Topics in Ethics: Theories of Resistance

PHIL 1305

Spring 2024

University of Pittsburgh

Class location: 121 Cathedral of Learning
Meeting times: Mo/We 4:30PM - 5:45PM
Primary Instructor: Dr. Shawn Simpson
Pronouns: he/him/his
Office location: 1029A
Office hours: TBD
Email: sms461@pitt.edu

Members of the Maquis (French Resistance) in La Trésorerie, France (1944). Source: Library and Archives Canada

Overview

A common theme in human history is that of people resisting their oppression. Resistance is such a common part of the human experience, in fact, that groups have even come to be called *The Resistance,* or *La Résistance* as in the case of the French Resistance during the Second World War. Resistance occurs against tyrants, against unjust governments and laws, and against unjust institutions and practices. When we consider the ethics of resistance, we find that the list of ethical questions involved is long. *When* is resistance justified – under what circumstances? What *kind* of resistance might be justified – non-violent? Violent? What are the proper *goals* of a resistance movement? And how might resistance be carried out in a *preventative* manner? In this course, students will explore theories of resistance attempting to answer these and other important questions. The aim of the seminar is to develop a better understanding of resistance movements, their ethics, and the conditions that bring them about. A major focus will be on the difference between civil and non-civil disobedience and on attempts at justifying non-civil resistance methods.

Required Texts

All readings will be made available through the course Canvas page (via the "Files" tab). Two texts are required. Andreas Malm's *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* (2021) and Timothy Shanahan's *The Provisional Irish Republican Army and the Morality of Terrorism* (2008).

Grading

Attendance/participation	10%
Essay 1	45%
Essay 2	45%

Essays will be roughly 10-20 pages, double-spaced. The first will be short and the second one long.

Schedule

Required readings are marked with a star *. All other readings listed are optional.

Introduction

Jan 8

Overview of the course and syllabus.
Introduction to the social contract and civil and non-civil disobedience.
Optional readings: Rousseau, *The Social Contract,* selections;
Mills, *The Racial Contract*, selections; Sitting Bull's, 1882 speech.

Part 1: Civil Disobedience

~What is CD?~

Jan 10

*Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience"

Jan 15

--- No class --- MLK Jr Day ---

Jan 17

*Rawls, A *Theory of Justice*, selections
*Mills, "Ideal Theory as Ideology"
Welchman, "Is Ecosabotage Civil Disobedience?"

~When is CD justified?~

Jan 22

*MLK Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
*Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet"

Jan 24
*Gourevitch, "The Right to Strike: A Radical View"
*Regan, "The Case Against Vandalism and Violence"

Jan 29
*Gandhi, *Selected Writings* and *Collected Works*, selections

Part 2: Non-Civil Disobedience

~Vandalism and Sabotage~

Jan 31
*Delmas, "Uncivil Disobedience"
Pasternak, "Political Rioting: A Moral Assessment"

Feb 5
*Lai, "Political Vandalism as Counter-Speech"
*Lim, "Vandalizing Tainted Commemorations"

Feb 7
*Malm, *How to Blow up A Pipeline*, selections
*Lai, "Justifying Uncivil Disobedience"

Feb 12
*Malm, *How to Blow up A Pipeline*, selections 2
*Smith, "Disruptive Democracy: The Ethics of Direct Action"

~Violence and Terrorism~

Feb 14
*Malm, *How to Blow up A Pipeline*, selections 3
*Abbey, *Desert Solitaire,* selections – "Polemic: Industrial Tourism and the National Parks"

Feb 19
*Primoratz, "What is Terrorism?"
*FBI/DHS and other definitions of terrorism

Feb 21
*Coady, "Justifying Terrorism: Four Attempts"
*Shanahan, *The Provisional Irish Republican Army*, selections 1

Feb 26
*Magney, "The Intersection of Terrorism and Art"
*Shanahan, *The Provisional Irish Republican Army*, selections 2
******Midterm paper due******

Feb 28
*Fotion, "The Burdens of Terrorism"
*Shanahan, *The Provisional Irish Republican Army*, selections 3

