SOC 360 SOCIOLOGY OF DISSENT
Spring 2019

Dr. Rosa Vasilaki

Class Meetings:
DAY: tbc  HOURS: tbc

Course Description
Dissent occupies a particular place in contemporary societies. On the one hand, state mechanisms adopt pre-emptive policies and strategies in an attempt to prevent dissent from evolving into civil unrest and disorder, whilst on the other hand, dissent remains the most powerful tool in the hands of those social groups who feel and/or are marginalized, excluded or silenced. Arising in a number of contexts – the political domain, everyday life, popular culture, sports, institutions – dissent has been routinely associated with progressive causes and positive social transformation. However, similarly to the germane concept of resistance, dissent can also take regressive forms. In recent years, the multiple manifestations of crisis in the West have given rise to ideologies and practices with a strong anti-establishment profile coupled with an agenda of social exclusion, calling, thus, for a revision of our sociological horizon and analytical tools with regards to dissent. Using contemporary Greece as an entry point to these debates and combining key readings with interactive learning methods, this course presents a sociological perspective on dissent that calls into attention the meanings and conceptual histories of dissent.

To do so, the following topics will be explored throughout the course of the semester:
• The culture of protesting: civil unrest, public order/disorder and police violence
• The convergence between sports and politics: football (soccer) fan clubs, collective belonging and ritualised violence
• On the Left: anarchism and the emergence of identity activism (feminism, veganism, anti-fascist and anti-racist groups)
• On the Right: the rise of new fascism as an anti-establishment movement (white supremacy, ultra-nationalism, anti-immigration discourses)
• Alternative rationalities: contesting scientific expertise, alternative therapies and spiritualities, the rise of conspiracy theories
• Street art forms: hip-hop culture, street poetry, graffiti and landscapes of dissent in the urban culture and the new media
• Tradition as resistance: religion as a powerful institution and as a force of dissent

Course Resources and Activities
To investigate these questions, we will read and interpret texts, analyze audiovisual material (films and videos), work in groups to present arguments and debate issues across a range of positions, develop research and writing skills as well as evidence/data collections skills via relevant field trips.

More specifically with regards to each of these modes of learning:

Reading: we will read a wide variety of texts, which are specified below in the weekly class schedule.

Analyzing and interpreting: along with key texts, we will analyze audiovisual material – films and videos – related to the topics examined by the course. The use of audiovisual material will allow students to use the analytical tools acquired through the course to dissect and interpret the phenomena in question.

Group work: team work will enhance the culture of collaboration and exchanging of views. Team work also
allows for experiencing the difficulties of allocating tasks but also the joys of working together towards a common goal.

Writing: this course involves a substantial amount of writing of different kinds: every week (second session) you are required to prepare a short answer related to the question provided in the weekly class schedule; most significantly, the course requires the submission of a 4000-word research essay on one of the key topics addressed throughout the semester.

Debates: debates in the class around controversies will enhance the students’ ability to construct arguments and position themselves vis-à-vis controversies in a structured and measured manner as well as promote the values of dialogue and consensus.

Field trips: these trips will allow for the exploration of these issues on the ground as well as for the development of observation and evidence/data collecting skills.

Learning Objectives
By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1) Discuss fundamental concepts, theories and debates shaping the understanding of dissent, resistance and violence in social sciences.
2) Identify and critically assess a wide array of forms of dissent and their relationship to contemporary political, economic and social developments.
3) Compare, contrast and evaluate forms of resistance, dissent and violence in a variety of cultural, historical, social and national contexts.
4) Apply the theoretical toolbox developed through the course to analyze instances of dissent, resistance and violence.
5) Acquire the conceptual background and analytic capacity to recognize manifestations of dissent and engage in their own examination of contemporary forms of dissent.

Course Requirements
- Class attendance and participation: weekly individual and group assignments based on the questions provided on the weekly class schedule: 15%
- Participation in class debates (based on the questions provided on the weekly class schedule and prepared in groups): 20%
- Field trip attendance (two field trips)
- Mid-term exams: 20%
- Research paper of 3,000 words on one of the themes addressed by the course (specific topics to be discussed at the beginning of the semester with the course instructor): 35%
- Presentation of the research paper: 10%

Assignments
To receive credit for an assignment, you must turn it in at the beginning of class on the due date. No late assignments will be accepted.

Paper
You must produce and submit one research paper of 3,000 words on one of the core issues linked to the course. The precise topic will be discussed with the course instructor at the beginning of the semester. You should make an argument and support your position based on the bibliography provided by the course but also on research conducted by you. Coherent structure and argument, understanding of key concepts, range of material employed, integration of evidence and argument, quality of analysis as well as proper referencing and clarity of expression are all essential criteria which are taken into account for the evaluation of your essay (for more information, see attached rubric). This is an individual assessment.

