Contentious politics involve groups of people engaged in collective action to bring about or resist social change. Contentious actors challenge authorities or other elites. To my mind, contentious politics constitute one of the most fascinating and important aspects of politics. The stakes for those involved often are high. Injustice wears people down and challenging it never is easy or simple. Moreover, injustice often is not self-evident; convincing others that a particular situation is unjust may require considerable thought and some good luck.

Participants in contentious politics make decisions about how they will organize, the kinds of goals they will seek, and the nature of tactics they will employ. Research on contentious politics and social movements addresses these issues as well as the political contexts of movements and the conditions under which individuals choose to participate in them.

Our study of this research will involve considerable reading and writing. In addition to assigned reading, you might consult Mobilizing Ideas, an online source that reviews both contentious politics research and its practical implications. Participation in this class is not an endeavor for the faint of heart. Sustained participation in contentious politics requires commitment. Our study cannot match that commitment but the subject deserves our best effort.

Texts

Grades and Requirements
Grades are a source of unpleasantness and ambivalence for me. I am not at all sure of their value; their assignment often reveals a gulf in understanding between students and me. But assigning grades is part of my job and I am committed to doing it with integrity. Thus I do my best to assign letter grades that reflect the quality of students’ work. In my experience, some of that work is excellent; some is good; much of it is fair; and some is indeed poor. For the purpose of calculating
course grades, each assignment will be weighted according to the table below.

Regarding all written assignments: please submit them on paper, printed on both sides of each page. For the various iterations of your research paper, please include a list of references. Though no title page is necessary, a substantive title is essential.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment/(Due Date)</th>
<th>Percent of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper (case description)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1/22, 2 PM)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper (preliminary draft)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2/26, 2 PM)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper (final draft)</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3/11, 2 PM)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Reviews</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3/3, 2 PM)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3/16, 8 AM)</td>
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</table>

**Participation**

Students play a major role in the success of upper-level courses. Classroom discussions provide opportunity for students to learn from others' understanding of particular texts. These discussions also allow me to gauge how well students understand the reading and the extent to which my lectures should review or extend particular readings. For these reasons it is crucial that students come to class having read the texts assigned for the day. Students who are not prepared to take on significant reading and participation assignments should not enroll in this course.

Participation grades will reflect regular attendance, timely submission of empirical propositions (see below), and the quality of contributions to class discussion. I will not formally monitor attendance but will, on randomly selected dates, assign in-class projects that are due at the end of class; these projects will be part of participation grades.

The following is offered as a general set of guidelines and should not be seen as a promise of any particular grade. Other things being equal, timely submission of empirical propositions, regular attendance, and occasional questions/comments related to course reading will merit a grade in the range from C to B. Participation characterized by timely submission of empirical propositions that demonstrate increasing analytical sophistication, regular attendance, and specific questions about the reading that lead to clarification of concepts and arguments presented by the authors will generally merit a grade of B+. Students who go beyond this level to extend particular ideas from the reading and grapple with broader issues in politics will merit grades in the A range.

**Empirical Propositions (Hypotheses)**
During the first five weeks of the quarter, students should come to each class session with a typed, single-spaced page presenting one empirical proposition from each of the chapters/articles assigned for the day. To construct an empirical proposition or hypothesis, rewrite an author’s claim as a tentative if/then statement. Each proposition should be accompanied by a relevant quoted passage from the reading (with page number) and a short paragraph explaining the reasoning the author uses to support the claim. An example: if technology advances to facilitate communication across greater spaces, then the geographic range of social movements will likely expand. Another example: if the state has the capacity to repress, then movements are unlikely to engage in violence. We will review and share these propositions in class.

Empirical propositions are due at the beginning of class. Late propositions will not be accepted.

