

Oberlin College

EXCO119 - Changing the World: Theories and Methods of Nonviolent Social Action

1 credit
Fall 2010
Time: TBA
Place: King Building room 341

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THIS COURSE IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AT NO COST

Students in this course will systematically study the theory, methods, planning, organization, and management of nonviolent social movements. The course textbooks are free and can be found at:

<http://exco2010.nonresistance.org>

They were written by the Centre for Applied Nonviolent Action & Strategies, which began as the *Otpor* student movement that led the struggle to overthrow Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic. We will discuss application of the material both to regime-change movements and to issue-related movements such as immigration reform and gender equality. This course is intended to be a useful adjunct to the college's Peace and Conflict Studies concentration (which we highly recommend).

As many as three sections of this course will be offered to serve as many students as possible while maintaining manageable class sizes. Along with regularly attending class, students will be responsible for a short oral presentation of one week's reading material, a short oral presentation on a nonviolent movement of the student's choice, a one-page paper on that movement, and a final one-page paper on a pertinent topic of the student's choice. **This course is for those who want to actively participate in class discussion; those who want to sit back and listen should find a different ExCo.**

Week 1: September 13 to 16

Video • *Bringing Down a Dictator*

Introductions and logistics

Chapter 1 • The First Step: The Vision of Tomorrow (Supplemental material chapter #1)

Discussion Questions • *What do you expect to get from this course? What issues or situations are you passionate about? What is your vision of the future?*

Week 2: September 20 to 23

Chapter 2 • Power in Society: Models and Sources of Power (Sup. #2)

Chapter 3 • Pillars of Support (Sup. #3)

Discussion Questions • *What sources of power are opposed to your movement? On what pillars of support do those sources of power depend?*

Week 3: September 27 to 30

Chapter 4 • Obedience

Chapter 5 • Activating Nonviolent Power: Mechanisms of Change in Nonviolent Action

Discussion Questions • *What aspects of loyalty and obedience support and oppose your movement? What mechanisms of change are applicable to achieving your vision of the future?*

Week 4: October 4 to 7

Chapter 6 • Activating Nonviolent Power: Methods of Nonviolent Action

Chapter 7 • Strategy and Principles of Nonviolent Struggle (Sup. #4)

Discussion Questions • *What methods are applicable to realizing your vision? How would you develop a strategy for your movement? Perform a cost-benefit analysis for your movement.*

Week 5: October 11 to 14

Chapter 8 • Planning Methodologies: The Power Graph (Sup. #5)

Chapter 9 • Impacting Audiences and Communicating Messages (Sup. #7)

Discussion Questions • *How can you tip the existing power relationships in favor of your movement? What is your message and to whom do you want to communicate it?*

Week 6: October 18 to 21

Chapter 10 • Communication Tools and the Types and Categories of Targeted Communication (Sup. #6)

Chapter 11 • Managing a Movement: Leadership

Discussion Questions • *What methods would and would not be effective to communicate your message? What sort of leadership does your movement need?*

Week 7: November 1 to 4

Chapter 12 • Managing a Movement: Dilemma Actions

Chapter 13 • Fear and Overcoming the Effects of Fear (Sup. #14)

Discussion Questions • *What dilemma actions would support your movement? How would you overcome fear of your movement and fear of retaliation against your movement?*

Week 8: November 8 to 11

Chapter 14 • Contaminants to Nonviolent Struggle and Security Culture (Sup. #13)

Chapter 15 • Plan Format (Sup. #12)

Discussion Questions • *What would you need to avoid that would undermine your movement? What level of security does your movement need? Apply the plan format to your movement.*

Week 9: November 15 to 18

Chapter A1 • Planning Methodologies: The Strategic Estimate (Sup. #8)

Discussion Questions • *What elements of the strategic estimate are pertinent to your movement? What external situations work for and against you? Who are your natural allies and adversaries?*

Week 10: November 29 to December 2

Chapter A2 • Managing a Movement: Material Resources (Sup. #9)

Chapter A3 • Managing a Movement: Human Resources (Sup. #10)

Discussion Questions • *What material resources does your movement need, and how would you secure them? What human resources does your movement need, and how would you recruit them?*

Week 11: December 6 to 9

Chapter A4 • Managing a Movement: Time Management (Sup. #11)

Chapter A5 • Managing a Movement: Transferring Nonviolent Skills and Knowledge (Sup. #15)

Discussion Questions • *What time constraints is your movement under? How would you use time to your advantage? What training methods would you use?*

Week 12: December 13 to 16

Concluding remarks and presentations

Discussion Questions • *What did you learn through this course? What didn't you learn that you wanted to learn? What is your overall opinion of this course material? Will it work?*