

Politics of Protest in East & Southeast Asia

Course meetings (for lectures & discussions): Wednesday 8:00 - 10:00

Location: CSS 2-1-12

Lecturer: Dr. Mai Van Tran

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Office hour: Wednesday 15:00 – 16:00 or by appointment via email, room CSS 12-2-32

Course Description

What facilitates the development of protests under hostile environments and how might these events change politics in the long run? This course introduces students to major protest movements and mobilizations that have shaped East & Southeast Asia's current societies. These protests cover a wide variety of demands, from broad anti-regime and pro-democracy goals to specific claims on gender equality, labor rights, land rights, etc. As contentious politics across Asia's authoritarian states exhibits highly diverse dynamics that transcend regional borders, lessons on mass activism from here can shed light on important questions surrounding contemporary social movements around the world.

The course will begin with an introduction to theoretical frameworks underpinning contentious politics under authoritarianism. We will then examine specific cases of protest mobilization and their operating environments in each of the region's most populous countries, including: China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, and Burma/Myanmar. In the third and final part of the course, we will analyse some cross-cutting themes, such as: gender & sexuality issues, migrant labour activism, the role of social media, and transnational activism. The course highlights various methodological approaches to study contentious politics under authoritarianism, including: archival research, ethnography, onsite survey, and social media analysis.

Goal Description

Knowledge:

Students will be able to reflect on both theoretical foundation and empirical knowledge regarding a wide range of protest mobilizations across authoritarian states in contemporary Asia.

Skills:

Students will be able to identify and engage critically with major theories and research designs surrounding contentious collective actions under authoritarianism.

Competences:

Students will be able to produce nuanced analysis on important issues facing many contemporary protest movements, including: the influence of political systems and social norms on protest dynamics, factors that enable protest success under hostile environments, roles of women and other marginalized groups in protest mobilization, and impact of international response and interventions.

Teaching Methods

Students are expected to complete readings before each class. Each meeting begins with a lecture, followed by discussions and student presentations.

In order to hone students' ability to turn their knowledge into concrete real-world outputs, the course also encourages students to work together in small groups in order to co-produce a podcast on a self-selected topic relevant to the course content.

Students receive written and/or oral feedback on their work.

Academic Prerequisites

This course complements other current courses on Asian societies and contentious politics at UCPH, including: Contentious Electoral Politics in Southeast Asia; Protest, Resistance, Rebellion and Revolution; etc. I encourage that students have taken these or other similar courses in order to establish essential understanding and relevant knowledge for our discussions.

Course grade

Students will be graded based upon their final written exam. Details on the exam will be updated in time.

Readings

Part 1: Introductions

1. Conceptualizing contentious politics

- Sidney Tarrow. 2011. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Third Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pages 1-34.
- Charles Tilly. 2006. "Repertoires, Meet Regimes." In *Regimes and Repertoires*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- James C. Scott. 1985. "Normal Exploitation, Normal Resistance." In *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

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2. Conceptualizing protest mobilizations

- Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow. 2000. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 611-39.
- Michele Ford. 2013. "Social Activism in Southeast Asia: An Introduction." In Michele Ford (Eds.), *Social Activism in Southeast Asia*, (pp. 1-21). London and New York: Routledge.
- O'Brien, Kevin J., and Rachel E. Stern. 2008. "Studying Contention in Contemporary China." In *Popular Protest in China*. Edited by Kevin J. O'Brien. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Part 2: Country perspectives

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3. China (Mainland)

- Hurst, William. 2008. "Mass Frames and Worker Protest." In *Popular Protest in China*. Edited by Kevin J. O'Brien. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wright, Teresa. 2008. "Student Movements in China and Taiwan." In *Popular Protest in China*. Edited by Kevin J. O'Brien. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mary E. Gallagher. 2014. "China's Workers Movement & the End of the Rapid-Growth Era." *Daedalus* 143(2): 81-95.
- Diana Fu & Greg Distelhorst. 2017. "Grassroots Participation and Repression under Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping." *The China Journal*. 79: 100-122.

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4. China (Hong Kong)

- Francis Lee & Joseph Chan. 2011. *Media, Social Mobilisation and Mass Protests in Post-Colonial Hong Kong*. Page 1-20.
- Ngok Ma and Edmund Cheng. 2020. *The Umbrella Movement: Civil Resistance and Contentious Space in Hong Kong*. Page 11-24.
- Francis Lee, Edmund Cheng, Hai Liang, Gary Tang, Samson Yuen. 2021. "Dynamics of Tactical Radicalisation and Public Receptiveness in Hong Kong's Anti-Extradition Bill Movement." *Journal of Contemporary Asia*: 1-23

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5. Indonesia

- Vincent Boudreau. 2004. *Resisting Dictatorship: Repression and Protest in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pages 103-133, 215-237.
- Edward Aspinall. 2005. "Regime and Opposition." In *Opposing Suharto: Compromise, Resistance, and Regime Change in Indonesia*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

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6. The Philippines

- Vincent Boudreau. 2004. "People Power and Insurgency in the Philippine Transition." In *Resisting Dictatorship: Repression and Protest in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Patricio N. Abinales. 2012. "The Philippines: Students, Activists, and Communists in Movement Politics." In *Student Activism in Asia: Between Protest and Powerlessness*. Edited by Meredith L. Weiss and Edward Aspinall. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lisa Brooten. 2013. "Social Movements, Contentious Politics and Media in the Philippines." In *Mediation and Protest Movements*. Edited by Bart Cammaerts, Alice Mattoni and Patrick McCurdy. Bristol: Intellect.