Due Dates: Week 3: 1-2 page proposal including a clear research question, the objectives of your paper and the rationale of your argument.
• Week 6: 2-3 page working outline explaining the problem to be addressed, the context, the theoretical framework as well as a basic bibliography. This essay plan will help you to structure your thoughts, to identify any possible gaps and to effectively support your claims in the final draft.

• Week 11: Submission of final work

Exams
Midterm: tbc

Grading and Evaluation (also see attached rubrics)
Your grade for this course will be based on the following distribution:

• Class attendance and participation: 15%
• Participation in class debates: 20%
• Mid-term exams: 20%
• Research paper: 35%
• Presentation of the research paper: 10%

Grades are intended to give you a sense of the quality of a particular piece of work: roughly speaking, a B means that you have done a good job with the writing, the ideas, and the organization of the work; a C conveys that the work lacks some important qualities and has some problems, while an A means that the work is exemplary in some key ways: the writing is particularly clear, the ideas thoroughly treated, the organization of the presentation well considered and effective.

Class Participation: Your attendance and in class writing and analysis – is vitally important to your success in this course. (for more details, see attached rubric)

Attendance: Students are expected to report for classes promptly. CYA regards attendance in class and on-site as essential. Absences are recorded and have consequences. Illness or other such compelling reasons which result in absences should be reported immediately in the Student Affairs Office.

Policy on Original Work: Unless otherwise specified, all submitted work must be your own, original work. Any excerpts from the work of others must be clearly identified as a quotation, and a proper citation provided. (Check Student handbook, pg. 9)

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you are a registered (with your home institution) student with a disability and you are entitled to learning accommodation, please inform the Director of Academic Affairs and make sure that your school forwards the necessary documentation.

Books, Course Materials, Moodle

• Core reading:


Further reading:


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<tr>
<th>Class Day</th>
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| 1         | WEEK 1     | **SETTING THE SCENE:** The spectrum of dissent in the 21st century: the agents, the reasons, the manifestations, the transformations  
*Description*  
This introductory session will present the social and economic context within which dissent has become a main vehicle of political expression in the Western world and will canvass its contemporary employments for ultra-progressive and ultra-conservative causes alike.  

*Required reading*  

*Optional bibliography*  

*Assignment question (300 words)*  
- Do you think that manifestations of social discontent are increasing in recent years? If yes, what are the main reasons, in your view?  

| 2         | WEEK 1     | **SETTING THE SCENE:** Violence, resistance, dissent: definitions and theoretical background  
*Description*  
This session will address the key concepts, structuring the debate that is dissent, resistance and violence. It will also cover the main theoretical approaches addressing social unrest and manifestations of discontent, as well as the significance of dissent for positive and negative social change.  

*Required reading*  

*Optional bibliography*  

*Assignment question (300 words)*  
- What is the analytical difference between the key concepts of dissent, resistance and violence? Use examples to illustrate your definitions.  

| 3         | WEEK 2     | **PUBLIC ORDER AND DISORDER:** Protests, demonstrations, riots: social unrest and civil disobedience  
*Description*  
This session will look at the wide-spread practice of protests and demonstrations as expressions of social unrest. Using as an entry point the recent economic crisis in
Europe, it will examine facets of public protests – from strikes to riots and performative tactics – and will dissect the politics of social movements today.

**Required reading**


**Optional bibliography**


**Assignment question (300 words)**

• How have causes and drivers of protests and riots changed in recent years? What are the reasons for such change?

4 **WEEK 2**

**PUBLIC ORDER AND DISORDER: Police violence and the political ramifications of enforcing public order**

**Description**

This session will examine the role of police in enforcing order and will critically examine aspects of police violence as well as instances of violence against the police. Using Greece as an example, the session will look at the construction of police officers as violent subjects as well as the key symbolic function of the police in histories and mythologies of dissent.

**Required reading**


**Optional bibliography**


**Assignment question (300 words)**

What are the causes and consequences of police violence in contemporary states?
WEEK 3

FOOTBALL AND POLITICS: Football fun clubs and violent incidents: the politics of the pitch

Description
This week will look at football as a vehicle for politics – local and national – in Europe. We will look at the phenomenon of football hooliganism and its causes, football clubs and belonging as a form of kinship in the urban environment, the relationship between football and nationalism, but also at the significance of football for the formation of social and gender identities.

Required reading

Optional bibliography

Assignment question (300 words)
What are the causes and consequences of police violence in contemporary states?

WEEK 3

FOOTBALL AND POLITICS: Field trip: Football game (details tbc)

Assignment work (300 words)
Observation: How are the fans organized in the stadium? How are celebrations choreographed? How is discontent/disappointment expressed? What kinds of rituals are taking place?

