



**University  
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MA (University of Victoria, 2010)  
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**“Determinations of Dissent: Protest and the Politics of Classification”**

Department of Political Science

Tuesday, August 20, 2019

2:30 P.M.

Clearihue Building

Room B007

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Robert Walker, Department of Political Science, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Simon Glezos, Department of Political Science, UVic (Member)

Dr. Reuben Rose-Redwood, Department of Geography, UVic (Outside Member)

Dr. Michael Shapiro, Department of Political Science, University of Hawai'i at Manoa (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Roland Bleiker, School of Political Science and International Studies, University of Queensland

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Shailoo Bedi, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines the significance of the politics of classification to how we have come to understand and study practices of protest and dissent. I trace the politics of classification in the history of political thought, and highlight how the categories of thought often most deeply associated with the promises of the Euro-modern Enlightenment constitute both aspirations and limits to questions of dissent and political transformation. These modern aspirations and limits, I argue, have tended to fall into one of two traditions – a Kantian/Foucauldian tradition and a Hegelian/Marxian tradition. While the Hegelian/Marxian tradition involves a specific, progressivist theory of the subject, lines of thought associated with this tradition tend to be reductionist. By contrast, the Kantian/Foucauldian tradition is not reductionist in the same way as the Hegelian/Marxian, and involves both an ontological and an epistemological theory of classification, but is constrained by its own constitutive limits.

I apply these theoretical insights to a study of how a range of sympathetic, progressivist commentators, from journalists, to activists, to academics, have attempted to explain the 2009-2013 wave of global protests. Examining commentaries that discuss and link events ranging from the Syntagma Square and *indignadas* protests in Greece and Spain, the Occupy Wall Street movement and the summer 2013 protests in Brazil, Turkey and Bulgaria, I show that these commentaries claim novel politics but ignore the politics of classification within which their own work operates. This lack of attention paid to the politics of classification by both participants and commentators in progressive politics is symptomatic of a hegemony of the particular classificatory practices and categories I have identified. I suggest that explanations of protests often clustered around three key issues – or three ways that commentators claimed something was changing – claims to novelty, claims to the emergence of new forms of subjectivity, and claims around changing structures of authority. To take seriously the question of dissent, I conclude, we must take into account the epistemological inheritances within which our claims about practices of dissent are located.