Advocates and practitioners of non-violent opposition to imperialism and to other evils often look to M. Gandhi for inspiration and direction, envisioning him as having been the embodiment of these practices and principles. Indeed, Gandhi projected himself as a living “experiment with truth.” This seminar will explore the history and meanings of Gandhi as exemplar of non-violent non-cooperation and the larger issues of such resistance.

During his early years in South Africa and later life in India, Mohandas K. Gandhi developed and implemented a revolutionary political strategy: satyagraha. Gandhi drew on two traditions to formulate this powerful type of civil disobedience, synthesizing Indian principles of non-violence (as part of a universal moral order) with British principles of jurisprudence, citizenship, and the dignity of the individual. Satyagraha is best glossed as “non-violent non-cooperation with evil.” In Gandhi’s hands, this innovative strategy proved convincing to its Indian practitioners and likewise to many Euro-Americans, both who confronted and also those who adopted or adapted it. At the same time, a number of critics of Gandhi and his policies have stressed what they feel are the costs and limitations of his method.

In order to comprehend Gandhi’s use of satyagraha, we must understand its social, religious, and political contexts. This course will begin with a look at Gandhi and the culture which produced him. Here we will search for the Indian roots of non-violence and the concept of a universal moral order which encompasses both the cultural and natural worlds. We will then turn to Gandhi’s other source for satyagraha: his training as a barrister and his formative years in London society. We will thus seek understanding the presuppositions for these distinct moral and juridical orders.

Gandhi’s arenas for his formulation and application of satyagraha were the colonial worlds of South Africa and India. Called to South Africa as a fledgling Indian barrister, Gandhi found himself leading the Indian community against the newly created, racist policy of apartheid. His successes in South Africa then enabled him to assume a leading role in the Nationalist struggle in India against British imperialism. We will examine Gandhi’s role in these two arenas through his revealing autobiography and other sources.

Gandhi’s political successes against the British in South Africa and India led to the use of satyagraha in other contexts as well. Gandhi himself worked (with more limited results) for the reform of Indian society, particularly with respect to prejudice against untouchables and women. Free India’s political leaders have dealt variously with Gandhi’s heritage. For his disciples, both prominent and unheralded, Gandhi left a complex role to emulate. Using Gandhi’s own writings (including his autobiography and manifesto, Hind Swaraj), fiction, and more critical scholarly evaluations (various articles available on Blackboard) we will study some later uses of satyagraha within India. Further, we will see the problems faced by post-colonial governments advocating non-violence while simultaneously reforming and protecting the world’s largest democracy.

“Mahatma” Gandhi’s principles of civil disobedience have been applied in a range of political and social reform movements within and outside of India as well. A number of Indian, African, Euroamerican, African American, and other leaders interacted with M. Gandhi or his principles. Each seminar student will select one such leader or movement or a related issue for a
research paper and class presentation. Examples may be chosen—with the assistance of the instructor—either from India or from elsewhere in Asia, Africa, Europe, or the Americas. This ongoing comparison of political strategies with the Gandhian civil disobedience movement will provide additional breadth to the course.

Reading of the required materials and class participation are mandatory. There will be a series of four position papers (400-500 words each), a research paper of approximately 5,000 words (~20 pages) using primary sources, and a brief class presentation of that research.

Research Paper guidelines:
Each person in the colloquium will select (in consultation with Mr. Fisher) a research topic. Mr. Fisher will assist in identifying and locating primary and secondary sources for this topic. Each person will then proceed to research and write a research paper with full foot/end notes and bibliography. Further, each person will make a brief presentation of this paper to the rest of the colloquium. Throughout the term Mr. Fisher will be available for consultation on the outline and drafts as appropriate.

The position papers collectively count 30% (there are four assignments, I will count the top three grades), class participation counts 20%, the research paper counts 50% of the final grade. The grading is as follows: A+ 100-97; A 96-93; A- 92-90; B+ 89-87; B 86-83; B- 82-80; C+ 79-77; C 76-73; C- 72-70; D 65-69; F below 65.

Required Book:
Additional required readings are available on Blackboard.

