

# ***POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY***

University of California, Berkeley  
Spring 2021

**Laleh Behbehanian, Ph.D.**

**Tuesday/Thursday 3:30 – 5:00**

**Email:** lalehb@berkeley.edu

**Office Hours:** Monday 2-3 & Thursday 1-2

\*Sign up at [wejoinin.com/LalehBehbehanian](https://wejoinin.com/LalehBehbehanian)

This course introduces students to theories and concepts of *political sociology* through utilizing them to make sense of major developments in our contemporary world.

Part I of the course explores scholarship on the relationship between *State and Economy*. We begin with Marxist approaches that help us understand our current **economic crisis** by contextualizing it within a larger history of capitalist crises from the Great Depression to the Great Recession. We then proceed to examine two major state projects in the contemporary era of neoliberal capitalism: **mass incarceration** and **mass deportation**.

In Part II, we shift our focus to scholars that forefront *State Violence*. We begin by utilizing Weberian approaches that emphasize the state's monopoly of legitimate violence to examine the US' "**War on Terror**," followed by scholarship that historically traces the development of state power through **war, money** and **imperialism**.

We conclude in Part III with *Feminist Revisions* of the approaches we studied in the first two parts of course, providing us with radically different perspectives on states, capitalism, violence, mass incarceration, and particularly the current **pandemic** and **crisis of social reproduction**.

## ***PART I: STATE & ECONOMY***

### **Economic Crises, Mass Incarceration & Mass Deportation**

"Prisons are the underbelly of global capitalism." (Tanya Golash-Boza)

**1/19** *Course Introduction*

\*Read the course requirements and policies laid out on Pp.7-9 of this syllabus.

**1/21 Booms & Busts: The Crises of Capitalism**

Viewing Assignment: “Capitalism Hits the Fan.” (2009) Lecture by Richard Wolff

<https://berkeley-kanopy-com.libproxy.berkeley.edu/video/capitalism-hits-fan>

\*Watch this video lecture **BEFORE** today’s class utilizing the provided viewing guide

**1/26 The Stock Market Crash of 1929 & The Great Depression**

Viewing Assignment: “1929: The Great Depression”

Part 1: [https://youtu.be/bCEJ65H\\_1XE](https://youtu.be/bCEJ65H_1XE)

Part 2: <https://youtu.be/gO42ZfCN9ug>

\*Watch both parts of this documentary **BEFORE** today’s class

**1/28 Classical Marxism: The State as an Instrument of the Ruling Class**

Engels, Friedrich. 1978 [1884]. “The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State” in *The Marx-Engels Reader, Second Edition*. New York: EE Norton. (Pp.751- 759)

**2/2 Neoliberalization**

Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Pp.1-3; 5-26)

**2/4 The Neoliberal State**

Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. (Pp.26-35; 64-71; 72-74; 75-78; 80-84)

**2/9 Primitive Accumulation & Accumulation by Dispossession**

Marx, Karl. 1978. “The So-Called Primitive Accumulation” in *The Marx-Engels Reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) Edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York: Norton & Company. (Pp.431-436)

Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. (Pp.154; 159-165)

**2/11 The Global Economic Crisis of 2008 & The Great Recession**

Viewing Assignment: *Inside Job* (2010)

\*Watch this documentary **BEFORE** today's class [Viewing link will be provided]

Class discussion: Applying Marxists to *Inside Job*

Suggested Additional Reading:

Badger, Emily. 2013. "The Dramatic Racial Bias of Subprime Lending During the Housing Boom" *CityLab*. August 16. (<https://www.citylab.com/equity/2013/08/blacks-really-were-targeted-bogus-loans-during-housing-boom/6559/>)

White, Gillian B. 2015. "The Recession's Racial Slant" *The Atlantic*. June 24. (<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/06/black-recession-housing-race/396725/>)

**2/16 Neoliberal Rationality and the Undoing of Democracy**

"What Exactly is Neoliberalism?" Interview with Wendy Brown (2015) *Dissent Magazine*. <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/blog/booked-3-what-exactly-is-neoliberalism-wendy-brown-undoing-the-demos> (Pp.1-4; 5-6)

Brown, Wendy. 2015. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Brooklyn: Zone Books. (Pp. 17; 28-31; 175-176; 178-183; 184-187; 199-200)

**\*Exam 1 distributed**

**2/18 NO CLASS – Exam 1 due 2/21**

**\*\*\* EXAM 1 DUE on 2/21\*\*\***

**2/23 The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration**

Alexander, Michelle. 2012. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press. Excerpts of Intro & Ch.1 (Pp.1-2; 12-13; 20-41; 42-48; 54-57).

