

Sociology of Political Parties  
Sociology 190.5, Spring 2019

Thursdays 2-4pm, Barrows 175

Instructor: Shannon Ikebe (shannon.ikebe@gmail.com)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-4pm or by Appointment – Passione Caffè (91 Shattuck Square)

Sign up at <https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/cpfac>

Political parties play an essential role in a modern society; this course explores multiple sociological questions on the party-form. What is a political party and what does it do, internally and externally? In what circumstances does a party shape society or is it rather just a mirror of the society in which it operates? How much power do members have in a party? What distinguishes a political party from other types of organizations or communities? We will firstly explore classical theories of parties, then discuss the mass parties' engagement with elections, civil society, the capitalist state and their own membership in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the final part of the course, we examine contemporary development of the party as an institution, as existing political systems are entering crisis in many countries. Comparative and historical dimensions are emphasized throughout the course, and we will be paying particular attention to political parties that have sought to transform society in an emancipatory direction, since it is in these parties that dilemmas and dramas of the party-form manifest most acutely. Do we need a party to change the world?

**Course Requirements:**

*Class Participation* (25%): Active participation in class is an essential requirement for the course. You are expected to attend class every week, and more than one unexcused absences will negatively affect your participation grade. (When you need an excused absence, please e-mail me *before* the class starts.) Nevertheless, it is even more important for you to actively participate in class discussions. While I will be conducting mini-lectures in some weeks, this is primarily a discussion-based class; attendance without participation does not fulfill the course requirement!!! If there are any factors that are preventing or making it difficult for you to participate, even if it's a matter of simple discomfort, please discuss it with me.

*Weekly Short Comments* (12 %): It is imperative that you read all the readings for class each week, since discussions proceed on the assumption that you have read all the readings. Engaging, enriching discussions are impossible if you have not read them! To facilitate your reading, you are expected to write a short comment (around 250 words) each week on the readings. These are to help arrange your own thoughts, as well as for me to structure each class better. The comment should at least include a summary of the arguments and your own thoughts on at least two of the readings for the week. The comments are due by 9pm on Wednesdays, the day before class. These comments will not be graded; you will get full points for each comment as long as it is submitted, unless the comments are too late, too short or long, or completely off-topic.

*Presentation* (10%): Each student will present on the readings for a particular week, once in the semester. The presentation should be for around 10 minutes, and discuss the main arguments of each reading, connections between the week's readings (as you see them), as well as your own assessment of the authors' arguments. Do you agree? Disagree? Why? The presentation should

conclude with suggestions for a couple of discussion questions for the class. Further explanations of the historical context, wherever appropriate, are also definitely welcome. You are highly encouraged to see me in office hours prior to the day you are presenting.

*Final Paper (53%):* You will write a final paper on a topic of your choice regarding political parties. You will choose a party or parties during a certain historical period, and examine at least one of the following: their relations with the state, their relations with civil society and/or social movements, their ideology/program, internal organization, or experiences of party members. Comparative analysis is highly encouraged. If you are unsure if a particular topic falls within the scope of this assignment, please discuss it with me.

The final paper should include engagement with some of the course readings, and most importantly, your own theoretical and empirical argument. Primary source research (archives or interviews) is not a requirement, but highly encouraged if feasible depending on your topic. More information on the paper will be forthcoming in class.

The final paper is a work to be completed throughout the semester; it cannot be completed at the last minute! To facilitate development of the paper, the following pieces of it are due throughout the semester. But, only the in-class presentation (3%) and the final paper (50%) will count towards the grade. Furthermore, you are required to meet with me at least once in office hours to discuss the paper, between Research Proposal and In-Class Presentation.

- Research Proposal (2 pages): Due Sunday, February 24
- Literature Review (2-3 pages): Due Sunday, April 7
- In-Class Presentation (5 minutes): Thursday, April 25 (3%)
- Final Paper (15-20 pages): Due Wednesday, May 15 (50%)

**Required Texts:** All materials are available in the course reader, available at University Copy (2425 Channing). They are also available in pdf on the bCourses page for this class.

## **Course Schedule**

### **January 24: Introduction**

*Optional* -Paolo Gerbaudo. 2018. "The Return of the Party." *Jacobin* Oct. 22, 2018. (<https://jacobinmag.com/2018/10/mass-party-labour-podemos-neoliberalism>)

### **January 31: The Party as Oligarchy**

-Robert Michels. 1915 [1911]. *Political Parties: a Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. pp. 25-33, 46-49, 145-155, 164-173, 417-425

-Carl Schorske. 1955. "Ch. 5: Party Structure and Factional Power." *German Social Democracy 1905-1917: Development of the Great Schism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. pp. 116-145.

### **February 7: The Party and Spontaneity from Below**

-Vladimir Lenin. 1929 [1902]. *What is to Be Done? The Burning Questions of Our Movement*. New York: International Publishers. pp. 31-44, 75-86.

