

Learning Outcomes

Students who complete this course are expected to be able to do the following:

- To comprehend and articulate what various types consist of.
- To understand the arguments concerning the morality of methods of dissent.
- To provide novel arguments for against these competing theories of dissent.
- To display skill in writing coherent arguments about political disobedience.

Overview

This course is concerned with political dissent: with what dissent looks like, when it is morally justified, and what states ought to do in light of a dissenting population. Broadly speaking, it is structured in a manner where we progress in the extremity of the type of dissent we investigate (though we will also grapple with the limitations of framing forms of dissent in that way).

The class begins by discussing an often-overlooked form of dissent: voting. We investigate when voting constitutes an act of dissent, problems arising from interpreting what a vote constitutes dissent of, as well as the conditions in which it is rational for someone to vote. We will then address civil disobedience and alternate nonviolent dissent. We begin by examining theories of dissent provided by Thoreau and Rawls—theories that both describe what civil disobedience consists of as well as factors concerning its morality. We then examine civil disobedience in practice: focusing on the Indian Independence Movement, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the Anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa. We then turn to the legal counterpart of civil disobedience: uncivil obedience. Uncivil obedience involves the use of laws to undermine political systems—for example, the practice of intentionally refusing to settle legal cases on a large scale in order to overburden an unjust legal system.

After understanding what various forms of dissent consist of, we will investigate how effective they are. We will read excerpts from Gause's book *The Advantage of Disadvantage*, which argues that protests (especially the costly protests of disadvantaged groups) effect legislative change.

We then turn to discussions of political violence. While states sometimes use violence in order to achieve political ends, we will focus primarily on individual acts of violence to achieve political goals. Along these lines, we will discuss whether acts of oppressed

groups constitute violence or self defense. We will address terrorism—focusing on what it consists of and whether ecotage (sabotage for ecological purposes) constitutes terrorism. The course will conclude by discussing two of the most extreme forms of dissent—secession and revolution.

Expectations and Evaluations

Students are expected to attend lectures, to actively participate in discussions, and to complete reading assignments before class. Students will be graded on the basis of two papers, a final exam, and participation. The breakdown of grades is as follows:

First Paper	20%
Second Paper	20%
Final Exam	35%
Participation	25%

Both papers will be 6–8 pages in length (double spaced) and based on topics distributed to the class. The prompt for the first paper will be handed out on January 30th, and is due February 13th. The prompt for the second paper will be handed out on February 22nd and is due on March 8th. The final examination will contain factual information about the readings and lectures, and ask you to reflect on its impact on different moral dilemmas.

If you need an extension for one of the papers, please contact your teaching assistant before the deadline. While extensions typically not granted simply on the basis of other assignments that you have, they may be given in extreme situations or if you have a personal emergency.

Participation is based on your attendance and performance in discussion sections. While there may be some classes where participation points are awarded automatically, in this class students must actively contribute to discussion in order to receive full credit. Remember that although active contribution involves making your own voice heard, it also involves listening to and engaging with your peers.

Students will *not* be evaluated based on their political opinions. The course will present and examine a wide variety of political views—some of which you may agree with, and many of which you will not. Students from all backgrounds—democrat, republican, independent, undecided (or anything else) are welcome, and all will be respected. This course asks only that you examine the arguments for political views rigorously, not that you hold any particular political position.

Academic Integrity

You are expected to conduct yourself with honor and integrity throughout this course.

“Integrity of scholarship, otherwise referred to as academic integrity, is essential for an academic community, including UC San Diego. Academic integrity is built on a foundation of honest, responsible, fair and trustworthy scholarly activity. Without it, the degrees we confer, the research we conduct, and our reputation all diminish in value. Thus, the University expects that both faculty and students will adhere to its standards of academic integrity. The UC San Diego Policy on Integrity of Scholarship (herein the “Policy”) states the general rules associated with student integrity of scholarship. The Procedures for Resolving Alleged Violations of the Policy (herein the “Procedures”) are found at <https://senate.ucsd.edu/media/389895/procedures-for-resolving-alleged-ai-violations.pdf> and authorized by the San Diego Division of the Academic Senate’s Educational Policy Committee.” —UCSD policy on academic honesty.

Academic honesty involves adequately citing the sources you rely upon, not stealing other students’ exams or papers, not cheating on exams, and not plagiarizing any work. Anyone who is found to be dishonest will automatically fail the class and be reported to the UCSD Academic Integrity Office. If you are unsure whether something constitutes academic dishonesty, contact me or your teaching assistant BEFORE submitting your work.

Reading Schedule

Introduction	<i>What is dissent? What does it mean to be disobedient to the State?</i>	
01/09	None	
01/11	The Crito	Plato
Voting	<i>Is voting an act of dissent? If so, is it one of the least or most extreme forms of dissent?</i>	
01/16	Martin Luther King Day: No Class	
01/18	Democracy: Instrumental Vs. Noninstrumental Value	Elizabeth Anderson
01/23	Polluting the Polls: When Citizens Should Not Vote	Jason Brennan
Civil Disobedience	<i>What does civil disobedience consist of? Are there moral restrictions on when it ought to be practiced?</i>	
01/25	Civil Disobedience	Henry David Thoreau
	A Theory of Justice: 319-43	John Rawls
01/30	Non-Violence in Peace and War	Mahatma Gandhi
01/30	First Prompt Distributed	

02/01	A Letter from a Birmingham Jail	Martin Luther King Jr.
Uncivil Obedience	<i>Are there ways to use unjust laws to undermine those very laws? What might this process look like?</i>	
02/06	Uncivil Obedience	Jessica Bulman-Pozen & David Pozen
02/08	The Advantage of Disadvantage: Chapter 2	LaGina Gause
Self Defense & Violent Dissent	<i>If civil disobedience is ineffective, are other (possibly more violent) forms of dissent permissible? Under what conditions are they justified?</i>	
02/13	Communication and Reality	Malcolm X
02/13	First Paper Due	
02/15	The Wretched of the Earth: Concerning Violence	Frantz Fanon
Terrorism	<i>Is there a difference between terrorism and (violent) disobedience?</i>	
02/20	President's Day: No Class	
02/22	Terrorism and the Uses of Terror	Jeremy Waldron
02/22	Second Prompt Distributed	
02/27	Eco-Terrorism or Justified Resistance?	Steven Vanderheiden
Secession	<i>Under what conditions is a region (or people) justified in seceding from the state they belong to?</i>	
03/01	A Defense of Secession and Political Self-Determination	Christopher Wellman
03/06	Political Authority and Indigenous Sovereignty	Burke Hendrix
Revolution	<i>When, if ever, are revolutions morally justified?</i>	
03/08	Second Treatise of Government: The Dissolution of Government	John Locke
03/08	Second Paper Due	
03/13	Taking the Law Into Our Own Hands: Kant on the Right to Revolution	Christine Korsgaard
Review		
03/15	Review Session	None
03/20	Final Exam	