**Writing**
Because this course is designated writing proficiency, we will devote particular attention to improving the quality of your writing. We will take some class time to discuss common challenges in writing. In advance of those discussions, I offer the following suggestions regarding writing. First, use words economically. If a word, sentence, or paragraph is not essential to your analysis, omit it. Second, organize your effort by constructing an outline before you write. An outline will help to discipline your analysis. Third, do not submit your first draft; few of us are sufficiently talented to inflict our first drafts on others (I do not ask others to read my first drafts and I decline to read the first drafts of my closest colleagues). Plan your schedule so that you have sufficient time to complete a draft of each assignment and then return to it at least a day later. Re-read it and revise to ensure clarity. Fourth, consider your audience. For this course, you may assume an audience of political science students who have not studied contentious politics. You should demonstrate your regard for that audience by presenting clear explanations that do not unduly tax your readers’ patience. Fifth, for all assignments, be sure to cite all sources and append a list of references; please use parenthetical citation as described in the APSA style booklet (you can find an online version here). You may also use *Power in Movement* as a model for citation. Within the text, cite the author and date for ideas that are not your own and for facts that are not common knowledge. When you quote or paraphrase a very specific claim, cite the page number on which the relevant passage may be found. Try to paraphrase when possible, avoiding extended quotations. Finally, there are rules or conventions of grammar, punctuation, citation, and syntax. Please follow these rules.

For further discussion of grammar and style, you may wish to consult Jack Lynch’s, *Guide to Grammar and Style*, and William Strunk and E.B. White’s, *The Elements of Style*. The latter is available in most bookstores.

**Research Paper**
During the second half of this year, people all over the world have engaged in sustained, collective challenges to policies of their governments. Prominent examples of sustained contention include *India*, *Hong Kong*, *Lebanon*, *Iraq*, *Iran*, *Colombia*, *Chile*, *Bolivia*, *France*. Some of these protests have received more attention than others but all have involved organized groups engaged in sustained challenges to their governments. Your assignment is to select one of these cases and write a research paper about it. If you would like to write your paper on a different contemporary case, you should discuss it with me. You will complete your research paper in a three-step process: description of your case, preliminary (not first) draft, final draft.

**Case Description (due 22 January)**
Read as much as you can about each case to discern which interest you. Also assess the availability of information about each. After selecting your case, you should prepare a description (4-6 pages). Your case description should identify the actors involved, the purposes and identities they share, the tactics they have used, authorities’ response(s), and any outcomes of contention. You should organize your paper in a logical manner. It should not read as a series of answers to disconnected questions. These papers will comprise a section of your research papers.

Preliminary Draft (due 26 February)
After you have selected your case, you should begin to think about the hypothesis you would like to test. As you prepare empirical propositions for class each day, reflect on whether any of them offers a relevant hypothesis. That is, consider whether your case would provide information necessary to evaluate the hypothesis. While you will not formally test your hypothesis with a single case study, you should be able to assess whether your case is consistent with the hypothesis. *Power in Movement* and the journal articles we will read offer numerous hypotheses that might orient your research.

These articles also provide models for the organization of your research papers. Typically such papers begin by describing either the conceptual or empirical context of the case. They then frame a research question (the interrogative form of your hypothesis) and review previous research that is related to your question. This review should lead to the statement of the hypothesis followed by the presentation and evaluation of evidence (results). You should conclude by explaining how your research has added to our understanding of contentious politics, the limitations of your study, and how future research might address remaining puzzles/questions.

Research papers should range from nine to twelve pages. Drafts should be complete, well written, and reflect your knowledge of both the case and relevant research.

Final Draft (due 11 March)
After submitting your preliminary draft, you will have the opportunity to revise in response to comments from me and a team of your peers. To facilitate peer review, students will be assigned to teams of three. On 26 February by 2 PM, you will distribute a preliminary (not first) draft of your research paper to me and to the members of your peer review team. Though you may arrange to distribute electronic copies of your paper to your group members, I will accept only paper copies. Group members will return the draft to you, along with written comments, on 3 March during class. I will return your preliminary draft during a meeting with you the same week. At that time we will discuss your plans for revision.

Because of the short time between submission of preliminary drafts and the due date for the final version of your research paper, late preliminary drafts will not be accepted. Absent a documented emergency, any student who does not submit a preliminary draft on time will forfeit 10% of their course grade and the opportunity for comments prior to the final paper.

