

Timothy Pachirat
Graduate Seminar on Resistance
GPIA, Spring 2009

Course Description

This research seminar explores and problematizes theories and practices of resistance. We begin with a concentrated overview of the social science literature on domination and obedience to authority before moving to historical case studies of various modes of resistance that may include: character assassination, pilfering, and the anonymous threat; madness, neurosis, and deviance; hunger strikes, self-immolation, and suicide bombing; prophecy and millennial and apocalyptic movements; principled and strategic nonviolence; peasant uprisings; labor movements; student movements; nationalist insurgencies and popular wars; transnational anti-war and anti-globalization social movements; feminist and queer struggles; anarchist direct action; and the commodification of lifestyle resistance under advanced capitalism. Contextualized, detailed examination of the selected cases will provide the empirical terrain that allows us to engage broader theoretical questions about relationships between power and violence, means and ends, and domination and subjugation. Seminar participants will play a central role in identifying and developing the course's case studies and will be encouraged to draw on a range of materials including history, social science, (auto)biography, fiction, film, theater, and art. In addition to regularly scheduled classes, participants may also be required to view films, visit art exhibits, and observe picket lines, mass demonstrations, street theater, and acts of civil disobedience. The seminar's culminating project will be a collectively curated exhibit—open to the entire GPIA community—that explores and problematizes resistance as idea and as practice.