

The University of Texas at Tyler
Dept. Of Political Science
Spring 2025, Monday 6-8:45pm
Room: CAS 257

Instructor: Amentahru Wahlrab, Ph.D.
Office: CAS 124A
Office Hours: M/W/F, and by
appointment
e-mail: awahlrab@uttyler.edu

POLS 4361/5350/ & PHIL 4300: THEORIES OF NONVIOLENCE

Course Description

Focusing on the political and social thought of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., this course will introduce students to a frequently neglected theme in the history of modern political theory: nonviolence & civil disobedience. Indeed, one of the central paradoxes of the “long” twentieth century of genocidal wars, concentration camps, urban riots, and ethnic strife, is the paucity of imaginative reflection on the conceptual meaning, causes and effects, and political implications of violence. Seeking to blend political, ethical, and sociocultural concerns, the course is designed to encourage students to embark on a personal examination of the connections between political power, violence, and ethically motivated forms of nonviolent resistance.

The course will be divided into four main parts. First, we will discuss the writings of three representative thinkers of the dominant “realist” discourse of *Realpolitik*. The next two sections will introduce the main ideas of Gandhi and King, and the last part will encourage you to investigate the pragmatic business of how nonviolent direct action “works.” As such an example, we will pick the remarkable story of the “Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo” in Argentina who stood up to state power despite considerable risks to their lives. As the “mothers” have shown, the test of any political theory lies in how well it can inform the concrete realm of political practice.

Let me add an important caveat: I am not interested in “selling you” on nonviolence, or to force a certain kind of morality on you. Rather, I want to critically examine long-standing assumptions about the nature of violence and political power from a cross-cultural perspective. Therefore, we’ll start the course by putting nonviolence on trial.

Here are the three main charges of the prosecution:

- 1) *Violence is inevitable in politics, because all people harbor violent tendencies as part of their human nature.*
- 2) *Nonviolence does not work in the “real” world of economic self-interest and power politics. The proof of this failure of the nonviolent method is that its proponents do not achieve their desired political and social objectives.*
- 3) *Subscribing to a philosophy of nonviolence and creating nonviolent social and political structures make us more vulnerable to our violent neighbors/enemies. Thus, we cannot afford to neglect our social responsibility and risk the safety and survival of our community by remaining “nonviolent.”*

After letting our “realist” political theorists make the case for the prosecution, we will listen to the arguments of the defense represented by Gandhi, King, and the “Mothers.” At the end of the course, you—the members of the jury—will deliberate on a verdict which you will present to the judge, the Honorable Prof. Wahrab.

In addition, the course will raise themes such as: 1) *raison d'être*: why nonviolence? 2) what is power? 3) common philosophical and moral underpinnings of Gandhi & King’s respective projects; 4) religious aspects of nonviolent theories; 5) the relationship between politics and culture; 6) the influence of Gandhi and King on other intellectuals and political activists like the Mothers of the Plaza the Mayo, Aung San Suu Kyi, Vaclav Havel and Cesar Chavez; the Middle East and North African Uprisings 7) the building and organization of non-violent political movements; 8) violence and gender 9) the *personal component*: what do nonviolence and civil disobedience mean to you and your own immediate context?

Course Objectives

It is important to me to encourage you to maintain an exploratory mind and create your own active learning environment—not solely interacting with me, but with each other as well. I will facilitate student discussions by creating a safe context that allows you to speak up freely. But I do not accept the equation of subjective experience with “truth.” You must be able to confront the questions I ask, regardless of your own preferences. Most of all, I am interested in preparing you for independent research which requires a tolerant, reflective mind, best summarized by Immanuel Kant’s dictum: “*Sapere aude*”—“Have the courage to use your *own* understanding!”

The course readings, assignments, and videos have been carefully selected to generate broad in-class discussions and oral presentations, ultimately guiding students to write informed essays. Responsible participation in class discussions will be based on weekly assignments.

In the second half of the course, students (group size will depend upon class size) will be responsible for a 30 minute in-class presentation on the readings (including leading class in the ensuing 45 minute discussion). Please clarify a suitable topic **with me beforehand during my office hours**. Please use supportive materials for your presentation (handouts, video clips, overhead, computer technology, etc.). Sign up for your presentation in the first three weeks of classes. You will be evaluated on four objective criteria: research, presentation, handout, discussion.