Tentative Schedule (I may make changes in the schedule below. It is your responsibility to be aware of any such changes.)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic and Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading should be completed by the BEGINNING of the class for which it is assigned.</td>
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</table>
Students should bring texts to class. Recommended readings are intended to provide a resource for students interested in particular topics.

| 1/7 | Contentious Politics, Social Movements, and Social Change  
Erica Chenowith on Nonviolent Civil Resistance. (We will watch in class)  
Tarrow, Introduction, Chapter 1 |
| 1/9 | Transforming Contention I  
Video: Frontline: Revolution in Cairo (We will watch in class)  
Tarrow, Chapter 2  
Recommended:  
| 1/14 | Transforming Contention II  
Tarrow, Chapters 3-4  
Recommended:  
<p>| 1/16 | Contentious Action: The Repertoire |</p>
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<tr>
<th>1/21</th>
<th>The Organization of Contention</th>
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<td>Tarrow, Chapter 6</td>
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**Recommended:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1/22</th>
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<th>1/23</th>
<th>Movement Cultures</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tarrow, Chapter 7</td>
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</table>
| 1/28 | **Political Opportunities and Threats**  
|      | Tarrow, Chapters 8,10  

**Recommended:**  

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Recommended:  

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Political Opportunities and Threats  
Tarrow, Chapters 8,10  

**Recommended:**  

<table>
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<th>1/30</th>
<th>Movement Outcomes and Social Change</th>
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Recommended:


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<th>2/4</th>
<th>Transnational Activism</th>
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Recommended:


**2/6**

**Contention in Multiple Dimensions**

Tarrow, Conclusion


**2/11**

**Courts, Lawyers, and Social Change**


Recommended:


### 2/13 Making a Dreamer
Nicholls, Introduction, Chs 1-2

**Recommended:**

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### 2/18 Expanding a Collective Identity
Nicholls, Chs 3-5

**Recommended:**

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### 2/20 Transforming a Narrative
Nicholls, Ch 6, Conclusion

**Recommended:**

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### 2/25 Explaining Mobilization I
Munson, Ch 1-3

Film: Union Maids (We will watch in class)

**Recommended:**

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### 2/26 Research Paper Drafts Due 2 PM (in AH 415)

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### 2/27 Explaining Mobilization II
Munson, Ch 4

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### 3/3 Peer Review Meetings (reviews due at 2 PM in class)

**Paper Consultations by Appointment**

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### 3/4 Paper Consultations by Appointment
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>3/6</td>
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<td>3/10</td>
<td>Movement Structures</td>
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<td>Munson, Chs 5-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/12</td>
<td>Ideas, Social Structure, and Social Movements</td>
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<td>Munson, Chs 7-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/16</td>
<td>Final Examination</td>
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<td>8-10 AM</td>
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**Instructor's Policies**

**Make-up Exams:** Students are expected to take the final examination at the scheduled times. If you know now that you cannot take the exam at the scheduled time, you should not enroll in this class.

**Accommodations:** Please let me know if you require any accommodations regarding class sessions or examinations. I will work with the Disability Access Center, [https://disability.wwu.edu](https://disability.wwu.edu), to provide appropriate accommodations.

Western also has a policy to ensure religious accommodations. You may find the relevant information here: [https://syllabi.wwu.edu](https://syllabi.wwu.edu).

**Academic Honesty:** The core requirement of academic honesty is that we do not take credit for others’ work. When we draw on the work of others (through direct quotation, the use of ideas developed by other authors, or by making factual claims), we must acknowledge original sources. There are various methods for citing sources. We will use American Political Science Association style as noted above. You may find information about academic dishonesty at [http://libguides.wwu.edu/plagiarism](http://libguides.wwu.edu/plagiarism). You may find more general discussion of academic integrity at: [http://www.wwu.edu/integrity/](http://www.wwu.edu/integrity/). I am happy to discuss any of these issues with you.

**Student Learning Objectives**

Of late, Western (along with many other universities) has taken great interest in the practice of assessment. One of the consequences of this interest is a requirement that faculty list student
learning objectives on their syllabi. Please do not let the following limit what you take from your work in this class.

1. Develop substantive knowledge in the disciplines of political science and sociology related to contentious politics and social movements.
2. Practice analytical skills in interpreting data.
3. Demonstrate writing competence.
4. Engage in independent research. The empirical propositions and research paper will afford you the opportunity to develop and practice a set of skills central to the practice of social science research.
5. Demonstrate critical, independent thinking about politics and public life as related to institutional and extra-institutional politics.