Sociology 140: **POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY**

Fall 2016
University of California, Berkeley

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Sociologists have always been inspired by the need to make sense of the world around them. Just as classical sociologists like Marx and Weber sought to understand the enormous changes unleashed upon their societies by Industrialization or political processes of democratization, we too are faced with a range of massive social transformations. This course will provide students with an **introduction to the field of political sociology through engagement with major contemporary developments**. The course is structured around three themes – the **Global Economic Crisis**, the “**War on Terror**,” and the **Occupy Movement**. Each theme provides an empirical entry point into the field of political sociology. In pursuing questions related to these contemporary developments, we will be introduced to a variety of concepts, theories and debates that are central to the field. In particular, we will focus on one of the main concepts of political sociology – **the state**.

Part I of the course introduces the case of the **Global Economic Crisis** that spread throughout the world in 2008. This provides the opportunity to engage with a long tradition of Marxist scholarship that seeks to understand the **relationship between state and economy** (Engels, Lenin, Block, Harvey). In doing so, we will explore a range of issues (the relation between state and capital, the political and economic power of the “ruling class,” the role of the state in mediating the crises of capitalism) that we can then apply towards understanding the Global Economic Crisis.

While Marxists have generally approached the state in terms of its ends or economic objectives, scholars inspired by Weber focus upon the **means of state power** (violence, bureaucracy, war-making, surveillance). Part II of the course will explore the case of the US’ “**War on Terror**” through the lens of this scholarship. These readings raise a series of questions that we will then apply towards understanding the “War on Terror”: What is the relationship between states and violence? How do states monopolize the power to classify certain forms of violence as “(il)legitimate”? (Weber) How is war-making central to processes of state-making? (Tilly) What are the various forms of state power and how are they intrinsically gendered? (Brown) How have surveillance practices historically developed as a means of governing race and class relations in the US? (Parenti & Guzik)

Political sociology is generally oriented around the study of relations of power. Sociologists seek to understand both the nature and operation of power, as well as the various forms of resistance that inevitably surface within unequal power relations. Part III of the course will introduce the case of the **Occupy Movement** as a way of exploring scholarship on **resistance and social**
movements. Beginning with the classic work of Piven & Cloward, we will consider the various ways sociologists have approached the study of resistance and social movements in the US. Drawing upon the first two parts of the course, we return to some of the same scholars (Harvey, Brown) in order to understand how the contemporary economic and political developments we’ve discussed have played a role in fueling the emergence of the Occupy Movement. And just as we focused upon identifying the concrete means and techniques of state power in Part II, we now turn to exploring the particular tactics and strategies of resistance that characterize “Occupy” (occupation, disruption, civil disobedience), considering how they are shaped by a long history of social movements in the US. Maintaining our focus upon the state, we conclude by examining the dialectical relationship between strategies of resistance and repression.

PART I: STATE & ECONOMY (The Global Economic Crisis)

8/25 COURSE INTRODUCTION

Film shown during class: Capitalism Hits the Fan (2008) - Lecture by Economist Richard Wolff

(Available at the Media Resources Center at Moffitt Library: DVD X1278)

8/30 MARXISM: The Global Economic Crisis

Film shown during class: Capitalism Hits the Fan (2008) - Lecture by Economist Richard Wolff

9/1 MARXISM: Origin & Functions of the State


9/6 MARXISM: Origin & Functions of the State


9/8 NEO-MARXISM: Autonomy & Dynamics of the State


9/13 CONTEMPORARY NEO-MARXISM: Neoliberalism


9/15 CONTEMPORARY NEO-MARXISM: The Neoliberal State

9/20  THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS

Review Marxists (Wolff, Engels/Lenin, Block & Harvey): *How would they explain the Global Economic Crisis?*

Film shown during class: *Inside Job* (2010)

9/22  THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS


Film shown during class: *Inside Job* (2010)

***ESSAY 1 will be distributed during class and is due on Monday 9/26 by 10pm***

PART II:  *THE MEANS OF STATE POWER* (The “War on Terror”)

9/27  WEBER:  *Violence*


9/29  WEBER:  *Violence*


10/4  TILLY:  *War-Making & State-Making*


10/6  TILLY:  *War-Making & State-Making*

10/11 BROWN: *Masculinist State Power*


10/13 BROWN: *Prerogative Power*


10/18 THE "WAR ON TERROR"

Film shown during class: *Taxi to the Dark Side* (2007)

10/20 THE "WAR ON TERROR"


Film shown during class: *Taxi to the Dark Side* (2007)

10/25 PARENTI: *Race, Class & Surveillance*


10/27 SURVEILLANCE: *The "War on Terror" and Beyond…*

Watch the documentary *Spying on the Homefront* (PBS/Frontline) http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/homefront/


***ESSAY 2 will be distributed during class and is due on Monday 10/31 by 10pm

PART III: RESISTANCE & SOCIAL MOVEMENTS (OCCUPY)

11/1 PIVEN & CLOWARD: The Structuring of Protest


11/3 THE POWER OF DISRUPTION


11/8 TACTICS OF DISRUPTION


11/10 OCCUPY WALL STREET


Film shown during class: History of an Occupation, Fault Lines/Al Jazeera (2012)
11/15  WHY OCCUPY?


11/17  OCCUPY OAKLAND


11/22  DIALECTIC of RESISTANCE & REPRESSION


11/24  NO CLASS

11/29  DIALECTIC of RESISTANCE & REPRESSION


12/1  PREFIGURATIVE POLITICS


***ESSAY 3 will be distributed during class and is due on Monday 12/12 by 10pm***

**GRADE DISTRIBUTION:**

10% Attendance
30% ESSAY on Part 1 (9/26)
30% ESSAY on Part 2 (10/31)
30% ESSAY on Part 3 (12/12)

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

All readings listed on the syllabus are included in the course reader, available at Replica Digital Ink (510 549-9991) at 2138 Oxford Street (by the Center Street entrance to campus near the Downtown Berkeley BART station], around the corner from Starbucks). Required readings have purposely been limited to ensure that students can be reasonably expected to read all assigned texts carefully and thoroughly.

**ATTENDANCE:**

Class attendance is mandatory. Students are allotted 2 absences without penalty. Any additional absences will result in a grade penalty. Absences may be excused by the instructor only in extreme circumstances, and only if discussed with me prior to the absence. It is crucial that all students arrive on time (class will start promptly at 10 minutes after the hour).

**ESSAYS:**

Students will write a short take-home essay (no longer than 5 pages double spaced) at the conclusion of each of the three parts of the course. Essays will be geared towards asking students to synthesize the scholarship covered in each part of the course, and to apply relevant concepts and theories to our three themes.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

All written work must be your own. Any words, or ideas, borrowed from another source (even if paraphrased) must be appropriately cited. Any form of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course.

**SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS:**

Please notify me immediately if you require any special accommodations for the course. If you are registered with the DSP program, please ensure that your authorization letter is forwarded to me at the beginning of the semester.