Suggested Additional Reading:

Alexander, Michele. 2018. "The Newest Jim Crow." *The New York Times*. November 8. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/08/opinion/sunday/criminal-justice-reforms-racetechnology.html>)

**2/25** *The Economies of Peculiar Institutions*

Waquant, Loic. "From slavery to mass incarceration: Rethinking the 'race question' in the US." *New Left Review* 13 (2002): 41-60.

**3/2** *Global Apartheid: Mass Deportation*

Golash-Boza, Tanya Maria. 2015. *Deported: Immigrant Policing, Disposable Labor, and Global Capitalism*. New York: New York University Press. (Pp.vii-x; 1-19; 167-169; 199-203; 217)

**PART II: STATE VIOLENCE**

**War, Money & Imperialism**

"The decisive means for politics is violence." (Max Weber)

**3/4** *The State's Monopoly of Violence*

Weber, Max. 1946 [1919]. "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press. (Pp.77-83)

**3/9** *(II) Legitimate Violence*

Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" (Pp.83-84; 115-121; 125-128)

Whitaker, Brian. 2001. "The definition of terrorism." *The Guardian*. May 7.  
(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/may/07/terrorism>)

**3/11** *War Makes States*

Tilly, Charles. 1985. "War-Making and State-Making as Organized Crime." In *Bringing the State Back In*, edited by Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol. NY: Cambridge University Press. (Pp.169-180)

**3/16** *War Makes Democracy*

Tilly, "War-Making and State-Making as Organized Crime." (Pp.181-186)

**3/18** *War (Re)Makes States*

No Assignment

In Class Viewing of *Top Secret America* (2013) PBS/Frontline

Class Discussion: Applying Tilly to *Top Secret America* (PBS)

**3/23** NO CLASS – *Spring Break*

**3/25** NO CLASS – *Spring Break*

**3/30** *The “War on Terror”*

Viewing Assignment\*: *Taxi to the Dark Side* (2007)

\*Watch this documentary **BEFORE** today’s class. [Viewing link will be provided]

Class Discussion: Applying Weber & Tilly to *Taxi to the Dark Side*

\*This documentary contains extremely graphic images and footage of physical, sexual and psychological violence. If you are not comfortable viewing this documentary, please contact me and we can arrange for an alternative means of accessing the information presented.

**\*Exam 2 distributed**

**4/1** NO CLASS – Exam 2 due 4/4

\*There is no assignment or class meeting today, but you should begin the reading for 4/6 which is longer than usual (40 pages).

**\*\*\* EXAM 2 DUE on 4/4\*\*\***

**4/6** *War Makes Money*

McNally, David. 2020. *Blood and Money: War, Slavery, Finance, and Empire*. Chicago: Haymarket Books. (Pp.1-6; 15-16; 68-70; 122-124; 128-134; 173-176; 177-180; 192-195; 204-210; 213-218; 230-234)

## **PART III: *FEMINIST REVISIONS***

### **Patriarchy, Prerogative Power & Crises of Social Reproduction**

[T]he state is an insignia of the extent to which politics between men are always already the politics of exchanging, violating, protecting, and regulating women; the one constitutes the imperatives of the other.” (Wendy Brown)

#### **4/8 *Masculinist State Power***

Brown, Wendy. 1995. *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Excerpt of Ch.7 “Finding the Man in the State” (Pp. 166-186)

#### **4/13 *Patriarchy & Prerogative Power***

Brown, “Finding the Man in the State.” (Pp. 186-191; 193-196)

hooks, bell. 2012. *Understanding Patriarchy*. Louisville Anarchist Federation. (Pp.1-4)

#### **4/15 *Primitive Accumulation & Patriarchy of the Wage***

Federici, Sylvia. 2014 [2004]. *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia. (Pp.7-8; 11-13; 22-25; 68-70; 71-72; 73-75; 82-85; 92-100)

#### **4/20 *Crises of Social Reproduction***

Fraser, Nancy. 2017. “Crisis of Care? On the Social Reproductive Contradictions of Contemporary Capitalism” in *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentring Oppression*. Edited by Tithi Bhattacharya. London: Pluto Press.