WEEK 4

ON THE LEFT (PART 1): Far-left activism and traditional anarchism in the 20th century in Europe

Description
This week will look at the far-left as the conceptual and political space which has been mostly identified with ideas and practices related to dissent and resistance. Using examples from Greece, and Europe more generally, we will look at the ideological constitution of far-left activism in the 20th century.

Required reading

Optional bibliography
“The Radical left and immigration: resilient or acquiescent in the face of the radical right?” pp. 89-112 in Europe’s Radical Left: From Marginality to the Mainstream?, London: Rowman and Littlefield International Ltd.

Assignment question (300 words)
What are the main characteristics of far-left ideology? Who are the agents of change and what are the traits of the utopias these ideologies are striving for?

8 WEEK 4 ON THE LEFT (PART 1): Identity and lifestyle anarchism in the 21st century

Description
This session will look at the transformation of anarchism and far-left activism at the dawn of the 21st century. As identity politics have taken over traditional forms of left-wing expression, such as class-based analysis, identity and issue-led politics have also transformed the political topography of the far-left (rise of feminist, anti-racist, vegan etc. movements).

Required reading

Optional bibliography
Trocchi, A. (2011) “For the insurrection to succeed, we must first destroy ourselves” in A. Vradis, & D. Dalakoglou (eds.), Revolt and crisis in Greece: between a present yet to pass and a future still to come, Oakland, CA: AK Press & Occupied London: 299-327.

Assignment question (300 words)
What are the main characteristics of identity and issue-led politics? How do they differ from previous forms of far-left political activism?

9 WEEK 5 ON THE LEFT (PART 2): “The Baader-Meinhof Complex” (film watching and analysis)

Description
This week we will watch and analyze the film “The Baader-Meinhof Complex” (2008) which looks at Germany's Red Army Faction (RAF), the terrorist group which organized bombings, robberies, kidnappings and assassinations in the late 1960s and ’70s.

Assignment work (300 words)
Take notes: what are the main reasons the film characters get involved in extremism? What is their social background? What is the political context of the time? What kind of ideological principles motivate them?

10 WEEK 5 ON THE LEFT (PART 2): Special focus: Why do people become radicalized? Causes, effects and theoretical failures

Description
This session will examine the complex reasons people become radicalized and the ways dissent develops into violent extremism. We will look at the basic tenets of radicalization theories, its analytical capacity and the failures in interpreting people’s involvement in extremism.

Required reading
Optional reading

Assignment question (300 words)
Are causes of violent radicalization/violent extremism the same across the political spectrum? Are we right or wrong in seeking answers in a-political, stageist models?

11 WEEK 6 ON THE RIGHT (PART 1): Far-right movements, totalitarianism and nationalism in the 20th century
Description
This week will examine the phenomenon of far-right extremism. We will look at the identification of far-right politics with nationalism and forms of totalitarianism in the 20th century in Europe as well as the causes and the ways that far-right ideologies achieved dominance in times of crisis in the recent past.

Required reading

Optional bibliography

Assignment question (300 words)
What are the main characteristics of far-right ideology? Who are the actors abiding by these ideas and what are the traits of societies imagined by such ideologies and movements?

12 WEEK 6 ON THE RIGHT (PART 1): Anti-immigration and the rise of cultural racism: the new far-right in the 21st century
Description
This session will look at the transformation of far-right ideologies from a fringe and marginal position to which they were confined in the post-war era, to the movements of dissent and protest in the years of the recent economic crisis. It will also address their ideological shift towards cultural racism and the anti-immigration rhetoric, which has been gaining increasing prominence throughout the Western world.

Required reading

Optional bibliography

Assignment question (300 words)
How is the new far-right different from older expressions of far-right discourses? How does nationalism and xenophobia tap into feelings of cultural anxiety and how does
13 WEEK 7 ON THE RIGHT (PART 2): a. “American History X” (film watching and analysis)
Description
This week will watch and analyze the film “American History X” (1998), in which a former neo-Nazi skinhead tries to prevent his younger brother from going down the same wrong path that he did.

Assignment work (300 words)
Take notes: what are the main reasons the film characters get involved in extremism? What is their social background? What is the political context of the time? What kind of ideological principles motivate them?

14 WEEK 7 ON THE RIGHT (PART 2): Special focus: women in the far-right movements
Description
This session will focus on the gender politics of far-right movement: we will look at the specific ideologies of masculinity and femininity they produce and the reasons women get involved in movements that seem to confine them to traditional roles. We will also look at the reactions of far-right ideologies towards new gender politics of equality and how such developments get instrumentalized into discourses of cultural threat.

