



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF AUCKLAND

FACULTY OF ARTS

POLITICS AND

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**POLITICS 740**  
**Revolutions, Ideas and Media**  
15 points

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

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Semester Two 2018 | Mon 9-11AM | Room 810-332

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Revolutions are politics writ large, moments when political reality and political aspirations collide and erupt in often epochal transformations. This course considers the aspirations and the reality, examining the role of revolution as an immensely influential idea (whether dream or nightmare) and hugely consequential event (whether willed, determined or contingent). In particular it probes the notion of politics 'writ large' – how revolutions have been shaped by the expression and circulation of



ideas through print and other media. Books, pamphlets, photographs and films can supply evidence in reflecting on the role of ideology, agency, public opinion and political culture in revolutionary change. The course's approach involves elements of comparative historical analysis, political theory, history of political thought, political sociology and media analysis. The course begins with conceptual and methodological issues before examining particular revolutions, centrally those in seventeenth-century England, eighteenth-century America and France, and twentieth-century Russia and China. This is followed by consideration of the demise of European communism and recent Arab revolutions as a preliminary to a concluding section, which asks whether fundamental political change remains desirable or possible in a twenty-first century context: does the dream still live, or has the nightmare ended? (Picture: Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*, 1830)

**Dr Geoff Kemp**  
**Course convenor**

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## PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course you should possess: a broad comparative knowledge of a number of revolutions and detailed knowledge of aspects of these; an understanding of revolution and resistance as a theoretical and actors' concept; an understanding of the interpenetration of ideas, agency and structural factors in revolutionary causation and process; knowledge of the role of the media in this nexus; an awareness of the contribution of historical revolutions to modern political culture; an appreciation of the 'historic turn' and 'linguistic turn' in the humanities and social sciences. You should also be better equipped to: think critically and with historical sensitivity about modern politics, political change, political ideas, and the role of the media; demonstrate effective research skills, dealing efficiently and productively with a wide range of sources and information; use the spoken and written word to convey your understanding to an intelligent audience; work individually and within a group, displaying appropriate commitment to set tasks.



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## COURSE STRUCTURE

**Requirements:** The course will consist of 12 two-hour classes, most of which will include presentations by class members, in which part of the class can be led by the presenter(s). You are expected to attend all classes and contact me if you are unavoidably absent. Assessment will be based on two essays and on a report accompanying the presentation. The first essay will count for 35% of the overall grade, the second essay for 50%, and the report for 15%. See below for further information.

**Reading:** Weekly readings can be found on Talis, via Canvas. These provide a shared basis for learning and discussion, to which class members can add the benefits of their own research and reading. A list of further reading will also be posted on Canvas, and you should feel free to ask me for advice on reading, though at this level everyone will also be able to act on their own initiative in locating material (of an appropriately reliable and scholarly kind).

**Flexibility:** The course by its nature covers a substantial amount of historical and political ground. One of the tasks ahead is to render revolution manageable as well as intelligible by combining consideration of broad issues with more detailed studies. Class members are welcome to suggest and pursue particular areas of focus, within the parameters required by assessment and overall course coherence. The emphasis is on the course being a collaborative venture in which we can share the scholarly labour and learn from each other.

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## **COURSE ASSESSMENT**

### Presentation and report

Value: 15% of Final Grade  
Due: To be arranged  
Length: Presentation of 15 minutes plus Q&A/leading discussion; submit report of 800 words (approximately two sides of A4).  
Topic: An agreed topic from list of classes in this Syllabus.

### Essay 1

Value: 35% of Final Grade  
Due: **9AM Mon 17 Sept** (or before). Proposal due week 5  
Length: 2,000 words  
Topic: See section on essays in this Syllabus.

### Essay 2

Value: 50% of Final Grade  
Date: **4PM Weds 31 Oct** (or before). Proposal due week 9  
Length: 3,200 words  
Topic: See section on essays in this Syllabus

**All students are expected to have read and understood the latest version of the Politics and IR Coursework Guide, available via the university website and on Canvas.**

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**SCHEDULE OF SEMINARS**

<i>Seminar</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>
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**PART ONE: REVOLUTIONS AND MODERNITY**

1	16 July	<b>Introduction</b> – no student presentation
2	23 July	<b>Revolutionary England</b> – Andrew
3	30 July	<b>America's Revolution</b> – Beth
4	6 Aug	<b>French Revolution</b> – James
5	13 Aug	<b>Marx and Revolution</b> – Nak, Kingsley

