political power.

Although pacifists have been the primary theorists and most prominent practitioners of nonviolence, the techniques have frequently been used by many people who are not categorically opposed to violence. Moreover, many of the methods for confronting violence that pacifists bring together under the heading of nonviolence, including civil disobedience, were developed by non-pacifists. This class examines the history, theory and current day practice of nonviolence in politics. We will explore a wide range of techniques (strikes, tree planting, performances, culture jamming, conflict zone reporting, boycotts, marches, etc.) for confronting a wide range of issues (the prison industry, colonialism, inner-city violence, dictatorships, gender and racial discrimination, homophobia, environmental degradation, abortion and access to abortion, gun rights and gun control, etc.) One of the critical questions of the course is whether or not the techniques of nonviolence imply support for particular people and causes or whether they are techniques that can be adopted by any and all political perspectives. Conversely, we will ask whether the use of nonviolence transforms the perspectives and opinions of those who use it.

Consistent with the theme of nonviolence in *practice*, the course asks you to not only study the theory of nonviolence but to get involved with organizations that do some form of political nonviolence and perhaps try it out for yourself.

#### Required Texts

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Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*

Dustin Howes, *Toward a Credible Pacifism: Violence and the Possibilities of Politics*

Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action, Vol. 1: Power and Struggle*

Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*

Gandhi, *For Pacifists*

**All other readings will be made available on Moodle.**

#### Course Assignments and Grading

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##### ***Nonviolence Notebook (30%)***

The class requires purchase of a notebook to record your thoughts about nonviolence, take notes in class and record items related to or referencing nonviolent resistance to violence. During the semester, I will ask you to periodically write about certain issues or in response to certain film clips both in and out of class. Most weeks of the course involve a discussion of readings on Tuesday and a viewing of film clips or a discussion applying the readings to a particular issue on Thursday. Please note that this will often require you to be in class to take notes or write responses to film clips. Any more than two missing entries will mean you are docked a full letter grade on the notebook.

In addition, the Nonviolence Notebook is a place for you to collect any encounters that you have with people practicing something that looks like nonviolence. These notes can be part of your big class project, but also might come at unexpected times and places. Does your 3 year-old nephew refuse to move from her car seat when asked? Does a friend diffuse an argument between an LSU student and a fan from an opposing team at a tailgate? Is someone protesting something on campus? The nonviolence notebook is a place for you to record such incidents and your observations about them. You can also record portrayals of nonviolence that you come across in the media (film, t.v., youtube, etc.).

##### ***Midterm Paper (7-10 pages, 30%)***

The week before the midterm paper is due, you will receive a list of topics and questions to guide the writing of your paper, or you can take up topics of your own choosing as long as they are related to the course.

The paper must engage extensively with at least three readings from the course. That means you explain an important idea introduced in three of the readings and either use them to support your thesis or take issue with them. For further guidance on what I expect from papers please see the attached "Elements of a Good Paper."

##### ***Major Project and Final (40%)***

The bulk of your work for the course will involve the final project. The final project is something that you will need to work on throughout the course of the semester, particularly if you choose option 2 below.

The final project will consist of either:

Option 1: *Research Paper*. A 20 page essay, which incorporates 5 of the course texts and 5 additional texts or articles to analyze the character of nonviolence. This will be a major research paper on the nature of nonviolence and/or a particular current or historical event involving nonviolence.

Option 2: *Nonviolent Action and Short Paper*. A 10 page essay, which incorporates 2 texts from the course and describes your participation in nonviolent action either of your own accord or as part of a larger group or organization. This option requires participating in something that makes the list of 198 methods of nonviolent actions described in Gene Sharp's book.

For both options, one place to start your research is the website [wagingnonviolence.org](http://wagingnonviolence.org) and another is the content of this syllabus where various organizations and issues will be discussed.

### ***Other Notes***

**Do not cheat.** Your papers should be aimed at expressing your own interpretation of the readings and your own perspective on the world. That is, the papers you write must be in your own words. When you borrow or draw upon the words and ideas of others you must acknowledge that with a footnote or a proper citation.