Required reading

Optional bibliography


Assignment question (group work)
Debate: Are all extremisms the same? Is violence ever justified?

15 WEEK 8 THE ECLIPSE OF REASON: Anti-establishment ideologies in the crisis era: specters of “the system” and its opponents
Description
This session will address the seeming retreat of rationalism in politics and the rise of political discourses adopting an “anti-establishment” rhetoric and agenda. Using examples from Europe and the USA we will examine the various conceptualizations of “the system” and its instrumentalization in different political and national contexts.

Required reading

Optional bibliography

Assignment question (300 words)
What is perceived as “the system” in different ideologies? What makes the concept so malleable and adaptable in different contexts?
16  WEEK 8  THE ECLIPSE OF REASON: Conspiracy theories and fake news

Description
This session will look at the rise of conspiracy theories and the impressive spread of fake news as responses and as concrete manifestations of dissent against “the system” and some kind of “hidden truth”.

Required reading

Optional bibliography

Assignment question (300 words)
What makes conspiracy theories convincing? What is the role of new technologies in supporting irrational claims and in creating “alternative realities”?

17  WEEK 9  ALTERNATIVE RATIONALITIES: The counter-culture movement and the rise of the New Age culture

Description
This session will look at the rise of the counter-culture movement of the sixties as the ideological matrix which popularized ideas and forms of alternative rationalities. Examining, also, the rise of New Age movements, as a form of dissent to the disenchantment of modernity and the power of “experts”.

Required reading

Optional bibliography

Assignment question (300 words)
What makes irrationalism appealing in the highly modern and rational societies of the West? Why do people dissent against “experts” and “technocrats”?

18  WEEK 9  ALTERNATIVE RATIONALITIES: Contesting scientific expertise: anti-science movements and the power of myths against facts

Description
This session will look at the recent proliferation of anti-science claims and attitudes and investigate the social ramifications of such trends. We will also explore the relationship between irrationalism, disenchantment and at the intellectual trajectory of forces which allowed irrationalism to emerge as a dissenting force in recent years.

Required reading
Optional bibliography

Assignment question (300 words)
What are the dangers of the spread of irrationalism in politics?

19 WEEK 10

DISSENT AND URBAN CULTURE: Aestheticized forms of dissent: graffiti, street poetry, hip hop music

Description
This session will explore art forms typically related with dissent, such as graffiti and hip hop. We will also look at the phenomenon of squats and other occupied spaces – such as squats for hosting refugees in Greece - and we will look at the ethics and aesthetics of such topographies and the way they alter perceptions about the use of the urban space.

Required reading

Optional bibliography

Assignment question (300 words)
What is the relationship between arts and politics in your view? Should art be political?

20 WEEK 10

DISSENT AND URBAN CULTURE: Field trip: Exarcheia

Description
Walking seminar in the area of Exarcheia, an area of high symbolic value in the universe of dissent in Greece.

Assignment work (300 words)
Take a photo of three graffiti you liked most and discuss what makes them interesting in your view.
WEEK 11  
RELIGION AS DISSENT: The transformation of the role of religion in the 20th century: from tradition to revolution

Description
This week will examine the changing role of religion in the 20th century from a force typically related to traditional power and established authorities to a force of revolution and dissent, particularly against forms of Western power.

Required reading

Optional bibliography


Assignment question (300 words)
Is religion making a come-back into politics? Has religion ever been marginalized in modernity?

WEEK 11
RELIGION AS DISSENT: Secular authority and religion as resistance

Description
Drawing on a number of examples from recent controversies revolving in Europe around religion – such as the ban against the veil, or the tension between blasphemy versus free speech – we will look at the ways religious subjectivity is reclaimed as a dissenting force against secular authority in recent years.

Required reading

Optional bibliography


Assignment question (group work)
Debate: Are European states right in their attempt to control forms of religious expression?
23 WEEK 12  CONCLUSION: PRESENTATION OF PROJECTS

Description
This session will be dedicated to the presentations of individual projects, which will be a short, ten-minute presentation of the research papers submitted in the previous week (week 11). Please keep notes during the presentations as you will be called to give feedback in the next session.

24 WEEK 12  CONCLUSION: EVALUATION OF THE PRESENTATIONS AND EVALUATION OF THE COURSE

Description
In this last session you will be called to give feedback to your colleagues on their presentations both in terms of content and in terms of presentation skills. You will also be offered feedback from your colleagues and from the course instructor.

You will also be called to give evaluation feedback and discuss your suggestions for the improvement of the course.

*Assignments must be submitted at the beginning of class on due date, unless noted otherwise on syllabus

Course schedule, in terms of subjects and readings, may be subject to change to benefit student learning and in keeping up to date with current research