Honor Code: The Honor Code applies to all assignments in this course. This means that any student found cheating, plagiarizing, turning in another person’s work as his/her own or otherwise violating the instructor’s explicit or implicit instructions will be subject to a hearing before the Student Honor Committee. To learn more about the Code, see the Rules and Regulations Section VI A and B in Fussers or the Student Handbook. (language courtesy of Susan Colley and the Student Honor Code Committee).

Accommodation: If you have specific physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities.

Seminar Meetings
2/4 Introduction: Gandhi’s significance and non-violence in world and Indian contexts
2/10 (Tuesday due by noon) Position Paper #1, 400-500 words on the nature of gender, rights, and law. Use as your starting point one or more of the following: *Autobiography*: Part I plus
from Blackboard either Jack, “Care and Rights” (24 pp.) or Hay, “Between Two Worlds” (15 pp.). Issues you might address as you develop your thesis might include: how does gender matter in British-American law; how does a cross-cultural education affect someone’s worldview; how does Gandhi present himself. Whatever your topic, develop your own thesis and then use specific evidence (with reference notes) to support and also qualify that thesis. We will circulate these papers to all seminar participants so that you can engage in our class discussion about each other’s work and the issues.

2/11 The Making of a Westernized Indian Barrister; gender, culture, and violence/non-violence Discussion of Position Paper #1 material

2/15 (Sunday at 6:00 PM) You are invited to my home (241 Oak St., 775-1728) for a dinner and discussion.

2/17 (Tuesday due by noon) Position Paper #2, 400-500 words on one aspect of the nature of colonial and indigenous laws and cultures. Use as your starting point one or more of the following: Autobiography, Part II sections 1-4 plus from Blackboard either Rudolph “Legal Cultures and Social Change” (39 pp.) or Roy, “Meat-Eating, Masculinity, and Renunciation” (30 pp.).

2/18 The Unmaking of a Westernized Indian Barrister Discussion of Position Paper #2 material

2/25 South Africa: The Roots of Satyagraha
Required: Autobiography, Part II sections 5-end and Part III; plus from Blackboard: Bose, “Hundred Horizons” (13 pp.).

3/3 (Tuesday due by noon) Position Paper #3, 400-500 words on applying non-violence in complex cases. Use as your starting point one or more of the following: Autobiography, Part IV plus from Blackboard either du Toit, “Experiments with Truth and Justice” (30 pp.) or Goswami, “A Re-reading of Gandhi’s Satyagraha in South Africa for contemporary community organizing” (10 pp.).

3/4 South Africa: Facing Apartheid Discussion of Position Paper #3 material

3/11 Indian and Western Civilization
Required from Blackboard Hind Swaraj (61 pp.).
(Schedule Individual Paper conferences with Mr. Fisher, at a time of mutual convenience between 3/12 and 3/17)

3/18 Violence, Non-violence, and the Environment
Spring Break

4/1 Indian Peasants, Workers, and Gandhi toward Independence

4/3 (Friday) by noon: Written statement of your research paper topic and preliminary bibliography

4/7 (Tuesday due by noon) Position Paper #4, 400-500 words on the nature of elite versus subaltern leadership. Use as your starting point one or more of the following from Blackboard: Shahid Amin, “Gandhi as Mahatma” (50 pp.) and/or Harish Trivedi, “Revolutionary Non-violence” (29 pp.).

4/8 The Peasants on Gandhi
Discussion of Position Paper #4 material

4/15 Gandhi and Women
Required: from Blackboard, Gandhi, “Women,” (38 pp.) and either Kaushik, “Women in Panchayati Raj” (11pp.) or Mookerjea-Leonard, “to be pure or not to be: Gandhi, women, and the Partition,” (17pp.) or both.

4/22 Gandhis (?)
Required: from Blackboard, any two (or more) of the following: Manto, “The Price of Freedom” (13 pp.) or Juergensmeyer: “Saint Gandhi” (20 pp.) or Gordon, “Mahatma Gandhi’s Dialogues with Americans” (16pp.).

4/24 (Friday) penultimate draft of paper due by 2:30 PM.

4/29, 5/6 Presentations of research paper (with First Responder)

As scheduled examination time final version of paper due.