**PART TWO: MODERN REVOLUTIONS**

6	20 Aug	<b>Russian Revolution I</b> – Elena <i>Mid-semester break</i>
7	10 Sept	<b>Russian Revolution II</b> – Logan
8	17 Sept	<b>Chinese Revolution I</b> – Min, Shirin
9	24 Sept	<b>Chinese Revolution II</b> – Elzanne
10	1 Oct	<b>Late 20th-century revolutions</b> – Blaise
11	8 Oct	<b>Early 21<sup>st</sup>-century revolutions</b> – Sash
12	15 Oct	<b>The Future of Revolutions? Conclusion</b> – GK

## SEMINAR PROGRAMME

The following seminar list indicates the main revolutions or revolutionary episodes to be covered, and likely themes, though not everything will be covered in equal measure. The aim is to also allow space for class members to pursue specific interests within the broader span of each revolution or topic. Each class member is expected to select a week in which they will give their presentation (see p. 6): first come, first served (subject to my discretion). For readings see Talis on Canvas and also below. An asterisk (\*) indicates week with no student presentations.

### 16 July: **Introduction: Talking About Revolution\***

Outline of course approach, content, and assessment. Initial exploration of the development of 'revolution' as a political concept and object of study.

### 23 July: **Revolutionary England\***

The English Revolution, 1640-60, and 'Glorious Revolution', 1688-89. The 'public sphere' and revolution. Locke and ideas of resistance.

### 30 July: **America's Revolution**

Intellectual origins and revolutionary process, 1776 and beyond. The question of radicalism and the revolutionary legacy.

### 6 August: **French Revolution**

Origins and process, to 1789. Structural preconditions, 'enlightened' ideas and revolutionary action. The press, the people and the nation. Eruption and outcomes, 1789 onwards. Ideas and revolutionary outcomes. Revolutionary Terror: inevitable, necessary, contingent?

### 13 August: **Marx and Revolution**

Marx and the Marxist theory of revolution. Contexts: revolutions of 1848, Paris Commune. Marxism's legacy: political and theoretical.

### 20 August: **Russian Revolution I**

Origins and eruption, to 1918. Lenin and revolution. Determinism and voluntarism. Revolutionary party vanguardism. Ideas, media and the masses.

Mid-Semester Break

10 Sept: **Russian Revolution II**

Outcomes, from 1918 to Stalin era and beyond to the fall of Communism.  
Permanent revolution. Revolutionary culture. Nationalism/internationalism.  
‘Totalitarianism’.

17 Sept: **Chinese Revolution I**

Origins, to 1949 revolution and early aftermath. ‘Democratic’ and communist revolutions. Party, workers and peasants. Mao and Maoism.

24 Sept: **Chinese Revolution II**

Outcomes, from 1949 to present. Consolidating revolution. The Cultural Revolution. Ending the Chinese revolution?

1 October: **Revolution in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century**

Iranian Revolution 1979; post-colonial revolutions; revolutionary students 1968; Revolutions of 1989 (and the fall of Communism, reprised).

8 October: **Revolutions of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century**

The ‘Arab Spring’ revolutions; the ‘colour revolutions’.

15 October: **The Future of Revolution? Conclusion and review.\***

Revolutions in political and historical perspective.

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## **ASSESSMENT**

### **Coursework**

#### ***Presentation/report***

Each class member will deliver a short presentation, accompanied by a short written report. Overall, the presentations should supply the class with an overview of the revolution or part-revolution under scrutiny, along with attention to a particular aspect of the revolution or the revolutionary process, which will normally be, or relate to, the role of ideas and/or media. There will often be two presentations each week so teamwork and division of labour are called for – most obviously, one person can do the ‘general’ report, the other a more ‘specific’ topic. Topics and themes to be addressed are decided by the presenters but consult me if in doubt. In each case, a summary report of about 800 words/two pages (analysis, narrative or informative bullet points)

should be prepared as a handout for the class and for assessment. Produce your own copies for distribution or email the report to me the day *before* the presentation for copying. As far as possible this arrangement will permit you to pursue your own research interests. Reports will be assessed on the basis of the report and presentation content and each individual grade will count towards 15% of the final mark. The presentation can make use of whatever audio-visual aids are appropriate and available (most obviously PowerPoint).

## Essays

You should complete two essays. Essay 1 is 2,000 words and worth 35% of the overall grade. Essay 2 is 3,200 words and worth 50% of the overall grade. One essay should focus on a single revolution or relevant theme/issue that is not primarily comparative; the other should have a comparative focus, i.e. directly comparing two or more revolutions to address a conceptual and/or thematic issue. You can choose in which order you do these. You can also choose to focus on a broad or narrower theme or issue as long as it is within the scope of the course's interests, i.e. revolutions, ideas, media.

