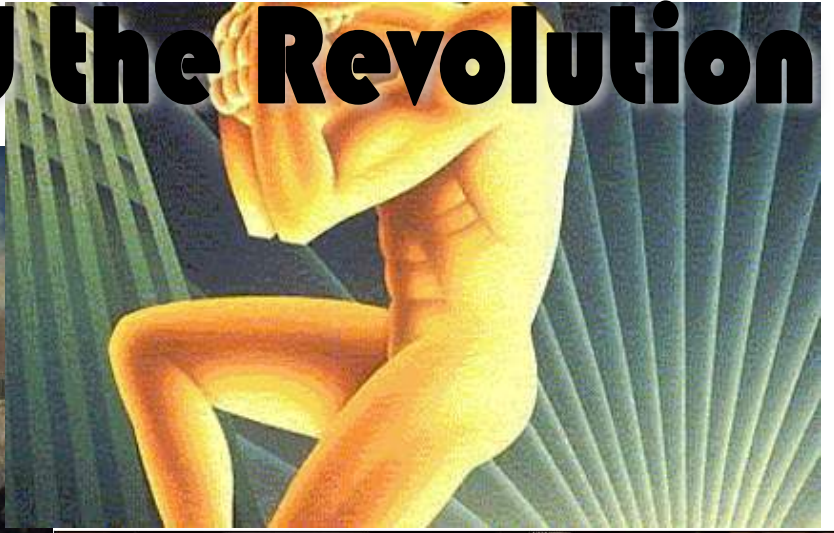


# You, Me, and the Revolution



**What is radical change? How does it happen?**

**How can we achieve it? (And do we even want to?)**

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You, Me, and the Revolution: What is radical change? How does it happen? How can we achieve it? (And do we even want to?)

Introduction: One of the major discoveries of studying abroad in Chile has been to experience a country in which the spectrum of viable political agendas extends from the far left to the far right, from dreams of communism to the current reality of one of the freest markets in the world. Since 2011, students here have demanded change, especially in higher education. There is constant talk about the viability of communism and there are regular acts of anarchy (of both peaceful and violent persuasions) on my campus. All of this got me thinking of our own social commitments at Haverford, from the Quaker tradition to the various programs of the CPGC and the exhibitions recently and currently on display at the Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery.

Despite our commitment to social change there have been few, if any, radical movements and there are very few radicals on campus. I think that while our culture of confrontation and careful reflection is perhaps in some ways not conducive to the sorts of things I see here, I wonder how our ways of examining social issues could lend themselves to a serious and un-idealistic examination of the viability of radical change.

Goal of Seminar: The goal of this seminar is neither to offer students a comprehensive survey of various revolutions nor is it to give students the sort of depth in one movement that one would find in a political science seminar. Rather, this seminar will offer students the chance to catch glimpses of various revolutions and begin to understand various actors' reasons for revolution as well as the positive and negative results of revolutionary movements in both the present and the past.

Texts: The sources for this seminar include novels, political science, political treatises, speeches, movies (both narrative and documentary), biographies, visual art, and music. Attached is the working syllabus, which will be finalized with the full group of students to best reflect the various backgrounds and view points of the participants.

Form: Given the subject material, it is important to me to incorporate horizontality both in how the final texts will be chosen and to include alternative ways of learning. The seminar will include various exercises from Theater of the Oppressed, *My New Gender Workbook* and other sources, which will occur at the beginning of sessions in order to warm up our brains and to think about power structures creatively.

Who might be interested: The syllabus I have here is designed to welcome students of various academic, personal, and political backgrounds. My greatest hope for the seminar is that it fosters passionate debate and profound disagreements rather than simply serving to strengthen personal convictions and academic biases. Thus, the ideal profile for a student interested in the seminar is not a certain major or minor, but rather simply an interest in understanding radical change in history, practice, and imagination.

Film Series: If the seminar is accepted, I would also like to apply to run a film series. The film series would include a selection of the films from the seminar and would allow other students and faculty to take part in the discussions we are having in the seminar.

Possible Speakers: Vijay Prashad. Grace Lee Boggs. Masha Gessen. Shirin Neshat.

## Working Bibliography

Note on trigger warnings: Given that the subject matter is revolution, I have chosen various texts that include violence, gendered violence, and other subjects that could be triggering. Any student who has concerns is strongly encouraged to discuss the matter with me personally so that we can best accommodate his/her needs.

### **Session 1: What is revolution?**

This session will introduce us to various examples of what revolution looks like in definition, history, imagination, and action.

*Revolutions: A Very Short Introduction*. Jack Goldstone. 2014. Oxford handbook.

*This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. ed. Gloria Anzaldúa & Cherríe Morraga. 1981/2015. United States.

*Liberty Leading the People*. Eugene Delacroix. 1830. Painting. France.

Jean-Michel Basquiat. website + essay. 1960-1988. Painter. United States

*The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*. Gill Scott-Heron. 1971. United States.