**There is no participation grade, but you will not succeed if you do not attend class.** On many occasions you will need to be present to record something in your nonviolence notebook. More generally, the papers require you to grapple with difficult ideas that you will probably not be able to fully grasp without the help of your classmates and myself.

**The use of laptops, cell phones and other electronic devices is prohibited during class.**

### Class Schedule

#### Week 1 Introduction to the Course

January 15<sup>th</sup> *How to Start a Revolution* online (52 minutes)

January 17<sup>th</sup> Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*

#### Week 2 Ancient Rome and the Refusal to Fight

January 22<sup>nd</sup> Reading:  
Livy, *History of Rome*  
Book 1: Chapters 55 – Book 2: Chapter 5  
Book 2: Chapters 21-24, 28  
Book 3: Chapters 33-7, 43-54

January 24<sup>th</sup> Screening of *Voice of Art: Iraq Veterans Against the War, Parts 1-3*.

#### Week 3 Plato and Punishment

January 29<sup>th</sup> Plato, *Gorgias*  
Gandhi, *For Pacifists* pp. 29-34. "Crime and Punishment"  
"Satyagraha or Nonviolent Resistance" and "Non-Violent Police"

January 31<sup>st</sup> Special *Times-Picayune* Report on "Louisiana Incarcerated"  
Clips comparing Norwegian and Louisiana Prison systems.

<u>Week 4</u>	<u>Christian Pacifism and the Second Amendment</u>
February 5 <sup>th</sup>	Jesus of Nazareth, "The Sermon on the Mount," Matthew Chapters 5-7 Excerpts from Tertullian, <i>Apology</i>
February 7 <sup>th</sup>	Clips from NRA promotional videos, <i>Bowling for Columbine</i>
<u>Week 5</u>	<u>Exploring the Character of Violence, Part 1</u>
February 12 <sup>th</sup>	MARDI GRAS HOLIDAY
February 14 <sup>th</sup>	Howes, <i>Toward a Credible Pacifism</i> , Chapters 1 and 2 Class Discussion and Free Write: What do you care about?
<u>Week 6</u>	<u>Exploring the Character of Violence, Part 2</u>
February 19 <sup>th</sup>	Howes, <i>Toward a Credible Pacifism</i> , Chapters 3 and 4
February 21 <sup>st</sup>	Clips from <i>Harlem County, USA</i>
<u>Week 7</u>	<u>Abolition and the New Slavery</u>
February 26 <sup>th</sup>	Adin Ballou, <i>Christian Nonresistance</i> William Lloyd Garrison, <i>The Anti-Slavery Society Declaration of Sentiments</i> Angelina Grimké and Theodore Weld, <i>Slavery As It Is</i>
February 28 <sup>th</sup>	Henry David Thoreau, <i>Civil Disobedience</i> Sex Slavery and Child Labor
<u>Midterm Paper Topics and Questions will be passed out on March 1<sup>st</sup>.</u>	
<u>Week 8</u>	<u>Women Performing Freedom</u>
March 5 <sup>th</sup>	Diana Taylor Visit from NYU
March 7 <sup>th</sup>	Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sylvia Pankhurst, Jane Addams
<b><u>MIDTERM PAPER DUE: March 8<sup>th</sup> at 5pm to Moodle.</u></b>	
<u>Week 9</u>	<u>Gandhi and the Monks</u>
March 12 <sup>th</sup>	Gandhi, <i>Hind Swaraj</i> , pp. 1-38
March 14 <sup>th</sup>	Clips from <i>Burma VJ</i>
<u>Week 10</u>	<u>Gandhi and the Artist</u>
March 19 <sup>th</sup>	Gandhi, <i>Hind Swaraj</i> , pp. 39-119
March 21 <sup>st</sup>	Clips from <i>Ai Wei Wei: Never Sorry</i>
<u>Week 11</u>	<u>Gandhi on Just About Everything</u>
March 26 <sup>th</sup>	Gandhi, <i>For Pacifists</i> , whole book.
March 28 <sup>th</sup>	NO CLASS (WPSA meeting)
<u>Week 12</u>	
April 2 <sup>nd</sup>	SPRING BREAK
April 4 <sup>th</sup>	SPRING BREAK