Your essays should respond to the 'questions' below or to others from past exam papers for the course (2010-2014), or you can propose your own essay question/title in a similar style, i.e. a thought-provoking quotation from the literature to which you can respond informatively and critically. Past exam papers can be consulted via the Library website (note: the course no longer has an exam!)

**You must submit essay proposals to me by the end of class in weeks five and nine.** These may be emailed or otherwise delivered. The proposal should give the title/question of your proposed essay, provide around 200 words indicating the broad content and approach, and list four or five books or articles forming your basic reading and research. **If such a proposal is not submitted, your essay will be docked five marks.** Your essay will build on this proposal. You can also build on material used in your presentation report in writing your essay but don't simply repeat the content.

The essay should be correctly presented and referenced. **Submit the essay online; you do not need to submit a hard copy**, nor do you need a cover sheet. To submit online, upload your essay to Turnitin on Canvas, via the Assignments tab. The essay will be marked using Grademark (on Turnitin), and you will be able to see the grade and comments by going back into 'Assignments' and clicking on your essay and Grademark. The essay deadlines are: Essay 1, 9am Monday 17 September (or before); Essay 2, 4pm Wednesday 31 October (or before). Feel free to submit early, to avoid later essay overload and guarantee that I have more time to devote to it. Don't submit late, which just throws marks away.

## Model essay 'questions'

For your essays you can choose from the following questions, or opt for an alternative as described in the section above. One essay should critically assess one revolution; the other should compare at least two revolutionary episodes. In each case you should engage critically and creatively with the theme, issue or argument in the quotation: this constitutes the 'question'. You are not required to focus on the quoted author, nor on the specific revolution(s) he or she addressed, though you may do so. Either way, you should bring the knowledge gained during the course to bear on the ideas raised by the quotation. The same revolution may feature in both your essays but undue repetition should be avoided.

1. 'Revolutions happen not upon every little mismanagement in public affairs. Great mistakes in the ruling part, many wrong and inconvenient laws, and all the slips of human frailty will be borne by the people without mutiny or murmur. But if a long train of abuses ... make the design visible to the people, and they cannot but feel what they lie under and see whither they are going; it is not to be wondered that they should then rouse themselves and endeavour to put the rule into such hands which may secure to them the ends for which government was at first erected'. (John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, 1690).

2. 'If revolution had aimed only at the guarantee of civil rights, then it would not have aimed at freedom but at liberation from governments which had overstepped their powers and infringed upon old and well-established rights. ... [T]he end of rebellion is liberation, while the end of revolution is the foundation of freedom'. (Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, 1963)
3. 'Vanguard ideology, and therefore the political character of the Terror, has a similar form in each of the great revolutions. ... For the placement of the intellectuals with reference to the different classes, and to the old order as a whole, remains fundamentally the same.' (Michael Walzer, 'Intellectuals, Social Classes, and Revolutions,' 1998)
4. Media in revolution has served 'two historic functions – the representation of elite self-purpose and the public redefinition of a wider social world [... producing] a grandiose system of public lying that paralleled the genuine communication between leaders and followers' (Jeffrey Brooks, 'Pravda and the Language of Power ...' 1995 [adapted])
5. 'Indeed, social media are a significant factor, but their role has been exaggerated. It is hardly the first disruptive technology to come along: the printing press, telegraph, telephone, radio, television and cassettes all posed challenges to the existing order of their day. ... The initial success of revolutions is determined less by the strength of the protesters than by the will and cohesion of the regime.' (Richard N. Haass, 'Reflections on the Revolution in Egypt', 2011)
6. 'What I want to propose here is that ideas and actors, not structures and some broad sweep of history, are the primary forces in revolutionary processes. Revolutions are human creations – with all the messiness inherent in such a claim – rather than inevitable natural processes. The focus, therefore, needs to be on people, not structures; choices, not determinism; and the transformation of society, not simply transitions.' (Eric Selbin, 'Revolution in the Real World,' 1997)

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## READINGS

Essential and recommended readings are identified for each week of the course on Talis/Canvas. These usually include for each week an overview of the revolutionary episode in view and primary political texts from the period, as well as other secondary literature. This year many weeks will feature one of the short chapters from the following book, which is worth buying from UBS: Rachel Hammersley, ed., *Revolutionary Moments: Reading Revolutionary Texts* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). These core readings will provide a shared basis for discussion but at postgraduate level you should also aspire to read more, and certainly your essays will be expected to go beyond those readings labelled 'essential' on Talis. The volume of volumes on all and any revolutions is immense. No one individual can master them all (although you can always try). A further list on Canvas will feature a range of comparative accounts, accounts of particular revolutions, primary sources, and other works of interest. It will continue to develop and I will provide further guidance in class and via Canvas. You should feel free to explore widely and share your findings with the class.