

# GOVT 3785 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

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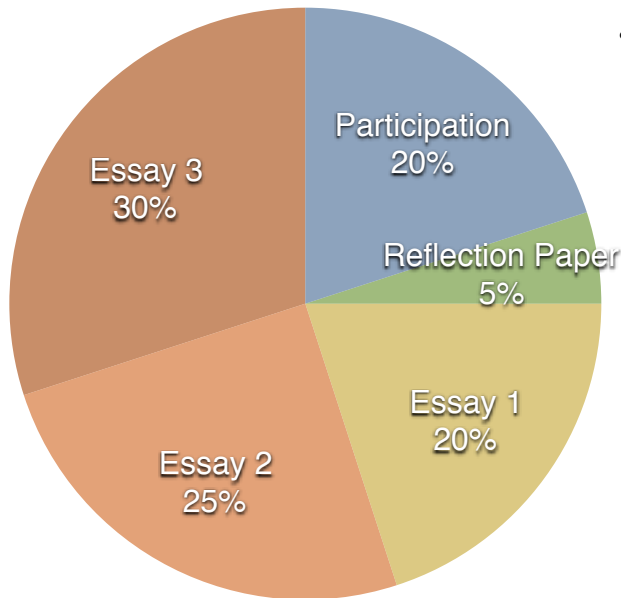
**Course Description:** This course examines controversies in the theory and history of civil disobedience. Do citizens have obligations to obey unjust laws? Can law breaking ever be civil rather than criminal? Do disruptive protests endanger democracy or strengthen the rule of law? How do acts of protest influence public opinion and policy? How is the distinction between violence and non-violence politically constructed and contested? We will study classical writings and contemporary scholarship in pursuit of answers to these questions and related debates concerning the rule of law, conscientious objection, the uses of civility and incivility, punishment and responsibility, as well as whistleblowing, direct action, strikes, hacktivism, and rioting.

**Credits:** This is a 4-credit course. Recognized in the following Majors: Government; American Studies; Philosophy. Recognized in the following Minors: Crime, Prisons, Education and Justice; Ethics and Public Life. Degree requirement: AS-KCM. Crosslisted: **AMST 3675; PHIL 2945.**

**Required Textbooks:** There are no required textbooks for this class.

**Learning Objectives:** The learning objectives of this course are to develop careful and rigorous reading habits, to sharpen interpretive and analytical writing skills, to cultivate skills for effective oral communication, to broaden your understanding of political theory, and to foster critical thinking. By the end of this semester, students should be able to demonstrate competency in (1) defining political theories and concepts; (2) applying a broader knowledge of political theory; (3) identifying a text's argument and restating it in your own words; (4) interpreting and comparing theoretical arguments and cases; and (5) analyzing and evaluating the normative and conceptual premises of historical and contemporary debates concerning civil disobedience.

**Assignments and Grading:** Final grades will be calculated on the basis of aggregate scores in the following assessments:



- *Participation (20%):* Your participation grade will reflect your presence and contribution to our common dialogue in lecture and seminar. It is therefore expected that all students come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings and have a point of view that demonstrates a strong command of, and sophisticated engagement with, the assigned texts. All students begin the semester with a participation grade of 100%. This portion of your grade drops due to missing class, arriving late, leaving early, arriving unprepared, or failing to actively contribute to in-class discussion.

- *Introductory Reflection Paper: (5%):* Write a short (between 400 and 500 words in length) reflection essay on a personal experience where you disobeyed a rule, a law, or an authority figure on moral grounds. What did you do? What was your motivation? Why did you think you were justified? Do you think your disobedience was civil or uncivil? Why or why not? Your paper must be submitted in hard copy, during class time, and on the assigned date. It will be graded pass/fail.
- *Analytical Essays (20%; 25%, 30%):* Essays are intended to test your comprehension of course materials, motivate thoughtful interpretation of texts, and encourage the development of original insights. All three essays must be between 2000 and 2500 words in length (citations, notes, & bibliography included). Format requirements will be included in the assignment prompts distributed by the instructor. All essays must be submitted in hard copy, during class time, and on the assigned date.
- *Final Exam:* There will be no final exam for this course.