-Rosa Luxemburg. "Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy" (1904, pp. 248-265), part of "the Mass Strike" (1906, pp. 191-199), part of "the Russian Revolution" (1918, pp. 299-310), "Order Reigns in Berlin" (1919, pp. 373-378). In Peter Hudis and Kevin B. Anderson (Eds.). 2004. *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

### **February 14: The Party as the Modern Prince**

-Antonio Gramsci. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers. pp. 125-133, 144-158, 180-190, 195-199

### **February 21: Electoralism and Its Discontents**

-Anthony Downs. 1957. *Economic Theory of Democracy*. pp. 21-35, 114-141  
-Adam Przeworski. 1985. *Capitalism and Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 99-129.  
-Pierre Bourdieu. 1979. "Public Opinion Does Not Exist." In Armand Mattelart and Seth Siegelaub (Eds.). *Communication and Class Struggle*, vol. 1. New York: International General. pp. 124-130.

### **Research Proposal (2 pages) due, February 24**

### **February 28: The Party, Civil Society and Articulation**

-Cedric de Leon, Manali Desai and Cihan Tuğal. 2009. "Political Articulation: Parties and the Constitution of Cleavages in the United States, India and Turkey." *Sociological Theory* 27 (3): pp. 193-219.  
-Dylan Riley. 2005. "Civic Associations and Authoritarian Regimes in Interwar Europe: Italy and Spain in Comparative Perspective." *American Sociological Review* 70, pp. 288-310.  
-Barry Eidlin. 2016. "Why Is There No Labor Party in the United States? Political Articulation and the Canadian Comparison, 1932 to 1948." *American Sociological Review* 81: 3, pp. 488-516.

### **March 7: Postwar Social Democracy**

-Adam Przeworski. 1985. *Capitalism and Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 7-46  
-Leo Panitch and Colin Leys. 2001. *The End of Parliamentary Socialism: From New Left to New Labour*. London: Verso. 134-176, 210-213

### **March 14: Experiences in Eurocommunism**

-Franco Fortini. 1966 [1958]. "Communism" [poem]. *New Left Review* I/38. pp. 81.  
-Rossana Rossanda. 2010 [2005]. *The Comrade from Milan*. London: Verso. pp. 287-333.  
-Jane Jenson and George Ross. 1984. *The View from Inside: a French Communist Cell in Crisis*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. Pp. 27-40, 63-89

### **March 21: Rise and Fall of the Mass Party**

-Alan Ware. 1996. *Political Parties and Party Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 63-78

- Susan Scarrow. 2014. *Beyond Party Members: Changing Approaches to Partisan Mobilization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 13-35.
- Peter Mair. 2006. "Ruling the Void?" *New Left Review* II/42, pp. 25-51.
- Oscar Mazzoleni and Gerrit Voerman. 2017. "Memberless Parties: Beyond the Business-Firm Party Model?" *Party Politics* 23: 6, pp. 1-10

March 28: SPRING BREAK!

#### **Apr. 4: American Exceptionalism?**

- Amy Bridges. 1984. *A City in the Republic: Antebellum New York and the Origins of Machine Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 103-124
- Leon Epstein. 1986. *Political Parties in the American Mold*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. pp. 155-174.
- Mike Davis. 1980. "Why the US Working Class is Different." *New Left Review* I/123, pp. 3-44. Read pp. 3-17, 23-44.

#### **Literature Review (2-3 pages) due, April 7**

#### **April 11: The Populist Moment**

- Ernesto Laclau. 2005. *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso. pp. 67-89.
- Julia Ramirez Blanco. 2018. *Artistic Utopias of Revolt : Claremond Road, Reclaim the Streets, and the City of Sol*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 117-157.
- Pablo Iglesias. 2015. "Understanding Podemos." *New Left Review* II/93, pp. 7-22.

#### **Apr. 18 – Party Democracy in the Digital Age**

- Paolo Gerbaudo. 2018. *The Digital Party: Political Organisation and Online Democracy*. London: Pluto Press. Pp. 66-80, 92-104, 126-143
- Donatella Della Porta, Joseba Fernández, Hara Kouil and Lorenzo Mosca. 2017. "Ch. 3: Organizational Repertoires of Movement Parties." *Movement Parties Against Austerity*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Pp. 67-101.
- Josep Maria Antentas. 2017. "Power in Podemos." *Jacobin* March 7, 2017. (<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/03/podemos-congress-vistalegre-iglesias-errejon-anticapitalistas>)

#### **April 25: Paper Workshop!**

#### **May 2: Conclusion**

- Jodi Dean. 2018. *Crowds and Party*. London: Verso. 1-29, 161-207.
- Simone Weil. 2013 [1943]. *On the Abolition of All Political Parties*. New York: New York Review of Books.

#### **Final Paper (15-20 pages) due, May 15**