Mar 4
*Card, *Confronting Evils*, selections
*Shanahan, *The Provisional Irish Republican Army*, selections

~~Revolution~~
Mar 6
*Jennings, *The Creation of America,* selections
*Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, selections
Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution,* selections

Mar 11
--- No class --- Spring Break ---

Mar 13
--- No class --- Spring Break ---

Mar 18
*Hobbes, *Leviathan*, selections
Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, selections

Mar 20
*Korsgaard, "Taking the Law into our own Hands: Kant on the Right to Revolution"
*Hill, "Questions About Kant's Opposition to Revolution"
Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, selections
Pettit, "Group Agents are Not Expressive, Pragmatic or Theoretical Fictions"

Mar 25
*Locke, *Second Treatise of Government,* Chapter XIX and section 227
Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations,* selections (pp. 157-172)
Flikschuh, "Reason, Right, and Revolution: Kant and Locke"

Mar 27
*Marx, "Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844", selections
Finlay, "Violence and Revolutionary Subjectivity: Marx to Žižek"

Apr 1
*Buchanan, "The Ethics of Revolution and Its Implications for the Ethics of Intervention"
*Norman, *Ethics, Killing and War*, selections
Rodin, *War and Self-Defense*, selections

Part 3: Preventative Resistance?
Apr 3
*Levitsky & Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*, selections 1

Apr 8
*Levitsky & Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*, selections 2

Apr 10
*Walter, *How Civil Wars Start*, selections 1

Apr 15
*Walter, *How Civil Wars Start*, selections 2

Apr 17
*Chenoweth & Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, selections 1

Date TBD
~Final Exam Day~
******Second Paper Due******

[Continued on next page…]

Course & University Policies & Services

Academic Integrity
Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

To learn more about Academic Integrity, visit the Academic Integrity Guide for an overview of the topic. For hands- on practice, complete the Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism tutorial.

Disability Services
If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Classroom Conduct
I expect you to complete the assigned readings before the corresponding class session. Some of the topics we'll be covering will be somewhat controversial and some of your fellow students will hold wildly differing views from you. I expect everyone in this class to treat each other with dignity and respect at all times in class. The purpose of this course is to provide a safe space for each of us to learn and explore ideas with each other – not to simply demean or put each other down.

Content Warning and Class Climate Statement
Our course readings and classroom discussions will often focus on mature, difficult, and potentially challenging topics. As with any course in ethics, course topics are often political and personal. Readings and discussions might trigger strong feelings – anger, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, and even boredom. Some of us will have emotional responses to the readings; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers' understanding of the readings; all of us should feel responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree) and be mindful of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom.

Class Participation
Lack of participation during class will not lower your grade. I understand that each of us have different degrees of comfort when it comes to talking in large groups and I do not believe in punishing shyness. However, active participation in lecture can affect your grade positively. Discussion during office hours may positively affect your grade too. Attendance is a part of your grade. Arriving to a session 10 minutes or more past start time will count as an unexcused absence (unless given prior permission).

Democracy in the Classroom
This course is meant to benefit *you*. As much as I will try to remain aware of how you all are doing and what is working and not working, you, more than I, know what is working and what isn't, what you are interested in or not, or what you need more time on. To the end of making this course work for you, I give you a say in just about all matters of course content (within university policy limits). Students may propose changes to and vote on when topics are discussed (earlier or later in the schedule), which topics are discussed (within thematic reason), and which readings are focused on during each section. Students may also propose and vote on changes to the general structure of in-class sessions (whether they want primarily lectures or group work or want to change things up for just one class in particular). If you have a proposal, either bring it up at the end of a class session or email me and I'll be happy to put it forward to the class. We'll discuss and vote on proposed changes anonymously through Canvas.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
The University of Pittsburgh does not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on disability, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, genetic information, marital status, familial status, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status or gender identity or other factors as stated in the University's Title IX policy. The University is committed to taking prompt action to end a hostile environment that interferes with the University's mission. For more information about policies, procedures, and practices, visit the Civil Rights & Title IX Compliance web page.