**Grading Scale:** A+ (100-97); A (96-93); A- (92-90); B+ (89-87); B (86-83); B- (82-80); C+ (79-77); C (76-73); C- (72-70); D+ (69-67); D (66-63); D- (62-60); F (59-0)

**Sections:** Active and informed participation constitutes a major part of your final grade. Attendance in section is therefore a necessary but not a sufficient condition for success in this course. Sections begin the third week of class.

Section 1: Wednesday, 9:05am-9:55am. White Hall 110. Instructor: Sarah Coomey ([src263@cornell.edu](mailto:src263@cornell.edu))

Section 2: Friday, 1:25pm-2:15pm. White Hall 110. Instructor: Erik Petrie ([ep477@cornell.edu](mailto:ep477@cornell.edu))

Section 3: Wednesday, 9:05am-9:55am, Room TBA. Instructor: Erik Petrie ([ep477@cornell.edu](mailto:ep477@cornell.edu))

Section 4: Friday, 1:25pm-2:15pm. Room TBA. Instructor: Sarah Coomey ([src263@cornell.edu](mailto:src263@cornell.edu))

**Office Hours:**

- Professor Livingston: Thursdays, 2-4pm. 215 White Hall. Sign-up sheet available on Canvas.
- Sarah Coomey: Thursdays, 1:30-3:30pm. Green Dragon Café, Sibley Hall.
- Erik Petrie: Fridays, 2:30pm-4:30pm. Green Dragon Café, Sibley Hall.



**Course Policies:**

Office Hours and Communication: Office hours are held after class Thursdays in 215 White Hall. A sign-up sheet for office hours is available online at <http://drlivingston.youcanbook.me>. I will do my best to respond to student emails in a timely fashion, but please know that I only check my email twice a week during the semester.

Canvas: All course documents are available on Canvas ([canvas.cornell.edu](https://canvas.cornell.edu)). If you are unfamiliar with how to access or use Canvas, please consult the resources on this website: (<https://canvas.cornell.edu/courses/1848/pages/student-resources>). Because important announcements and updates concerning the course will be posted regularly on Canvas, it is imperative that you enable your account to send announcements directly to your @cornell.edu email address.

Electronic Devices: *The use of computers and tablets in class is discouraged.* Surfing the Internet in seminar is distracting to both you and your fellow students. Recent studies suggest that your brain is more actively engaged in learning when you take notes by hand. If you do choose to use a computer in class, please be sure to also bring additional stationary and a pen or pencil. Phones must be turned off in seminar. Off means off – not vibrate.

Recording Devices: Audio and video recording devices are **prohibited** in the classroom unless required for accessibility purposes. This is to create a safe space where students can feel comfortable expressing their opinions in class without the possibility of their contribution to class being reproduced and replayed without their consent.

Classroom Climate: One aim of studying political theory is to unsettle received convictions and upset unexamined beliefs. Because of the controversial and provocative nature of some of the materials we will be studying this semester, I ask that all students exercise respect and generosity towards one another. It is always welcome to criticize an idea, but never to attack the person who holds it. If at any point in the semester a student feels uncomfortable with the class climate or disrespected in any way, please do not hesitate to come speak with me or the teaching assistants directly.

Late Assignments: Please consult the course schedule for information about assignment due dates. Permission to submit late work will only be granted in extenuating and unavoidable circumstances outlined to the instructor in writing prior to the due date. Such circumstances include medical, family, or personal emergencies. Multiple assignments scheduled for the same date do not constitute an acceptable reason for an extension. Late assignments will be penalized 2% of their final grade per day late (weekends included). Extensions will not be granted in any case after the submission deadline.



**Course Policies Continued:**

Plagiarism and Academic Ethics: Students should review Cornell University's policy concerning plagiarism and violations of academic ethics ([plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu](http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu)). The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery, falsification, lying, facilitation of academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. The university has a zero tolerance policy towards plagiarism. All suspected cases of plagiarism will be passed on to the Academic Integrity liaison for disciplinary review. If you have any questions about the appropriate use of secondary sources, your instructor is available to discuss best practices.

Accessibility Needs: If you have a condition that affects your ability to participate fully in class or to meet all course requirements, please speak with me after the first day of class so that we can work together to arrange appropriate accommodations. This syllabus and other course materials can be made available in alternate formats. Any student with a disability who may need accommodations in this class can obtain an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services, 420 CCC, Garden Ave Ext ([sds.cornell.edu](http://sds.cornell.edu)).

