

# ***POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY***

Sociology 140: Politics & Social Change  
University of California, Berkeley  
Spring 2025

**Laleh Behbehanian**

**Tuesday/Thursday 2:00–3:30** (159 Mulford)

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**Office Hours:** Tuesday 10-11 & Thursday 11-12 (Sign up at <https://www.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 & 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, borders** and **money**.

We conclude in Part III with *Feminist Revisions* of the approaches we studied in the first two parts of the course, providing us with radically different perspectives on states, capitalism, violence, 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)

**1/21** *Course Introduction*

\*Read the "Course Objectives and Expectations" on Pp.7-11 of this syllabus *before* our first class meeting

### **1/23    *Booms & Busts: The Crises of Capitalism***

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

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

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

### **1/28    *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

### **1/30    *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)

### **2/4    *Neoliberalization***

Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Pp.1-3; 5-12; 13-19; 22-26)

**\*READING RESPONSE DUE**

### **2/6    *The Neoliberal State***

Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. (Pp.26-34; 64-66; 67-68; 69-70; 72-74; 76-78)

### **2/11    *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)

## **2/13    *The Global Economic Crisis of 2008 & The Great Recession***

Viewing Assignment: *Inside Job* (2010) [Link for viewing will be posted on bCourses]

### **\*READING (VIEWING) RESPONSE DUE**

#### Suggested Additional Reading:

Badger, Emily. 2013. "The Dramatic Racial Bias of Subprime Lending During the Housing Boom" *CityLab*. (<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/>)

## **2/18    *The Economies of Peculiar Institutions: Mass Incarceration***

Wacquant, Loic. 2002. "From slavery to mass incarceration: Rethinking the 'race question' in the US." *New Left Review* 13. (Pp.41-49; 52-58; 60)

## **2/20    *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)

### **\*EXAM 1 distributed on 2/20 - DUE by 2pm on Thursday 2/27**

**2/25    NO CLASS – Working on Exam 1**

**2/27    NO CLASS – Exam 1 due by 2pm**

## **PART II: STATE VIOLENCE**

### **War, Borders & Money**

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

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

Weber, Max. 1946 [1919]. "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press. (Pp.77-79; 80-83)

### **3/6 (II) Legitimate Violence**

Whitaker, Brian. 2001. "The definition of terrorism." *The Guardian*. May 7.

Tilly, Charles. 2017. "War-Making and State-Making as Organized Crime." In *Collective Violence, Contentious Politics, and Social Change: A Charles Tilly Reader*, edited by Ernesto Castañeda, and Cathy Lisa Schneider. Taylor & Francis Group. (Pp.123-126)

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

Tilly, "War-Making and State-Making as Organized Crime." (Pp.126-129; 131-132; 133-137; 138-139)

**\*READING RESPONSE DUE**

### **3/13 War (Re)Makes States**

Viewing Assignment: *Top Secret America* (2013) PBS/Frontline

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/topsecretamerica/>

Torpey, John. 1998. "Coming and Going: On the State Monopolization of the Legitimate 'Means of Movement'" *Sociological Theory* 16(3): 239-259. (Pp.239-240; 241-242)

**\*READING (VIEWING) RESPONSE DUE**

### **3/18 Settler Colonialism, Slavery and US Border Formation**

Walia, Harsha. 2021. "Historic Entanglements of US Border Formation" in *Border & Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

In-class viewing of excerpts of *Exterminate All the Brutes* (2021) HBO

### **3/20 War Makes Money**

McNally, David. 2020. *Blood and Money: War, Slavery, Finance, and Empire*. Chicago: Haymarket Books. (Pp.1-5; 15-16; 67-68; 69-70; 122-124)

**3/25 NO CLASS – Spring Break**

**3/27 NO CLASS – Spring Break**

**4/1    *U.S. Empire & the Rise of the Dollar***

McNally, *Blood and Money*. (Pp.128-133; 173-174; 176; 177-180; 192-195; 204-210)

**\*READING RESPONSE DUE**

**4/3    *Debt Makes Money***

McNally, *Blood and Money*. (Pp.213-218; 230-234)

In-class viewing of excerpt of *97% Owned* (2012)

**\*EXAM 2 distributed on 4/3 - DUE by 2pm on Thursday 4/10**

**4/8    NO CLASS – Working on Exam 2**

**4/10    NO CLASS – Exam 2 due by 2pm**

**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)

**4/15    *Masculinist State Power***

Brown, Wendy. 1995. “Finding the Man in the State” in *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (Pp.166-177; 179-183; 184-186)

**4/17    *Patriarchy & Prerogative Power***

Brown, “Finding the Man in the State.” (Pp.186-189; 191; 193-194; 196)

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

**4/22    *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; 69-70; 71-72; 73-75; 92-100)

**\*READING RESPONSE DUE**

<b>4/24    <i>Race, Class &amp; Reproductive Rights</i></b>
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Davis, Angela. 1981. "Racism, Birth Control and Reproductive Rights" in *Women, Race & Class*