Moreover, you are required to write *four (3) interpretive essays* (five to six double-spaced, typed pages in length—**approximately 1500 - 1750 words not including footnotes and/or bibliography**). Each paper should address *one* well-formulated theme or problem taken from a) weeks 1-6; b) weeks 7-10; and, c) weeks 10-14. **Graduate students must also select a topic of their choice for a research paper** (25 double-spaced, typed pages, plus bibliography; topics must be clarified with me and approved by me in advance).

For the interpretive papers, you will pick your own theme/problem from the relevant readings of that particular section. In the paper, you should carefully explore the meaning of the theme/problem, and, with as much sophistication as possible, you should indicate how that theme/problem reveals something of political significance about the larger context from which it is taken. *No book reports or plot summaries please!* These short essays represent exercises in critical political thinking. **No late papers will be accepted.**

Research essay proposals (1-2 page abstract plus bibliography containing primary and secondary sources), will be due during the **10th week**. I will supervise each student’s progress,

as well as encourage you to consult with me during office hours to discuss *one* draft of your paper(s). The graduate research paper is due on Friday of the last day of class. **No late papers will be accepted.**

A Note on Grading

You must complete all assigned written and oral work in order to pass the course. Any student found guilty of plagiarism will fail the course.

Your in-class presentation will count for 15%, your four interpretive essays (and research paper if you are a graduate student) 70% (17.5% each (graduate students: 8.75% and 35% respectively), your attendance and participation 15%. Thus, your course grade will reflect your presentation, your willingness to participate in discussions, class attendance, and the overall quality of your written work. You are required to sign the circulating attendance sheet at the beginning of each class. Students who distinguish themselves during our class discussions will receive *extra credit*--meaning that if you find yourself between two grades at the end of the semester, you will receive the *higher grade*.

Please be advised that *overparticipation* and the monopolization of class discussion at the expense of your peers may count against you, especially if such actions consistently derail the course agenda. I reserve the right to cut off discussion at any point in order keep us on track and help *all* students to understand the relevant material. A significant element in the study of political theory is the ability to learn to listen to other voices.

For the purposes of this seminar, you should interpret the grades you receive in the following terms:

1) In-Class Presentations:

An “A” will only be given to presentations that are clearly superior in form as well as content. Typically, such presentations are coherent, well-organized, and adhere to the given time frame. “A” students show their thorough and careful reading of the text(s), bring in outside materials for reference, and generate genuine interest and excitement for their topic. They lead discussions effortlessly, distribute speaking time fairly, and stay focused on their theme. Use Hand-outs which help students follow along and suggest further readings (reference list to books and journal articles that you used).

If this grade is to mean something, just doing a “good job” is not good enough for an “A.” You must demonstrate your ability to go *beyond* the expected.

2) Interpretative Essays and Research Paper:

Much of the above pertains to essays/papers as well. In addition to treating the subject in a sophisticated and creative manner, “A” papers exhibit elegant and clear prose. Such papers draw connections between nonobvious points; they are well organized and furnish adequate citations of primary and secondary sources without losing their own unique and distinct “voice.” An “A” term paper in an advanced undergraduate course should add a “new wrinkle” to the existing body of literature on this topic.

A useful style manual will help you with citation formats. I recommend: Turabian, K. L., Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., & Williams, J. M. *A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations : Chicago Style for students and researchers* (8th edition. ed.). ISBN: 0226816389 (~\$13.29)

- “A” paper**—provides an original, insightful, and well argued thesis which is defended systematically using significant citation; demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the course material; is elegantly written and thoroughly proofread.
- “B” paper**—proves a coherent thesis which is defended; uses sufficient citations; demonstrates an understanding of the course material; is well written.
- “C” paper**—provides a more-or-less coherent thesis; uses adequate citations; demonstrates a basic understanding of the course material; is readable.
- “D” paper**—provides a basic argument; uses minimal or no citations; demonstrates minimal understanding of the course material; is poorly written
- “F” paper**—Paper is turned in but does not meet basic requirements (too short, does not answer the question, etc.). Not turning in a paper results in a zero.

UT Tyler and Course approved policy on use of artificial intelligence (AI)

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools’ ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler’s Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler’s Academic Integrity Policy.

