It is undoubtedly true that various individuals with a myriad of motivations participate in these events. Given a comparative lens, however, it would seem that some more general force is behind the patterns seen within the field of variation...It is the goal of comparative political scientists to seek this force and see if it has generalizable properties."

Nationalism and democratization are defining features of the modern political age. This graduate seminar considers the interaction of these two global trends by comparing and contrasting some of the major mass movements for popular self-rule that have erupted around the world from the 17th century to the 21st. We will pay particular attention to the social foundations of these political revolutions, exploring the (remote?) possibility that we might uncover some common causal processes across this extraordinarily diverse set of events. Following the lead of sociologist Jack Goldstone, our working definition of revolution in this seminar....

“...focuses on efforts to change values and institutions and on mass action, but without insisting on revolutionary success or violence. In this view, revolutions are ‘an effort to transform the political institutions and the justifications for political authority in a society, accompanied by...mass mobilization and noninstitutionalized actions that undermine existing authorities.’ This definition includes both successful revolutions and unsuccessful but clearly revolutionary challenges to state authorities. It excludes both coups and civil wars that change only rulers, not institutions or the structure of political authority (such as most African and Latin American military coups). It also excludes reform movements that achieve changes without mass mobilization or attacks on existing authorities (such as the Prussian Reform Movement of the early nineteenth century, or the American New Deal under Franklin D. Roosevelt). It suggests that the key defining

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element of revolution is always the attack on authorities’ right to rule and mass involvement in that attack; but the level of success and the violence involved are contingent factors to be explained, not assumed as part of the definition.”

The social foundations of political revolutions are clearly multiple and complex. In line with the quotation by Petersen above, our main goal is to consider whether some social forces mattered more than others in specific revolutions, and whether we might fruitfully compare revolutions on such a basis. We will be especially attentive to the relative importance of social classes, collective identities, and transnational influences in sparking and sustaining popular protests for political change.

The following five books are available for purchase at the Seminary Co-Op Bookstore and on reserve at Regenstein Library. (Article- and chapter-length readings can be accessed through the course Chalk site, under “Library Course Reserves.”)

- Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine’s Orange Revolution* (Yale, 2005)

There are two types of writing assignments. First, each student is required to write three 3-4 page response papers to the weekly readings over the course of the quarter. These should be critical and creative responses, not summaries. Which week these essays are written is at the student’s discretion. Please e-mail me a copy of your essay by 8am on the day of class, and hand in a hard copy of your essay at the beginning of seminar.

Each student must also turn in a final written project, a paper of approximately 15 pages examining revolutionary events in one or a carefully selected small set of countries. Students may also consider collaborating with one or two colleagues on a more substantial paper project. All final projects (individual or collaborative) must be approved by either the instructor or the TA by May 1st. Everyone will discuss and receive feedback on his or her final project in a small group setting during our final class session on May 31st. The final papers are due on June 5th.

Final grades will be based on the final written project (50% of total), the weekly papers (10% each for a total of 30%), and class participation (20%). While I recognize and appreciate that some students are more talkative in a seminar setting than others, every student is expected to attend each class and actively contribute to class discussion at least on occasion.

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Course Schedule

WEEK 1 – March 29th
Introduction and Course Overview

WEEK 2 – April 5th
What are Revolutions, and Why Might They Happen?
- Foran, Taking Power, pp. 5-29.

WEEK 3 – April 12th
Early Democratic Revolutions in Europe

WEEK 4 – April 19th
Failed Democratic Diffusion before World War I
WEEK 5 – April 26th
Social and Anti-Colonial Revolutions

WEEK 6 – May 3rd
Revolutionary China, 1937-1989

WEEK 7 – May 10th
Post-Colonial Liberation Movements
- Foran, *Taking Power*, pp. 205-244.
- Younis, *Liberation and Democratization*, all.

WEEK 8 – May 17th
Contention in the Collapse of European Communism
- Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization*, all.
WEEK 9 – May 24th
“Color Revolutions” of the Early 21st Century


WEEK 10 – May 31st
NO READINGS: SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS OF FINAL PROJECTS

*** FINAL PROJECTS DUE AT 4PM ON TUESDAY, JUNE 5TH ***