Week 13      Civil Rights Then and Now

April 9<sup>th</sup>      Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, On Cicero.  
Clips from *Eyes on the Prize*

April 11<sup>th</sup>      Dream Activists, Human Rights Campaign

Week 14      Civil Disobedience Then and Now

April 16<sup>th</sup>      John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* Chapter 6: Duty and Obligation, pp. 293-343.  
Quebec Student Movement

April 18<sup>th</sup>      Primo Levi, excerpt from *Other People's Trades*  
Clips from *The Interrupters*

Final Paper Topics and Questions will be passed out on April 19<sup>th</sup>.

Week 15      Power and Politics

April 23<sup>rd</sup>      Howes, *Toward a Credible Pacifism*, Chapters 5 and 6

April 25<sup>th</sup>      Howes, *Toward a Credible Pacifism*, Chapter 7  
Video of Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Homes

Week 16      Evidence and Inspiration

April 30<sup>th</sup>      Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, Part I

May 2<sup>nd</sup>      Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, Part III  
Community Gardens, update on Iran, Syria and other events

FINAL EXAM TIME: Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 5:30pm-7:30pm.

At the final exam we will screen a film and you will have your final chance at an entry into your Nonviolence Notebook before I collect them for grading.

**Major Final Project due to be submitted to Moodle at 5:00pm May 9th. We will then meet for class.**

## **Elements of a Good Paper**

**1. Original and creative insights into the issue at hand and/or novel interpretation of the primary texts.** The main purpose of writing a paper is for you to weigh in on a particular issue. Usually this will involve expanding upon the work of a thinker who you believe makes compelling arguments or by taking exception to an argument you think is implausible or not entirely accurate. This is also perhaps the most difficult element of a good paper because there is no formula for creativity. However, it is also the fun part: This is your chance to express and develop your views on some fundamental aspect of politics – take advantage of it!

Subpoint 1: If you mostly agree with an author, you will need to add something to their analysis. For instance, you might apply their insights to a historical or contemporary example or take up a counterargument they did not consider and help them account for it.

Subpoint 2: Almost any statement is technically “an argument.” However, a good thesis and a creative paper will usually involve a claim that people disagree about. For instance, while in some contexts the claim that “The grass is green” might make for a compelling thesis, in most it will not. Try to come up with an argument that you not only think *can* be made, but *needs* to be made.

**2. Solid understanding and fair treatment of primary texts.** Most of the questions I ask require that the views of a difficult thinker (or thinkers) are explained and explored effectively. This does not mean that you should agree with the authors we read or that the purpose of the paper is to regurgitate what the thinker says. However, it does require that you convey to me that you have a good understanding of the views of the thinker.

Subpoint: Supporting your assertions about a thinker will almost always require relying on evidence from the text. Offering quotations is always preferable to a citation without reference to a particular passage, particularly if you are making a claim about the thinker that is potentially controversial. A crucial part of offering a fair treatment of a thinker is to avoid taking quotes out of context. Page numbers are required for all citations. For texts outside of those assigned for the course, you will need to have a Works Cited page or footnotes with a full citation.

**3. Coherent argument and presentation.** This involves developing a clear thesis and thinking about how you can structure your paper to support that claim. Your argument will usually be stated early on in the paper and each part of your essay should be informed by your overall thesis and aims.

Subpoint: Good grammar is important to the extent that it affects the coherence of your argument. Make sure that your choice of words guides the reader effectively. For instance, be sure that you do not construct sentences that can be readily interpreted to mean two different things.

### **Grading Scale**

- A papers contain all three of these elements
- B papers contain two of these three elements and attempt all three
- C papers contain one of these three elements and attempt all three
- D and F papers contain none of these three elements and attempt less than three.

**Late papers receive a deduction of a full letter grade.**