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7. Vietnam

- Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet. 2005. *The Power of Everyday Politics: How Vietnamese Peasants Transformed National Policy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. pages 1-36.
- Andrew Wells-Dang. 2010. "Political Space in Vietnam: A View from The 'Rice-Roots.'" *The Pacific Review* 23(1): 93-112.
- Erik Harms. 2012. "Beauty as Control in the New Saigon: Eviction, New Urban Zones, and Atomized Dissent in a Southeast Asian City." *American Ethnologist* 39(4): 735-50.

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8. Thailand

- Prajak Kongkirati. 2012. "Thailand: The Cultural Politics of Student Resistance." In *Student Activism in Asia: Between Protest and Powerlessness*. Edited by Meredith L. Weiss and Edward Aspinall. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kevin Hewison. 2014. "Thailand: The Lessons of Protest." *Asian Studies* 50(1): 1-15.
- Bruce D. Missingham. 2003. *The Assembly of the Poor in Thailand: From Local Struggles to National Protest Movement*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books. Pages 1-14, 215-220.
- Duncan McCargo. 2021. "Disruptors' Dilemma? Thailand's 2020 Gen Z protests." *Critical Asian Studies*. 1-17.

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9. Burma/Myanmar

- Vincent Boudreau. 2004. "Protest and the Underground in Burma." In *Resisting Dictatorship: Repression and Protest in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kyaw Yin Hlaing. 2008. "Challenging the Authoritarian State: Buddhist Monks and Peaceful Protests in Burma." *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 32: 125-144.
- Ingrid Jordt, Tharaphi Than, Sue Ye Lin. 2021. *How Generation Z Galvanized a Revolutionary Movement Against Myanmar's 2021 Military Coup*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.

Part 3: Cross-cutting themes

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10. Gender

- Mina Roces and Louise Edwards. 2010. *Women's Movements in Asia: Feminisms and Transnational Activism*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. 1-19.
- Lenore Lyons. 2013. "The Christian Right and the Singaporean Feminist Movement." In Michele Ford (Ed.), *Social Activism in Southeast Asia*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Vanessa Lamb, Laura Schoenberger, Carl Middleton & Borin Un. 2017. "Gendered Eviction, Protest and Recovery: A Feminist Political Ecology Engagement with Land Grabbing in Rural Cambodia." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44(6): 1215-1234.

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11. Sex & sexuality

- Larissa Sandy. 2013. "International Agendas and Sex Worker Rights in Cambodia." In Michele Ford (Eds.), *Social Activism in Southeast Asia*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Julian C. H. Lee. 2013. "Sexuality Rights Activism in Malaysia: The Case of Seksualiti Merdeka." In Michele Ford (Eds.), *Social Activism in Southeast Asia*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Lynette J. Chua. 2014. *Mobilizing Gay Singapore: Rights and Resistances in an Authoritarian State*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Page 1-26.

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12. Migrant workers

- Rachel Silvey. 2003. "Spaces of Protest: Gendered Migration, Social Networks, and Labor Activism in West Java, Indonesia." *Political Geography* 22(2): 129-155.
- Nicole Constable. 2009. "Migrant Workers and the Many States of Protest in Hong Kong." *Critical Asian Studies* 41(1): 143-164.
- Dennis Arnold. 2013. "Burmese Social Movements in Exile: Labour, Migration and Democracy." In Michele Ford (Eds.), *Social Activism in Southeast Asia*. London and New York: Routledge.

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13. Social media

- Wee Yang Soh. 2020. "Digital Protest in Singapore: The Pragmatics of Political Internet Memes." *Media, Culture & Society* 42(7-8): 1115-32
- Aim Sinpeng. 2021. "Hashtag Activism: Social Media and the #FreeYouth Protests in Thailand." *Critical Asian Studies* 53(2): 192-205.
- Colin Agur & Nicholas Frisch. 2019. "Digital Disobedience and the Limits of Persuasion: Social Media Activism in Hong Kong's 2014 Umbrella Movement." *Social Media + Society*: 1-12.
- Paul Schuler & Mai Truong. 2020. "Connected Countryside: The Inhibiting Effect of Social Media on Rural Social Movements." *Comparative Politics* 52(4):647-669.

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14. Transnational activism

- Nicola Piper and Anders Uhlin. 2004. *Transnational Activism in Asia: Problems of Power and Democracy*. London: Routledge. 1-25, 129-167
- Mina Roces and Louise Edwards. 2010. *Women's Movements in Asia: Feminisms and Transnational Activism*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. 53-89.
- Sokphea Young. Forthcoming. "Transnational Activism under Autocracy: Environmental Advocacy Groups, Social Media, and Nationalism in Cambodia." In Max Gromping & Jessica C. Teets (Eds.), *Lobbying the Autocrat: The Dynamics of Policy Advocacy in Non-Democracies*. Michigan University Press.