

“Exploring Civil Disobedience: Assange and Snowden – A Rough Draft Analysis”

- *Considering Assange/Snowden or the Soviet Revolutions of 1989*

This presentation reflects initial ideas and seeks class feedback for my future essay

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HPHI5908



Why These Cases?

- Fits course content
- Snowden & Assange exposed state misconduct
- Moral duty vs legal obedience
- Digital, global, and anonymous resistance
- Aim: Test civil disobedience theory today

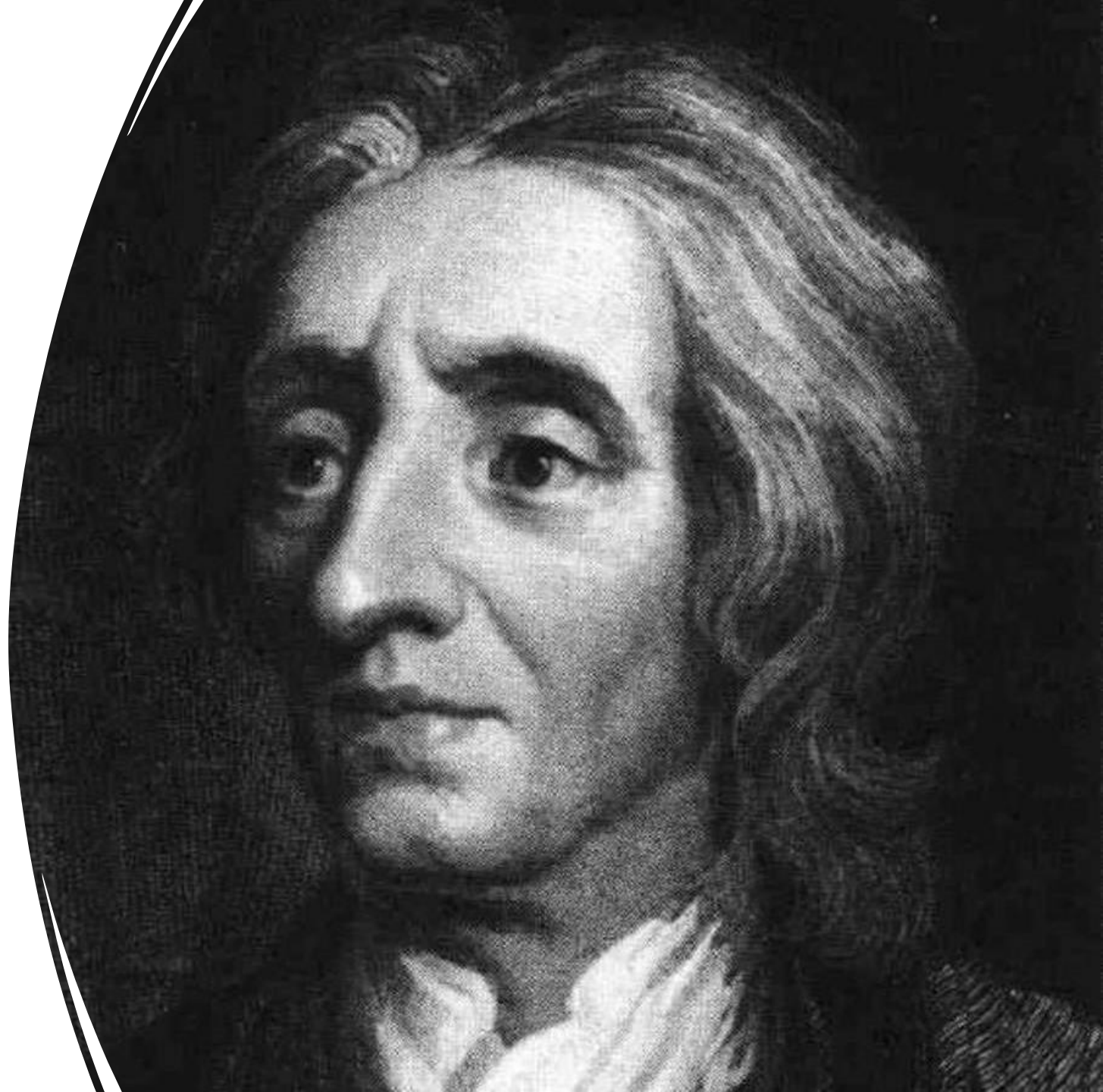


- *BBC News (2024).*

Locke: Consent and Legitimate Resistance

- Government is a trust; legitimacy requires consent
- Violation of trust → right to resist
- Resistance = restoring justice, not "rebellion"
- American Revolution

- Locke, J. (1689).