State and Social Revolutions a Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China (PART I). Theda Skocpol. Political sociology. 1979.

*Pray the Devil Back to Hell*. Film on nonviolent revolution of Leymah Gbowee in Liberia. Abigail E. Disney (Director). 2009. Liberia.

*A Place of Greater Safety*. Hilary Mantel. Novel on the French revolution through the psychologies of key players. 2006.

### **Session 2: Revolution in Theory**

This session will introduce us to the ideas of various revolutionaries.

State and Social Revolutions a Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China (PART I). Theda Skocpol. Political sociology. 1979.

*Marx-Engels Reader*. Karl Marx and Frederich Engels. To introduce us to Marxism, which has inspired many later revolutions as well as political writings in favor and against the theories of Marx and Engels.

*Selected Political Writings of Ghandi*. Book includes important political writings of Gandhi having to do with his beliefs in satyagraha (the power of non-violence) and swaraj (freedom).

*Anarchism and Other Essays*. Emma Goldman. Writings from the 20<sup>th</sup> century anarchist and feminist. United States.

*Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*. 1960s/1970s. China.

*Essential Works of Lenin*. Vladimir Lenin. Russia. 1920s. Russia.

*Freedom from Fear and Other Writings*. Aung San Suu Kyi. Burma. 2010. Writings by Burmese political dissident and democracy advocate.

### **Session 3: Anti-Colonial Revolutions and Revolutions of the Global South**

This session will give us various examples of anti-colonial revolutions and revolutions of the third world.

*The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World*. Vijay Prashad. 2008.

*Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*. Vandana Shiva. 2000. India.

*UnBowed: A Memoir*. Wangari Maathai. 2007. Kenyan environmentalist and nonviolent activist's biography.

*Concerning Violence*. Film. Director Göran Hugo Olsson. 2015. Documentary/art film that vindicates Frantz Fanon's pro-decolonization essay on the reaction of colonized subjects to the violence of the colonizer

*Zapatistas: Rebellion from the Grassroots to the Global*. Alex Khasnabish. 2010. Southern Mexico.

"Message to the TriContinental". Che Guevarra. Speech against Russia and US in favor of Third World movement.

#### **Session 4: Conservative Revolutions**

This session shows another side of revolution, how it is imagined and supported by the right.<sup>1</sup>

*The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*. RA Heinlein. 1997. Classic libertarian dystopian science fiction.

*Atlas Shrugged*. Ayn Rand. United States. 1999. Rand's masterwork illustrating her philosophy of Objectivism.

*How Islamic is the Islamic State?*. Mehdi Hasan. New Statesman. 3/10/2015. England. Political revolution.

*What ISIS Really Wants*. Graeme Wood. The Atlantic. March 2015. United States. Islamist revolution.

*The End of History and the Last Man*. Francis Fukuyama. 1992. United States. Argues against Marxist idea of communism as final form of the state in favor of liberal western democracy as final sociocultural evolution.

*The Wave*. Director Dennis Gansel. 2011. Movie based on real experiment by high school teacher demonstrating how easily a totalitarian state can come to power.

#### **Session 5: Revolution in Practice**

Handbooks, calls to action, and examples of positive and negative results of revolution.

*Change the World Without Taking Power*. John Holloway. 2002.

*The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for 21st Century*. Grace Lee Boggs. 2012.

*V for Vendetta* (graphic novel). Alan Moore. 1980s. Set in dystopian England inspired by Thatcher's England.

*Life And Death Are Wearing Me Out*. Mo Yan. 2012. Cultural Revolution as told by a benevolent landowner several times reincarnated.

*Persepolis*. Marjane Satrapi. 2007. Story of coming of age in Tehran during the Islamic Revolution and her return.

*Words Will Break Cement: The Passion of Pussy Riot*. Masha Gessen. 2014. Russia.

*My New Gender Workbook: A Step By Step Guide to Achieving World Peace Through Gender Anarchy and Sex Positivity*. Kate Bornstein. 2013.

"Accomplices not Allies." Indigenous Action Media. 2014. Examines what it means to be an activist.

"Stickin' It To the Man by Sticking it To Yourself: Finding Body Acceptance Through Masturbation". Vianca Masucci. Black Girl Dangerous. January 2015.

Gulabi Gang. Website. Radical indian women's' organization for literacy and against domestic abuse.

*Leila Khaled – Hijacker*. Lina Makboul. Movie about legendary Palestinian plane hijacker. Complicates terrorism.

*The Square*. Movie about protests in Tahrir square.

*Snowpiercer*. Joon-ho Bong. Film. Imagined revolution that takes place in a train where cars represent social classes.

*Women Without Men*. Shirin Neshat. Film. Different women live and ponder as Shah is put in power in Iran.

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<sup>1</sup> Although I am very excited about all of the readings in this section, I think it is my weakest because of my lack of knowledge of conservative revolutions. I look forward to the possibility that participants who are savvier than I may suggest other readings for this section in particular.