

# Advanced Studies in State Repression

**Christian Davenport**

Professor of Political Science &  
Faculty Associate with Center for Political Studies

Time: Wednesday 11am-1pm

Location: LSA 4155

Office Hours: Wednesday 1:30-3:30

Location: Institute for Social Research

## **Topic**

Approximately 30 years ago John McCamant (1984, 11) remarked that

(o)ne searches in vain through the thousands of articles and books written by political scientists, political sociologists, economists, and anthropologists for references to the awful and bloody deeds of governments and for explanations of how and why these deeds are done.

We are clearly beyond the point highlighted by McCamant: we now know a great deal about repressive behavior. The sheer amount of scholarship on the topic has increased several fold over the last three decades. Every day we hear about some new disclosure regarding state-sponsored torture, surveillance, mass arrests and killing somewhere in the world. In addition, every day we hear about some individual, organization, or nation that aspires to be free from repression, very frequently in the context of a movement to democracy or within a democratic state. Regardless of this attention, however, there is still a ways to go, for we are unclear about how the relevant behavior and our understanding of it fits with other concerns, other ideas, and other behavior. It is time to give these events and these efforts our full attention. Toward this end, the present courts is directed toward advancing the study of state repression. We do this through connecting it with some of the larger concepts in political science, discussing what has been done as well as laying out how the topic can be examined in the future.

## **The course involves six components**

- 1) careful reading of the assigned material
- 2) active participation in class (15% of the grade)

- 3) clear and concise oral presentations (10% of the grade)
- 4) several brief (5 page) and well constructed review essays of specific readings (40% of the grade)
- 5) a 3-5 page outline of the final paper (5%)
- 6) 1 final paper (30% of the grade)

Number 3, 4 and 6 are discussed in more detail below.

***Oral Presentations*** – These represent brief, efficient and entertaining summarizations of the article reviewed, following the outline provided below. We will likely begin with these and then, after having mastered some material, alter the format to be more interactive.

***Review essays*** – each class different individuals will be selected to prepare and submit written assignments (the assignments will rotate between students). The paper is due at the beginning of the class. Late assignments will not be eligible for an A. As people may not be able to read everything the only access to a piece will likely be through the individual presenting it. Consequently do a good job.

The assignments themselves will be 5 pages in length and will address the criteria provided below. Students will be evaluated on how well they meet these criteria.

review of article should address the following:

- **research question** (what do they want to know)
- **literature review** (what is known)
- **theory** (why does the phenomenon of interest take place)
- **hypotheses** (what do they expect)
- **data** (what information do they examine to test the theory)
- **method** (what approach is used to test the argument)
- **findings** (what do they find)
- **conclusion** (what do they conclude regarding the research question)
- **critique:** is the research question clear, is the literature review complete, is the theory clear, do the hypotheses logically follow from the theory, does the data seem appropriate and are reasonable alternatives ignored, does the method seem appropriate for the research question/existing literature and are potential/standard problems with the method addressed, what are the findings specifically and how do they address the initial question, does the conclusion logically follow given all the evidence presented, and what is missed/what should be done (if you note a problem with something make sure to have a solution for it – you can get away with doing this once in a review but not more)

- **spreadsheet entry:** place all the information above into a column that will be entered into one large spreadsheet for all of conflict studies (submit as excel file along with review submission)

As the objective is to write an article, only articles (published or in working paper format will be read). There might be one NGO or think tank report in there but only one or two.

***Final paper*** – At the end of class, a paper will be submitted concerning a topic of the students choice (discussed ahead of time with the Professor). Primarily the student should seek to extend the already existing literature reviewed in the course or take the area in a new direction (exploring unexamined arguments, sequences of tactics or comparisons across types of civil conflict). The paper should not exceed 30 pages in text (not including notes, tables, references and so forth). This work will not represent a complete piece of scholarship. Rather, it represents an article length paper up until the actual empirical analysis is undertaken: i.e., the puzzle, research question, literature review, theoretical contribution, hypotheses and research design. Preliminary data analysis will be an additional benefit.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at least two weeks prior to the time when the accommodation will be needed. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; <http://www.umich.edu/sswd>) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

### **Communication**

There are three ways to communicate with the instructor and I wanted to provide expected response times so that you can make the selection that best meets the students needs.

In-Person meeting during office hours: Immediate response

Telephone: 3-5 days

Email: 7-10 days

if I have not responded by this time, send the email again or try alternative method of communication;

in the subject line write “IMPORTANT CLASS BUSINESS” (in caps)  
be as direct as possible about what you need me to do.

## Course Schedule

### January

9 – Introduction

16 – *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* by James Scott

23 – Objectives of State Repression, Part 1: Order

TBA reading (if deemed useful)

The purpose of these weeks is to discuss available and needed theory, hypotheses, research design, data and methodological approaches

30 – *The Rebel's Dilemma* by Mark Lichbach

### February

6 – Objectives of State Repression, Part 2: Killing Political/Behavioral Challenges

TBA reading (if deemed useful)

13 – *Political Terror in Communist Systems* by Alexander Dallin and George Breslauer [Skype visitation]

20 – Tactical Evolution/Adaptation, Macro Patterns

TBA reading (if deemed useful)

27 – *State Repression and the Domestic Democratic Peace* by Christian Davenport

### March

13 – Democratic Institutions

TBA reading (if deemed useful)

20 – *Torture and Democracy* by Darius Rejali

27 – Tactical Diffusion

TBA reading (if deemed useful)

April

3 [International Studies Association] – Relax and Read some Repression Articles  
(1 from JCR, JPR, World Politics, APSR and AJPS)

10 – *There's Something Happening Here: The New Left, the Klan and FBI Counter-Intelligence* by David Cunningham

17 – Institutional Dynamics, Meso/Organizational Patterns

Jacqueline Demeritt's dissertation:

Delegating Death – A Strategic Logic of Government Killing

**April 26<sup>th</sup> – Final Paper Due**