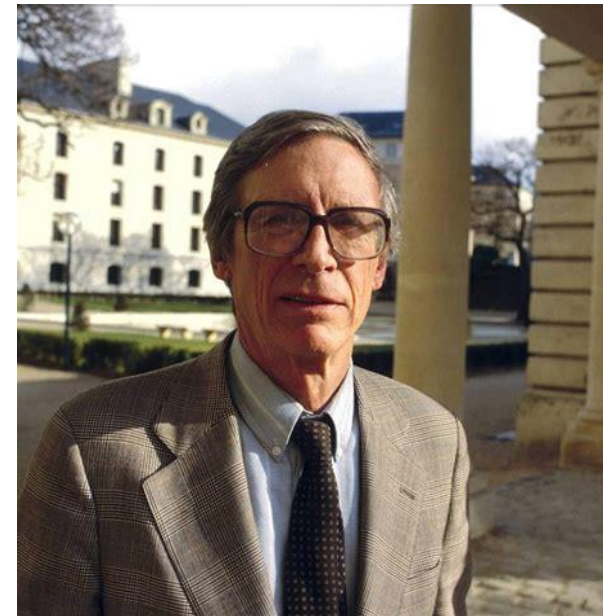
Thoreau: Conscience Over Law + Historical Context

- *Civil Disobedience* (1849)
- Individuals must follow conscience over law when laws are unjust.
- Personal protest can be symbolic, i.e., refusing taxes or to comply with certain rules.
- Emphasis remains on ethical responsibility, even when achieving systemic change is difficult
- **Historical reflection:** Considered the Romanian Revolution and Soviet states of 1989 uprisings as real-world forms of civil disobedience.



Theoretical Frameworks (Classical)

- **Locke:** Right and duty to resist tyranny; government legitimacy depends on the consent of governed.
- **Thoreau:** Moral duty to resist injustice, prioritizing conscience over law and favoring nonviolent action.
- **Rawls:** Civil disobedience functions as a corrective mechanism in order to maintain democratic legitimacy and fairness.

