POLITICS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Course description: This course focuses on the interaction between politics and society. We will look at different forms of politics including voting, social movements, party politics, state policies, direct democratic action, religious mobilization, and revolution. We will discuss whether, how, and why each of these forms of political action impact social change. We will ask whether some are more influential ways of bringing about change than others. We will explore these questions in different contexts including the United States, Europe, China, and the Middle East. We will study both historical examples and contemporary cases based on sociological perspectives.

Evaluation:

There will be three take-home examinations (5 double-spaced pages for the midterm, 6 for the final). You will write one research paper. Section discussions also constitute a part of the final grade.

Midterms (September 28; October 26): 30%
Final (December 14): 20%
Research paper (December 4): 30%
Section participation: 20%

Required texts: The reader is available at Copy Central (on 2576 Bancroft Way).

The research paper

The goal of the research paper is applying the perspectives we have learned to actual cases. You will pick one revolution, movement, or country and discuss it within the context of the theories. You can, for example, take one theory and discuss why it works better in the case you have chosen than other plausible theories (you do not have to cover all the theories we have learned). You can also seek to combine the insights of two or more theories.

You will have to build the argument you develop in this paper on additional research. This means that you have to read additional articles and books about the revolution, movement, or country of your choice and refer to these in your paper (along with the articles and books covered in class).

In early November, you will hand in a research proposal that will outline your argument and provide a provisional bibliography (1 double-spaced page, not counting the bibliography). The final paper will be double-spaced, and a maximum of 9-10 pages (including the bibliography).
I. CLASS, RACE, AND MOBILIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Week 1: Voting in America


Week 2: Class, slavery, and party


Week 3: The New Deal


Week 4: Beyond class and race? New Social Movements and the media


II. SOCIAL REVOLUTIONS

Week 5: Paris Commune


Week 6: The Russian revolutions of 1917

Week 7: Comparative analysis of revolutions

Skocpol, Theda. 1979. States and Social Revolutions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 3-43, 284-293.


Week 8: The Chinese revolution


Week 9: Occupy Wall Street


Weeks 10: The Arab Spring and Gezi


Possibly Week 11: ISIS


Week 12: Trumpism, Brexit: TBD