For this course, **AI is encouraged during the course, and appropriate acknowledgment is expected.** I encourage you to explore using artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT, for all assignments and assessments. Any such use must be appropriately acknowledged and cited, following the guidelines established by the APA/MLA/Chicago Style Guide, including the specific version of the tool used. The submitted work should include the exact prompt you used to generate the content and the AI’s complete response as an appendix. Because AI-generate content is not necessarily accurate or appropriate, you must assess the validity and applicability of any submitted AI output. You will not earn full credit if inaccurate, invalid, or inappropriate information is found in your work.

[APA Style Citation Information](#)

[MLA Style Citation Information](#)

[Chicago Style Citation Information](#)

Office Hours:

I really enjoy meeting with students during office hours and encourage all students to stop by. I have traditional office hours from **Tuesday/Thursdays 11-1pm** CAS Room 224. In addition, anyone who cannot meet me during this time should contact me via email to schedule an appointment. I am also available by email and will respond to your emails within one *working* day.

Late paper policy

Papers will be marked down one third of a grade every (business) day they are late (i.e. 24 hours late turns a B+ into a B). If you do not turn in a paper you get zero points. If a paper is late two weeks or more you will automatically receive an F (59%). It is in your interest to turn all assignments in,

even if they are late, since failing to turn in even one paper makes it almost mathematically impossible to pass the class.

NOTE: This fairly lenient late policy will be compensated for by the fact that there will be NO extensions given, except in case of an extreme emergency. If an emergency arises, documentation is required (police reports, obituaries, etc.) and I should be notified as soon as possible.

Turing in papers

All papers must be turned in through **Canvas' Plagiarism software**. *Late papers will receive grades only, no comments.*

Academic Dishonesty

The UT Tyler community regards cheating as an extremely serious matter and deals severely with those who violate the standards of academic integrity.

Examples of academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to):

- Copying from another person's test paper
- During a test, possession of materials not authorized by the person administering the test
- Discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination or the divulging of examination contents to another when an instructor has allowed the exam to be kept by the student
- Working with others in taking tests or preparing academic assignments when not authorized by the course instructor
- Obtaining by any means another person's work and submitting that work as one's own. This included the downloading of academic papers or the purchase of papers written by others.

If a student is suspected of academic dishonesty, the classroom instructor may ask the student to meet with him or her to discuss the incident. A student may admit to allegations of academic dishonesty, waive the right to a hearing and accept penalties imposed by the instructor. The student may also deny all allegations and ask to see the Dean of Student Affairs. An accused student may accept the decision of the Dean of Student Affairs or ask for a hearing before an impartial hearing officer appointed by the university. Witnesses may be called and evidence presented. The hearing officer will consider all evidence and make a decision. The decision of the hearing officer may be appealed to the President by either the student or the Dean of Student Affairs. For a discussion of possible penalties, please see <http://www.uttyler.edu/mainsite/conduct.html>.

UT Tyler Resources for Students

- UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu
- UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu
- The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
- UT Tyler Counseling Center (903.566.7254)

COURSE READINGS (REQUIRED):

1. Machiavelli, Niccoló. *The Prince*. Translated by Harvey C. Mansfield. 2nd ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998:
ISBN-13: 978-0812978056

2. Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001):
ISBN-13: 978-0192854575
3. Dennis Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Selected Political Writings* (Hackett, 1996):
ISBN-13: 978-0872203303
4. King Jr., Martin Luther *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Edited by James M. Washington. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991:
ISBN-13: 978-0060646912
5. Bouvard, Marguerite Guzman. *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza De Mayo.* Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 1998:
ISBN-13: 978-0842024877
6. Manfred B. Steger and Nancy S. Lind, eds., *Violence and Its Alternatives: an Interdisciplinary Reader* (St. Martin's Press, 1999):
ISBN-13: 978-0312221515
ISBN-10: 312221517

RELEVANT SECONDARY SOURCES (SOME ARE IN LIBRARY):

- 1) Stephen Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound: The Life of M.L. King Jr.* (Plume, 1982)
- 2) Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience*
- 3) Catherine Ingram, *In the Footsteps of Gandhi: Conversations with Spiritual Social Activists* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1990)
- 4) Robert Holmes, *Non-Violence in Theory and Practice* (Wadsworth, 1990)
- 5) Susan Schechter, *Women and Male Violence* (South End Press, 1995)
- 6) Pam McAllister, ed. *Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence* (New Society Publishers, 1982)
- 7) Staughton Lynd and Alice Lynd, ed. *Nonviolence in America* (Orbis Books, 1995)
- 8) Robert J. Burrows, *The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense* (SUNY Press, 1996)
- 9) Petra Kelly, *Fighting for Hope* (South End Press, ISBN 0-89608-216-4)

