SOC 280C
POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

This course will explore the changing relations between politics, society, violence, domination, and the state. We will start with classical texts of sociology and map out the contending perspectives on the roots of political dynamics. Throughout the course, we will study the Marxist tradition (and its focus on conflict-driven group formation) and the Weberian tradition (and its focus on state-making). We will also systematically engage the Nietzschean tradition (as a call for the disintegration of both perspectives and a focus on rhizomic power) and possible syntheses of two or three of the above (such as Gramscian and Bourdieusian perspectives).

The exploration of these perspectives will be interwoven with the study of the following topical and empirical questions:

1) What is the role of politics in producing and sustaining social order, domination, and change? 2) What is the state’s relation to classes, ideology and culture? How do cultural categories shape the formation of the state? 3) How do we draw the line between society and state? How does this differentiation develop historically? Where are institutions like political parties located in this differentiation? 4) How do non-state actors engage in politics? What relations do they seek with the state? What are the roles of culture and class in this engagement? 5) What is the role of politics in supposedly universal trends such as rationalization and bureaucratization? 6) How do states act in an international/global order? What impact do other actors have on the making of global order? 7) What is the relation between the development of capitalism and state formation?

We will evaluate what each of these perspectives have to contribute to our understanding of substantive issues such as social movements, nationalism, religion, state formation, coercion, populism, race, revolutions, and subject formation. The readings will have an international focus.

The second part of the course will focus on populism, fascism, and race. We will discuss these in the context of established frameworks, but will also raise the possibility that sociology has to be refashioned to speak to our turbulent era. As we approach what seems to be the end of the political formations associated with capitalism (liberalism, democracy, etc.), we will look back at the two major movements (left-wing populism and fascism) that attempted (but failed) to surpass capitalism and its political forms. (The other major anti-capitalist movement of the 20th century, communism, will be introduced and discussed in the first three weeks of this course, but its analysis will constitute a background theoretical framework with which we evaluate ongoing challenges to capitalism, liberalism, and modernity). It has become misleadingly fashionable (though still inevitable) to compare Trumpism with fascism, but the public debate misses greater continuities and discontinuities.
between the interwar era and our predicament. We will contextualize the globally resurgent right-wing extremism (and the receding left-wing challenges to the neoliberal era) to better understand the current climate of polarization and authoritarianism.

The course has two goals: introducing you to the contested “canon” of political sociology; and making use of this literature for your research. In the service of the second goal, you are expected to write a research proposal as the final paper. The paper needs to address the readings we have covered. **A two-page (double space) proposal for the final paper is due on March 12** (electronically, before class). **The final paper** (15-20 pages, double space, size 12 font, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins) **is due on May 13 (5 pm)**. Each late day will bring down your grade one notch.

Starting with **March 19**, a student (or group of students) will present and discuss each week’s readings. S/he will also discuss the relation of these readings with other books and articles (by picking 5-7 articles and books listed below one of the sections under “Further readings” + any appropriate additional texts) and broader political sociology. **You need to consult the instructor before you finalize the list of books and articles you will present.** The task of the discussant(s) will include summarizing the important points of the readings (including “Further readings” and additional texts) and coming up with discussion questions to guide the conversation. This exercise is essential for “finding your voice” within political sociology. **You need to plan ahead and start reading** the relevant texts as soon as possible.

**PART I. MAJOR PERSPECTIVES IN POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY**

1) **CLASSICS**


**Further readings:**


2) NEO-MARXISM


Further readings:


3) STATE-CENTERED APPROACHES: CORE ARGUMENT AND METHODOLOGY

Skocpol, Theda. States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/methodology/two%20methods.t%26s.pdf

Further readings on the mainstream and/or state-centered theorization of revolution:


Publishers.


**Further readings on the Russian Revolutions:**


Althusser, Louis. 1962. “Contradiction and Overdetermination.” In “For Marx”


**Further readings on the (non-state centered) sociology of revolution:**


Wickham-Crowley, Timothy. 1992. *Guerillas and Revolution in Latin America*. 


4) STATE-CENTERED APPROACHES: COERCION AND STATE FORMATION


Further readings:


5) THE NIETZSCHEAN TRADITION AND RHIZOMIC POWER


Further readings:


6) THE STATE AS A FIELD


Further readings:


**PART II. POPULISM, FASCISM, AND RACE**

7) Populism before the 21st century


*Further readings:*


8) Fascism


Further readings:


9) Racial politics


Further readings:


Fanon, Frantz. 2008 [1952]. Black Skin, White Masks.


10) The 2008-2013 wave


Selections from the MENA special issue of *Social Movement Studies* 18/1 (“Weathering the Storm: Network Mobilization Dynamics in Uncertain Times in the Middle East and North Africa”) https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/csms20/18/1?nav=tocList

Further readings:


*Arab Spring:*


11) CONTEMPORARY POPULISM


Further readings:

SPECIAL ISSUE: Journal of World - Systems Research; 2018; Vol. 24 (2)


12) Parties and neoliberalism