The twentieth century has been called the “century of revolutions.” With the end of that century, critical questions arise about revolution as a means of social and political change. We will examine a number revolutions over the last hundred years in order to explore the following questions: What brings about revolution? Why do some revolutions succeed, and others fail? Are revolutions effective means of social change, or do they merely reproduce the problems inherited from the past? Have recent global changes rendered revolutions obsolete, or will they likely persist as a means of social and political transformation?

We will address these and other questions by examining theories of revolutionary change, and then see how these different theories stand up by investigating concrete cases of revolutionary movements. In particular, we will examine revolutions that have taken place this century in the “South” and the “East”: Latin America and Russia/Eastern Europe (though we will look at other examples as well). The goal of this theoretical and historical knowledge will be not only to understand revolutions throughout the world, but also to deepen our understanding generally of political and social change.

Course Requirements

The course will consist of both lectures and discussion. You are expected to attend each session, and complete the reading before class. Lectures will assume knowledge of the reading, and will typically lead to discussion; the discussion sections will be based almost entirely on the materials we have read in common.

Graded assignments will consist of the following:
-- weekly postings to the Blackboard discussion forum. By Friday morning (9 am), you are to respond to questions I have posed on the Blackboard forum with your own critical comments directly related to the reading. I will not grade the quality of your individual responses, provided they a) indicate that you have in fact done the reading, and b) reflect sufficient thoughtfulness to demonstrate that you are prepared to contribute constructively to the day’s discussion.

-- 2 times during the semester, at weeks of your choosing (preferably once before and once after the mid-term break), instead of the Blackboard posts you will submit a more formal, 2-page reflection of that week’s materials. Your reflection can be in response to one of the questions I have posed on Blackboard, or a question of your own choosing. These reflections will be graded.

-- an analytical essay (5-6 pages) responding to questions I will distribute beforehand (due Wednesday March 19).

-- an 8-10 page case study of a revolutionary movement. Beyond a narrative description of a movement, your paper should relate your case to some of the specific material we have discussed in class, for example, by applying a theoretical concept(s) we have discussed, or comparing your chosen case with another we have examined. You will be asked to hand in a one-page paper proposal and preliminary bibliography (the proposal is due April 7; the paper is due May 2).

-- a take-home final exam (due by May 15).

Grades will be determined as follows:

Two reflection essays: 10%
Analytic essay: 20%
Case study paper: 20%
Final exam: 25%
Class participation, including attendance and postings to the Blackboard forum: 25%

Please note: I request that you not use laptop computers or other electronic devices during class time. Even if laptops might not be distracting to the individual user, they can be distracting to other students. We’ll discuss toward the end of the semester whether or not the revolution will be tweeted.

Reading:

The following books have been ordered for purchase at the Oberlin bookstore:

*I, Rigoberta Menchú: an Indian woman in Guatemala* (Verso, 1984)

This book has not been ordered, but since we will read a number of selections from it you may want to purchase it:

All of the assigned readings (besides the two books for purchase) will be available on Blackboard.

**Class Schedule**

**February 3: Course Introduction**

**February 5: Some Central Concepts**

Kimmel, *Revolution*, chap. 1  
DeFronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements*, chap. 1  

**February 7: Marx and revolution**  
[Note: all sections this Friday meet @ 11:00 in KING 306]

Kimmel, *Revolution*, pp. 15-25  
Karl Marx, “The Communist Manifesto” in Goldstone, ed., *Revolutions*

**Feb. 10: Peasants and Moral Economy**

Eric Wolf, “Peasant Rebellion and Revolution,” in Goldstone, ed., *Revolutions*  
James Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, chap. 6

**Feb. 12-14: State and Revolution**

Charles Tilly, *European Revolutions, 1492-1992*, pp. 10-17  
Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, pp. 81-99; 128-140  
Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements*, pp. 24-31; 35-50  
[Note: all sections this Friday meet @ 11:00 in KING 306]

**Feb. 17-21: The Mexican Revolution**

Michael Richards, "The Mexican Revolution," in *Revolutions in World History*  
Walter Goldfrank, “The Mexican Revolution,” in Goldstone, *Revolutions*  
Enrique Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power*, chap. 11
Feb. 24-Feb. 28: The Russian Revolution

DeFronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements*, chapt. 2 (through "Long-Term Consequences" plus "Summary and Analysis")
Sheila Robowtham, *Women, Resistance, and Revolution*, chapt. 6
Eugenia Ginzburg, *Journey Into the Whirlwind*, pp. 3-51

March 3-7: Revolution in the Third World

Kimmel, *Revolution*, chapter 4
Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 1-62 [skim]
Film: *The Battle of Algiers*

March 10: Rational Choice and the Problem of Collective Action

Samuel Popkin, *The Rational Peasant*, chaps. 1, 6
Kimmel, *Revolution*, pages 188-206

March 12-14: Vietnam

DeFronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements*, chapt. 3-4

March 17: Culture Between Structure and Action

John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness*, chapter 1
Eric Selbin, “Agency and Culture in Revolutions,” in Goldstone, ed. *Revolutions*
Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* [excerpt]

March 19: Analytic essay due

March 19-21: Cuba

DeFronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements*, chapt. 5

[Spring Break]

March 31-April 4: Central America
DeFronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements*, chapt. 6
*I, Rigoberta Menchu*, chapt. I, IV, VI, VIII, XII-XIII, XV-XIX; XXXIII
UN Commission for Historical Clarification, “Guatemala: Memory of Silence,”
Conclusion, Part 1 [skim -- can be found at http://shr.aaas.org/guatemala/ceh/report/english/conc1.html]
Greg Grandin, “It Was Heaven That They Burned,” *The Nation*, September 8, 2010
Recommended: Stephen Kinzer, "Get Rid of this Stinker," chapt. 6 in *Overthrow*

April 7: 1968

Mark Katz, "The Diffusion of Revolutionary Waves," in Goldstone, ed., *Revolutions*
Immanuel Wallerstein, “1968, Revolution in the World-System” in *Geopolitics and Geoculture*
Mark Kurlansky, *1968*, chapt. 12-13; 19

April 7: Paper proposal due

April 9-11: Iran

DeFronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements*, chapt. 7
Stephen Kinzer, "Despotism and Godless Terrorism,” chapt. 5 in *Overthrow*
Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis* [selections]

April 14-18: 1989

DeFronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements*, chapt. 2 (from "The Soviet Union and Revolution in Eastern Europe")
David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics*, chapt. 1,5

April 21-25: Violence and Non-Violence in Revolution

Srdja Popovic, Andrej Milivojevic, and Slobadan Djinovic, *Nonviolent Struggle: 50 Crucial Points*
Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution*, chapt. 5, Scene 15-16

April 28-May 2: Globalization and the Arab Spring

James Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings*, chaps. 1-2


Screening of film “The Square” [time and place TBA]


**May 2: Case study paper due**

**May 5-9: What Future for Revolutions?**

John Foran, "Introduction,

Jeff Goodwin, "The Renewal of Socialism and the Decline of Revolution"

Fred Halliday, "Utopian Realism: The Challenge for 'Revolution' in Our Times," all in John Foran, ed., *The Future of Revolutions*

David West, “Social Movements, Global Crisis and the Failure of Institutional Politics, in *Social Movements in Global Politics*

Paul Mason, *Why It’s Kicking Off Everywhere*, chapt. 2

**May 15, 7-9 p.m. : Final Exam due**