#### **4/22 *The Pandemic, the Crisis of Care & the Racial Division of Reproductive Labor***

Federici, Silvia. 2012. “On Elder Care Work and the Limits of Marxism” in *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*. Oakland: PM Press. (Pp.115-120; 123-125)

Featherstone, Liza. 2020. “The Pandemic is a Family Emergency” *The New Republic*. <https://newrepublic.com/article/157528/coronavirus-pandemic-family-care-work-crisis-social-reproduction-theory> (Pp.1-6; 9-10)

Nakano Glenn, Evelyn. 1992. "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor" *Signs* 18, no.1. (Pp.1-3; 6-9; 19-20; 23; 30-31; 32-33; 34-35; 36-37)

**4/27 *Neoliberalization, Social Reproduction & Mass Incarceration***

Roberts, Adrienne. 2017. *Gendered States of Punishment and Welfare: Feminist political economy, primitive accumulation and the law*. London: Routledge. (Pp.1-3; 5; 24-27; 29-30; 45-46; 47-48; 62-65; 132-133; 140; 175; 178-180)

**4/29 *Nuisance Laws and the Neoliberal Assault on Women's Citizenship***

Arnold, Gretchen. 2019. "Neoliberalism's Assault on Women's Citizenship: The Case of Nuisance Laws and Intimate Partner Violence in the United States" *The Sociological Quarterly* 60, no.1. (Pp.71-89)

**\*Exam 3 Distributed**

**\*\*\* EXAM 3 DUE on 5/10\*\*\***

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**GRADE DISTRIBUTION:**

**30%** Exam 1 (Due 2/21)

**35%** Exam 2 (Due 4/4)

**35%** Exam 3 (Due 5/10)

***Students are expected to thoroughly and carefully read the course policies below.***

**DO NOT** email me with questions that can be answered by referring to this syllabus.

**LECTURES:**

All lectures will be held via **Zoom** (<https://zoom.us/download>) and will begin promptly at 10 minutes after the scheduled hour (**3:40 pm**). All lectures will be **recorded** and made available to students (access to recordings is limited to students in the course only). While you will have access to these recordings, students are expected to attend the real time lectures – this kind of active engagement and discussion is crucial for the learning process and will make the course much more enjoyable. Attending real time lectures will also enable us to build our community in the classroom, which is particularly important given the social isolation we all struggle with

during this pandemic. I also ask that you have your video turned on during lecture (although I understand this may not always be possible), as actually seeing each other is crucial for community building and connecting as a class.

## **REQUIRED READINGS:**

The primary work for this class is reading – this course requires extensive and careful reading. The assignments listed for each class meeting are to be read **prior** to that scheduled class. The expectation is that students allocate the necessary time to undertake a **thorough and careful reading**. The examinations for this course consist of take-home, open-book exams which you will have a limited time to complete and which will require extensive citation (in other words, your answers to the exam questions will require you to provide the corresponding page numbers from the text). Hence, keeping up with the readings and notetaking throughout the semester are crucial for performing well on exams.

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). You must first purchase the reader on their website (<https://store.replicadigitalink.com/>), and then you'll have the option of picking it up or having it shipped to you.

While course readings are **also available on bCourses**, I strongly recommend that you utilize a course reader rather than these digital copies. Extensive research indicates that we learn and process information much more effectively with hard copies. The course reader will also prove highly advantageous for the exams (all your readings/notes will be organized and easily accessible).

## **READING GUIDES:**

Included in the course reader (and available on bCourses) are reading guides for all of the assigned readings. You should always **refer to the reading guides before beginning the assigned readings** as they are intended to make the process easier (especially for the more difficult theoretical texts). Utilizing these guides will enable you to focus on the most important issues and help clarify your reading.

## **EXAMS:**

The 3 exams for this course will be **open-book, take-home examinations** that consist of short essays that assess students' mastery of the course materials. Exams will be cumulative (covering material from the entirety of the semester) and will be geared towards asking students to synthesize the scholarship covered in the course.

The distribution and due dates for the exams are listed on this syllabus. Students are expected to be aware of these dates and to schedule and prepare accordingly. (You should check these deadlines against your other academic obligations at the beginning of the semester and ensure that you are able to meet them before deciding to remain in this course.) **Please do not contact**



**me with requests to change due dates because of other academic obligations.** Late submissions will result in a grade penalty.

## **SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS:**

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 accommodation letter is forwarded to me at the beginning of the semester. Students who wish to utilize DSP accommodations for the exams are required to contact me about this well in advance.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

All written work must be your own. Any words, or even *ideas*, drawn from another source (even if paraphrased) must be appropriately cited.