A SHORT SELECTION OF USEFUL SECONDARY SOURCES:

A) GANDHI

- 1) Raghavan Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (Concord: Grove, 1973)
- 2) Mark Juergensmeyer, *Fighting Fair: A Non-Violent Strategy for Resolving Everyday Conflicts* (Harper and Row, 1986)
- 3) Mark Juergensmeyer, *Imagining India* (Oxford UP, 1988)
- 4) Joan Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* (Princeton UP, 1988)
- 5) Dennis Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi* (Columbia UP, 1993)
- 6) Yogesh Chadha, *Gandhi: A Life* (Wiley & Sons, 1997)

B) KING

- 1) James H. Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare* (Orbis, 1995)
- 2) James Colaiaco, *Martin Luther King Jr.: Apostle of Militant Non-Violence* (St. Martin's Press, 1988)
- 3) John Ansbro, *Martin Luther King Jr.: The Making of a Mind* (Orbis, 1995)

- 4) Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years: 1954-63* (Simon and Schuster, 1988)
- 5) Adam Fairclough, *Martin Luther King, Jr.* (University of Georgia Press, 1995)
- 6) John Dear, *The God of Peace: Toward a Theology of Nonviolence* (Orbis, 1995)
- 7) Greg Moses, *Revolution of Conscience* (The Guilford Press, 1997)

Course Schedule

WEEK 2: (Note that class 1 will be held on January 20th due to MLK Day)

Topic I: Introduction

Reading (After Class):

- ! Read Steger and Lind, *Violence and Its Alternatives*, Section I, pp. 3-53.

Topic II: Discussion of *The Prince*. Modernity and the New Science of Politics; Political Action and History; *Virtù* and *Fortuna*; Nation-building and Violence. Means-End Rationality. *Raison d'Etat*. The Role of War.

Readings (to be completed before class):

- ! Machiavelli, *The Prince* (pages for Penguin edition: pp.29-42; 47-53; 61-66; 71-73; 87-102; 130-138; Chicago Edition: 1-15; 20-25; 34-38; ch X; XIV-XIX; XXV-XXVI; Peter Constantine translation: 3-18; Ch 5-6; Ch 8; ch 10; Ch 14-19; Ch 25-26
- ! Steger and Lind, *Violence and Its Alternatives*, Section 5, pp. 201-250.

WEEK 3: Jan 27

Topic: Discussion of Niebuhr. The Christian Response to Machiavelli: "Augustinian Realism." Violence and Democracy. Human Nature. Original Sin. Political Bonding (Individual and Community). Nationalism & Violence.

Readings (to be completed before class):

- ! Reinhold Niebuhr, "Children of Light and Children of Darkness" in *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr* (edited by Robert McAfee Brown, Yale UP, 1986: **ISBN-13:** 978-0300040012 (excerpt online also).

WEEK 4: Feb 3

Topic: Discussion of Weber. Ethic of Ultimate Ends and Ethic of Responsibility. State and Violence. Leadership. Mass Politics. "The Demon of Politics and the God of Love"--incompatible? Summary and Evaluation of the "Realist Paradigm." Discussion of Arendt.

Readings (to be completed before class):

- ! Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" in *Political Writings* (edited by Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs, Cambridge UP, 1994): **ISBN-13:** 978-0521397193 (this essay is also translated in some places "The Profession and Vocation of Politics");
- ! and Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970): **ISBN-13:** 978-0156695008, *On Violence* (excerpt online).

WEEK 5: Feb 10

Topic: Discussion of Arendt, cont. Summary of realist perspective. Second attempt to define our key concepts. Origins of Nonviolence and Civil Disobedience in Western Traditions.

Readings (to be completed before class):

- ! Arendt, *On Violence* (excerpt);
- ! Manfred B. Steger, "Mahatma Gandhi and the Anarchist Legacy of Henry David Thoreau" *Southern Humanities Review* 23, no. 3 (1993).

- ! Steger and Lind, *Violence and Its Alternatives*, Section II, pp. 57-76; 89-92; Sect. VI, pp. 274-283.