I ask that everyone in the class strive to help ensure that other members of this class can learn in a supportive and respectful environment. If there are instances of the aforementioned issues, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, by calling 412-648-7860, or e-mailing titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu. Reports can also be filed online. You may also choose to report this to a faculty/staff member; they are required to communicate this to the University's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. If you wish to maintain complete confidentiality, you may also contact the University Counseling Center (412-648-7930).

Gender Inclusive Language
Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Just as sexist language excludes women's experiences, non-gender-inclusive language excludes the experiences of individuals whose identities may not fit the gender binary, and/or who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. Identities including trans, intersex, and genderqueer reflect personal descriptions, expressions, and experiences. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (for example, first year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind, etc.). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students, faculty, and staff may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.

Sexual Misconduct, Required Reporting, and Title IX
The University is committed to combating sexual misconduct. As a result, you should know that University faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct,

including harassment and sexual violence, to the University's Title IX office. What this means is that as your professor, I am required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that are directly reported to me, or of which I am somehow made aware. After a report is made, you will be contacted by the Title IX Office for opportunities for support and options for proceeding.

There are two important exceptions to this requirement about which you should be aware:

A list of the designated University employees who, as counselors and medical professionals, do not have this reporting responsibility and can maintain confidentiality, can be found here: https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/civil-rights-title-ix-compliance/make-report/information-responsible-employees

An important exception to the reporting requirement exists for academic work and advocacy. Disclosures about sexual misconduct that are shared as part of an academic project, classroom discussion, course assignment or public awareness event, are not required to be disclosed to the University's Title IX office.

If you are the victim of sexual misconduct, Pitt encourages you to reach out to these resources:

Title IX Office: 412-648-7860
University Counseling Center: 412-648-7930 (8:30 A.M. TO 5 P.M. M-F) and 412-648-7856 (AFTER BUSINESS HOURS). This is a confidential resource.

If you have a safety concern, please contact the University of Pittsburgh Police, 412-624-2121.

Your Well-being Matters
College/Graduate school can be an exciting and challenging time for students. Taking time to maintain your well-being and seek appropriate support can help you achieve your goals and lead a fulfilling life. It can be helpful to remember that we all benefit from assistance and guidance at times, and there are many resources available to support your well-being while you are at Pitt. You are encouraged to visit Thrive@Pitt to learn more about well-being and the many campus resources available to help you thrive.

If you or anyone you know experiences overwhelming academic stress, persistent difficult feelings and/or challenging life events, you are strongly encouraged to seek support. In addition to reaching out to friends and loved ones, consider connecting with a faculty member you trust for assistance connecting to helpful resources.

The University Counseling Center is also here for you. You can call 412-648-7930 at any time to connect with a clinician. If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal, please call the University Counseling Center at any time at 412-648-7930. You can also contact Resolve Crisis Network at 888-796-8226. If the situation is life threatening, call Pitt Police at 412-624-2121 or dial 911.

LGBTQIA Services
The University Student Affairs has resources for LGBTQIA students at their website:

https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/shs/lgbtqia/resources/
There are also non-university affiliated local organizations: Persad Center: https://www.persadcenter.org/ (5301 Butler St #100, Pittsburgh, PA 15201), PGH Equality Center: https://pghequalitycenter.org/ (5401 Centre Ave Suite 103, Pittsburgh, PA 15232), Allies for Health and Wellbeing (5913 Penn Ave 2nd Floor, Pittsburgh, PA 15206): https://www.alliespgh.org/).

Writing Center
You are strongly encouraged to trade drafts of your writing assignments with your classmates for editing and to make use of the Writing Center.

Location: 317B O'Hara Student Center — Phone: 412-624-6556
Webpage: https://www.writingcenter.pitt.edu — Email: writecen@pitt.edu

Study Lab
A good resource for helping you plan your semester coursework.

Location: Gardner Steel Conference Center. — Phone: 412-648-7920
website: asundergrad.pitt.edu/study-lab. — Email: study.lab@pitt.edu

Statement on Classroom Recording
To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

Contacting the Instructor
Please touch base with me about any issues that you might have that could potentially impact your success in the course. Visit me during my office hours or e-mail me with any questions you might have. I am a resource to help you learn. If you are confused about the readings or my expectations from you, please reach out.

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