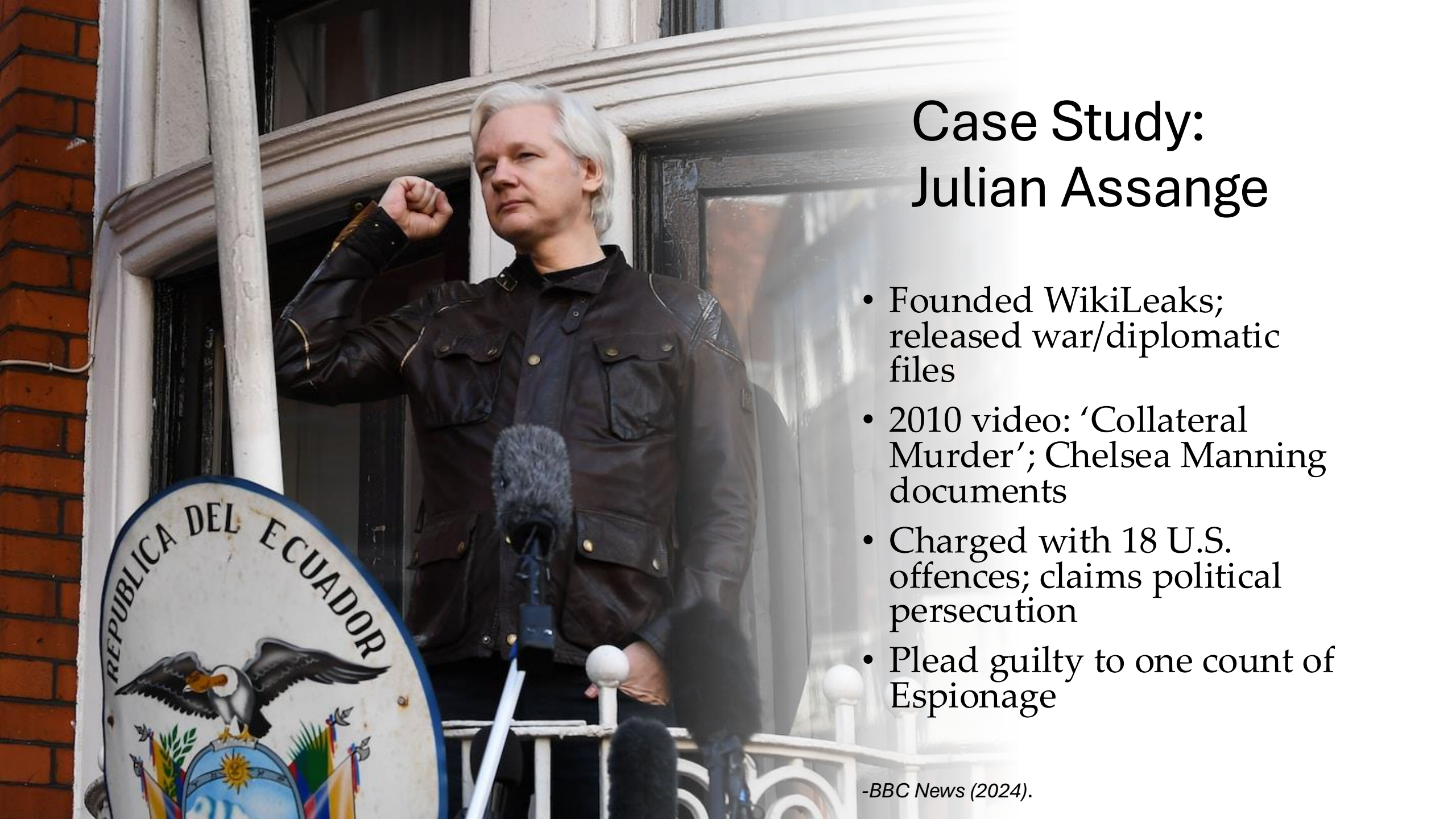


John Rawls (1921-2002)

Case Study: Julian Assange

- Founded WikiLeaks; released war/diplomatic files
- 2010 video: 'Collateral Murder'; Chelsea Manning documents
- Charged with 18 U.S. offences; claims political persecution
- Plead guilty to one count of Espionage

-BBC News (2024).



Case Study: Edward Snowden

- 2013: Exposed global mass surveillance
- Moral duty → public accountability; accepted exile in Russia
- Raises question: Rawlsian reform or digital disobedience?
- Pozen: “fits and strains” traditional theory
- Shows how technology is reshaping modern protest and civil disobedience



Assange vs. Snowden



<u>Theme</u>	<u>Assange</u>	<u>Snowden</u>
<i>Motivation-</i>	Radical transparency	Public accountability
<i>Method-</i>	Mass publication	Targeted leaks
<i>Public Appeal-</i>	Limited moral framing	Strong ethical justification
<i>Relation to State-</i>	Confrontational	Reformist
<i>Fit with Theory-</i>	Locke/Thoreau	Rawls/Thoreau

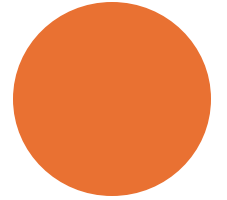
Challenges / Limitations

- Locke: assumes territorial government (tied to a specific state)
- Thoreau: assumes safe individual resistance
- Rawls: requires publicity & cooperation (aim for social change)
- Modern digital disobedience challenges these assumptions



Feedback/Next Steps

- Do the mentioned theories apply to Assange and Snowden?
- Does the comparison between the two whistleblowers make sense?
- Are there better historical examples (like the Romanian Revolution) that would better strengthen my essay?



Bibliography

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