Appealing Grades: Any student who feels that their assigned grade does not reflect his or her performance on an assignment can appeal the grade. All appeals must be submitted to the instructor in writing, in the form of a one-page document that clearly explains why you believe that the assigned grade does not reflect your performance. I ask that petitioners wait at least twenty-four hours after the grade is announced before submitting appeals. All appeals must be submitted no later than one week after the grade is announced.

**Knight Institute Deadline Extension:** I will grant a 2-day extension for all papers and essay assignments (the first reflection paper excluded) to students who elect to schedule an appointment with a tutor through the Knight Institute Writing Center to discuss a draft of your assignment prior to the due date. The Knight Institute The Writing Center has multiple locations on campus and provides one-on-one consultation to discuss specific pieces of writing or answer questions you may have concerning your writing. To take advantage of this extension you must (1) inform me *before* the due date that you are meeting with a tutor at the Knight Institute, and (2) attach a 250-word reflection of your experience with your final paper explaining (a) how you revised your draft into the submitted essay, (b) how your consultation with the tutor impacted your essay, and (c) what forms of feedback you received where most/least useful and why. Failure to meet these two conditions will void your extension. To learn more about this resource and schedule a meeting with a tutor see the Knight Institute website: <https://knight.as.cornell.edu/wc>

		<i>All readings posted on Canvas</i>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	Tuesday (1/21)	
<b>2. Conscientious Objection</b>	Thursday (1/23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read this syllabus carefully before coming to class</b></li> <li>• Henry David Thoreau, 'On Civil Disobedience'</li> </ul>
	Tuesday (1/28)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roger Baldwin et al., 'Statements of Conscientious Objection, 1917-1918'</li> <li>• Michael Walzer, 'Conscientious Objection'</li> <li>• <b>Reflection Paper Due</b></li> </ul>
	Thursday (1/30)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• United Nations, 'Principles of International Law Recognized in the Nürnberg Tribunal and in the Judgment of the Tribunal'</li> <li>• Hannah Arendt, <i>Eichmann In Jerusalem</i>, pp. 21-55, 135-150</li> </ul>
<b>3. Fidelity to Law</b>	Tuesday (2/4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Statement by Alabama Clergymen'</li> <li>• Martin Luther King, Jr., 'Letter from a Birmingham Jail'</li> <li>• <b>Sections Begin</b></li> </ul>
	Thursday (2/6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i>, pp. 3-19, 47-56, 93-101</li> </ul>
	Tuesday (2/11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i>, pp. 293-343</li> </ul>
<b>4. Is Civil Disobedience Democratic?</b>	Thursday (2/13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daniel Markovits, 'Democratic Disobedience'</li> </ul>
	Tuesday (2/18)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• William Smith, 'Civil Disobedience and the Public Sphere'</li> <li>• Mark Engler and Paul Engler, <i>This is an Uprising</i>, pp. 197-223</li> <li>• <b>First Essay Due</b></li> </ul>
<b>5. Civil Disobedience: Moral, Legal, or Political?</b>	Thursday (2/20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hannah Arendt, 'Civil Disobedience'</li> </ul>
	Tuesday (2/25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• February Break. <b>NO CLASS</b></li> </ul>
	Thursday (2/27)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hannah Arendt, 'Civil Disobedience' [re-read]</li> </ul>
	Tuesday (3/3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kermat Reiter, 'The Pelican Bay Hunger Strike: Resistance within the Structural Constraints of a US Supermax Prison'</li> <li>• Lisa Guenther, 'Political Action at the End of the World: Hannah Arendt and the California Prison Hunger Strikes'</li> </ul>

