

HOW TO END A REVOLUTION?

The Annual Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Student Conference
The Mahindra Humanities Center at Harvard University, April 13-14, 2012

*"Things are so fluid," said Robert Danin.
"They're not driving the train.
They're reacting to the train,
and no one knows where the train is going."*

Image by Yoav Weiss (www.yoav-weiss.com)



How to *begin* a revolution is a question that has received much attention from many great thinkers. The goal of the 2012 Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference at the Mahindra Humanities Center is to reverse that perspective and ask: **How to *end* a revolution?**

The end of a revolution is not something inherently given, but a process in the making that serves different perspectives and interests. At the same time, the phase of transition characterized by chaos and instability very often opposes and challenges the attempts of making an end – from both a theoretical and a practical perspective. Is an end of a revolution even possible if history is understood as a constant process based on a linear definition of time and temporality? What challenges does the idea of a leaderless movement pose towards traditional views of political authority and authorship? What happens when unity and cohesion break apart and many different individual interests and powers evolve? What comes after the revolution?

The ongoing revolutions and uprisings in the Arab world highlight both the challenges of making a (constructive and collective) end, as well as the significance and timeliness of these questions to be addressed at the conference. Drawing upon contemporary and historical examples like the Arab Spring and the French Revolution, we invite you to examine the complex, multifaceted and mutable discourse that is shaped by historians who define, politicians who declare, writers who narrate and lawyers who legitimate the end of a revolution. In what violent and non-violent ways have people tried to stop, use or influence a revolution? Which strategies, tools and techniques are employed to end a revolution and how are they determined by underlying concepts of time, history and change? Through our collective inquiry – by analysing how people deal and dealt with moments of transition and by comparing their strategies, interests and narratives – our goal is to better understand the phenomenon of social and political change. With this approach we hope not only to expand the knowledge of revolutions but also to develop new ideas and strategies that will potentially prove to be practically important and relevant.

We seek rich, rigorous graduate student contributions from the humanities, social and political sciences (in particular from the following disciplines: law, literature, history, philosophy, political sciences, sociology), and even natural sciences if relevant.

Discussion themes may include, but are not restricted to:

- What is an End? Thinking About and Representing the End
- The End Versus Ending – Revolution as Process or Given?
- Controlling the End – Controlling the Power. Attempts of Overtaking the Protest
- Temporality, Change – and Order? How to Transform Chaos into Stability
- New Beginnings. Manifestos and Literary Narratives
- The People, the Media or the Military? Authorship of Revolution
- Continuity of Power. How to Deal with the Old Structures?
- Circular Revolution, Linear Progress and Permanent Evolution?
- Arts, Religion and Empathy. Lessons to Unite the People
- Trials, Constitutions and Elections. The Role of Law in Transitional Periods

We ask prospective participants to submit a short **curriculum vitae** and a **500-word abstract** that outlines the paper's topic, methodology and argument, as well as how the prospective participant's research interests relate to the theme of the conference more generally. Participants will be notified by mid-February whether their paper has been accepted into the conference. Please note that participants can apply for a limited number of travel grants.

Deadline for abstract submission: Tuesday, January 31st, 2012

Abstracts and CVs can be uploaded on the conference website: <http://isites.harvard.edu/revolution2012> (under the "Submissions" tab). Please make sure to include your full name, institutional affiliation, the title of your paper, and contact details. Questions and inquiries should be emailed to hconfer@fas.harvard.edu.