WEEK 6: Feb 17

Topic: 1st interpretive essay due. FILM: R. Attenborough's "GANDHI." We will use all the time for the movie this week, feel free to bring popcorn but expect to go long.

Readings (to be completed before class):

- ! Parekh, *Gandhi* (pp. 1-48);
- ! Dalton, *Gandhi: Selected Political Writings* (pp. 3-25).

WEEK 7: Feb 24

Topic: Student Presentations. Gandhi's Life. Intellectual Influences on Gandhi. Nonviolence in the Eastern Tradition. Freedom and Self-Rule (*Swaraj*). Colonialism and Nationalism. Gandhi's Critique of Modernity. Caste and Ethnicity in India.

Readings (to be completed before class):

- ! Dalton, *Gandhi: Selected Political Writings* (pp. 95-126);
- ! and Parekh, *Gandhi* (pp. 49-63; 78-91).

WEEK 8: March 3

Topic: Student Presentations. Truth and Nonviolence, *Satya*, *Ahimsa*, and *Satyagraha*. Political Power and Nonviolence.

Readings (to be completed before class):

- ! Dalton, *Gandhi: Selected Political Writings* (pp.27-93);
- ! Parekh, *Gandhi* (pp. 64-77).

WEEK 9: March 10

Topic: Student Presentations. *Sarvodaya*. Gandhian Economics. *Swadeshi*. Gandhi and Socialism. Transformative Politics.

Readings (to be completed before class):

- ! Dalton, *Gandhi: Political Writings* (pp. 127-153);
- ! Parekh, *Gandhi* (pp. 92-126);
- ! And Steger, "Politician and Saint: Mahatma Gandhi's Ethical Socialism" (Online).

Spring Break: March 17-21

WEEK 10: March 24

Topic: 2nd interpretive essay due. VIDEOS: "EYES ON THE PRIZE."

Readings (to be completed before class):

- ! Washington, *I Have a Dream*, pp. vii-xxx.
- ! Washington, *A Testament of Hope* (Read: "Editor's Introduction" & Speeches 3, 5-8, 11, 14, 24-25, 27, 36-41, 43, 45-47).

- ✚ Steger and Lind, *Violence and Its Alternatives*, Section IV: 157-197.
- ✚ Selected chapters from Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound* (optional).

WEEK 11: March 31

Topic: *Student Presentations.* *Term paper proposal due.* Discussion of Videos. King's Life and the Context: America in the King Years. Malcolm X. Intellectual Influences on King. Racism and Violence. "Us" vs. "Them:" The Mentality of Exclusion.

Readings (to be completed before class):

- ! Washington, *A Testament of Hope* (Read: "Editor's Introduction" & Speeches 3, 5-8, 11, 14, 24-25, 27, 36-41, 43, 45-47).
- ❖ **Bibliography and 1-page abstract for long research paper due (grad. students).**

WEEK 12: April 7

Topic: *Student Presentations.* King, the Political Philosopher of Militant Non-Violence, Main Ideas and Concepts.

Readings (to be completed before class):

- ! Washington, *A Testament of Hope* (Read: "Editor's Introduction" & Speeches 3, 5-8, 11, 14, 24-25, 27, 36-41, 43, 45-47).

WEEK 13: April 14

Topic: *Student Presentations.* **3rd interpretive essay due.** The Practice of Civil Disobedience & Direct Action in the Argentinean Context. Organization and Resistance. Truth and Power. Socializing Maternity. Women and Political Power. Revolutionizing Motherhood. Nonviolence and Human Rights. Feminism and Nonviolence.

Readings (to be completed before class):

- ! Guzman Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood* (all);
- ! Steger and Lind, *Violence and Its Alternatives*, Section III, pp. 95-153.

WEEK 14: April 21

Topic: *Student Presentations.* Nonviolent Revolutions: Other Cases (Resistance to the Nazis in Denmark and Germany; Cesar Chavez in California; the Philippines Revolution; the 1989 Czech "Velvet Revolution," East European "Color Revolutions", the "Arab Revolts" and the "African Awakening").

PBS VIDEO: "A FORCE MORE POWERFUL."

Nonviolence on Trial: The Closing Arguments. Jury Deliberation. Verdict. Discussion of Verdict. Student evaluations.

Readings (to be completed before class):

- ! Steger and Lind, *Violence and Its Alternatives*, Section VII: pp. 308-350

4th Interpretive Essay Due April 25th