<b>6. The Politics of Civility</b>	Thursday (3/5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linda Zerilli, 'Against Civility: A Feminist Perspective'</li> <li>Emmeline Pankhurst, 'I Incite This Meeting to Rebellion'</li> <li>Emmeline Pankhurst, 'When Civil War is Waged by Women'</li> </ul>
	Tuesday (3/10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robert Gooding-Williams, 'Look, a Negro!'</li> <li>Juliet Hooker, 'Black Lives Matter and the Paradoxes of U.S. Black Politics: From Democratic Sacrifice to Democratic Repair'</li> </ul>
	Thursday (3/12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cristina Beltrán, 'Undocumented, Unafraid, and Unapologetic: Dream Activists, Immigrant Politics, and the Queering of Democracy'</li> </ul>
<b>7. Punishing Civil Disobedience</b>	Tuesday (3/17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>William Scheuerman, 'Whistleblowing as Civil Disobedience'</li> <li>Kimberley Brownlee, 'The Civil Disobedience of Edward Snowden'</li> <li>Piero Moraro, 'On (Not) Accepting the Punishment for Civil Disobedience'</li> </ul>
	Thursday (3/19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Matthew Hall, 'Guilty but Civilly Disobedient: Reconciling Civil Disobedience and the Rule of Law,' 2083-4, 2111-24</li> <li>Steven M. Bauer and Peter J. Eckerstrom, 'The State Made Me Do It: The Applicability of the Necessity Defense to Civil Disobedience'</li> <li>Paul Butler, <i>Let's Get Free: A Hip-Hop Theory of Justice</i>, 57-78</li> </ul>
	Tuesday (3/24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erin Pineda, 'Civil Disobedience and Punishment: (Mis)Reading Justification and Strategy from SNCC to Snowden'</li> </ul>
<b>8. The Power of Nonviolence</b>	Thursday (3/26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>M.K. Gandhi, 'The Theory and Practice of Passive Resistance'</li> <li>M.K. Gandhi, 'The Secret of Satyagraha in South Africa'</li> <li>M.K. Gandhi, 'Satyagraha - Not Passive Resistance'</li> <li>M.K. Gandhi, <i>Hind Swaraj</i>, pp. 286-298</li> <li><b>Second Essay Due</b></li> </ul>
	Tuesday (3/31)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spring Break. <b>No class</b></li> </ul>
	Thursday (4/2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spring Break. <b>No class</b></li> </ul>
	Tuesday (4/7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, <i>Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict</i> pp. 1-60</li> <li>Candice Delmas, 'Uncivil Disobedience in Hong Kong'</li> </ul>
	Thursday (4/9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professor away at conference. <b>No class.</b></li> </ul>
	Tuesday (4/14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barbara Deming, 'On Revolution and Equilibrium'</li> </ul>

<b>9. Beyond Civil Disobedience</b>	Thursday (4/16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Molly Sauter, <i>The Coming Swarm</i>, pp. 1-7, 39-57, 137-157</li> <li>Candice Delmas, 'Is Hacktivism the New Civil Disobedience?'</li> </ul>
	Tuesday (4/21)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>William Smith, 'Disruptive Democracy: The Ethics of Direct Action'</li> <li>Mark Bray, <i>Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook</i>, pp. 167-206</li> </ul>
	Thursday (4/23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frances Fox Piven, <i>Challenging Authority</i>, pp. 19-35</li> <li>Virginia Held, 'On Understanding Political Strikes'</li> </ul>
	Tuesday (4/28)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avia Pasternack, 'Political Rioting: A Moral Assessment'</li> </ul>
<b>10. Disobey... and Then What?</b>	Thursday (4/30)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jo Freeman, 'Tyranny of Structurelessness'</li> <li>Zeynep Tufekci, <i>Twitter and Tear Gas</i>, pp. 49-82, 189-222</li> </ul>
	Tuesday (5/5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jeffrey Stout, <i>Blessed Are the Organized</i>, pp. 1-20</li> <li>Alyssa Battisoni, 'Spadework: On Political Organizing'</li> </ul>
	TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Third Essay Due</b></li> </ul>

Additional Readings on 4-Hour Reserve at Uris Library:

William E. Scheuerman, *Civil Disobedience* (Medford, MA: Polity, 2018)

Candice Delmas, 'Civil Disobedience,' *Philosophy Compass* 11, no. 11 (2016): 681-691

William Smith and Kimberley Brownlee, "Civil Disobedience and Conscientious Objection," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

Mark Engler and Paul Engler, *This is an Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt is Shaping the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Nation Books, 2016)

Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011)

L.A. Kauffman, *Direct Action: Protests and the Reinvention of American Radicalism* (New York: Verso, 2017)

Lewis Perry, *Civil Disobedience: An American Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013)