In-class viewing of excerpt of *Belly of the Beast*

<b>4/29    <i>Crises of Social Reproduction</i></b>
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Fraser, Nancy. 2017. "Crisis of Care? On the Social Reproductive Contradictions of Contemporary Capitalism" in *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*. Edited by Tithi Bhattacharya. London: Pluto Press. (Pp.21-35)

**\*READING RESPONSE DUE**

<b>5/1    <i>The Pandemic &amp; the Crisis of Care</i></b>
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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)

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)

**\*READING RESPONSE DUE**

**\*EXAM 3 distributed on 5/1 - DUE by 2pm on Monday 5/12**

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**GRADE DISTRIBUTION:**

**15%** Reading Responses

**30%** Exam 1 (Due 2/27)

**30%** Exam 2 (Due 4/10)

**25%** Exam 3 (Due 5/12)

## COURSE OBJECTIVES & EXPECTATIONS

Our basic objective for this course is to learn and enjoy doing so. There are **3 stages of the learning process**. The first entails independently undertaking the assigned readings. The second stage occurs in the classroom where we fully make sense of the readings together, clarifying and connecting the arguments and bringing them to life. The third and final stage involves doing the coursework. This is when you fully master the course content and can synthesize and articulate what you've learned.

There are **3 basic expectations** of you that correspond with these stages of learning: doing the assigned readings, attending class, and completing the coursework. Each is discussed in detail below.

## READINGS

The first expectation is that you will fully and carefully **complete the reading assignments before class**. This is crucial for establishing a solid foundation for the learning process. If you complete the reading, you will easily and fully understand what we cover in class. Sometimes students who have not completed the reading think they understand what is being covered in class, but that level of understanding is often superficial (a problem that rears its head at exam time). Developing a solid mastery of the material and being able to take good notes during class (rather than frantically trying to write down everything), hinges on coming to class prepared and having read the assigned texts. I have limited the length of assignments so that you can read them fully and carefully. Most crucially, I have selected readings that I think you will find fascinating and enjoyable (even if sometimes challenging).

Note that the exams for this class (discussed in detail in the section below on coursework) consist of take-home, open-book exams which you will have limited time to complete, and which will require extensive citation (meaning your answers to the exam questions will require that you provide the corresponding page numbers from the text). Thus, keeping up with the readings throughout the semester is crucial for performing well on exams. In other words, you are eventually going to have to read most of the assigned texts for the exams. Doing so before class meetings (rather than trying to cram this into the limited exam period) is much more effective, particularly in terms of enabling you to fully grasp and take notes on what we cover in class.

### Course Reader

All assigned readings for this class 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 (the link for doing so is posted on bCourses) before going to pick it up.

All course readings are also available on bCourses. However, 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 advantageous for exams (all your readings/notes will be organized and easily accessible). Whether you choose to purchase the course reader or utilize the digital copies on bCourses, you are expected to **bring the assigned readings to every class** meeting.

## **Reading Guides**

Given that readings can sometimes feel intimidating or challenging, I have provided reading guides for all the assigned readings (included in the course reader and posted on bCourses). You should always **refer to the reading guides before beginning the readings** as they are intended to make the process easier (especially for the more difficult texts). They will guide you through the reading and help you to focus on the most important issues.

## **CLASS**

The second expectation is that you will **regularly attend our class meetings**. Being present and actively participating in class is the crucial second phase of the learning process. My objective for our class time together is to clarify and connect the ideas in the readings and bring the course material to life. This is when the learning process can become really enjoyable.

You will find that my lectures in class often include posing questions for you, the objective being to fuel a more active learning process. We learn much more effectively when we actively think our way through the process, rather than just passively consuming a lecture. You will also find that I often wait awhile before calling on anyone. This is because the ultimate objective is not to get the right answer right away, but rather to get all students to begin actively thinking their way to that answer.

During lectures, I will stop at regular intervals for any questions on what we've just covered. Please feel comfortable to ask any questions of clarification (i.e. asking me to clarify something that doesn't make sense or repeat something that you didn't quite catch). I know that this can sometimes feel intimidating, but my hope is that we develop a classroom dynamic that feels comfortable for you to do so. There are no "stupid" questions and if something is not clear for you, chances are there are many other students in the same position who will be glad you asked. However, if you have any questions or comments that are not directly related to what is being covered in lecture, please wait until we have time for general discussion so as not to divert the focus of the larger class. When we have time, I will open the floor for general discussion where these kinds of questions/comments can be shared. Our discussions will be much better once we've first ensured that we collectively understand the course content that we're covering in that class.

Finally, it is crucially important that we create space for all students in the class to ask/answer questions and participate in our discussions. There are several things we can collectively do to work towards ensuring an inclusive class experience for everyone. First, with time we will hopefully develop a sense of community and mutual respect that makes everyone more comfortable to participate. Secondly, I will always try to call on different students in order to distribute participation more evenly. Therefore, I'll sometimes wait awhile before calling on anyone. This is because some students need just a little more time to compose their thoughts clearly, and we want to provide that so that they can participate as well, rather than immediately calling on those who raise their hands the quickest. Waiting just a few more seconds usually results in many more hands being raised and allows us to balance participation more equally. Class discussions that allow for a diversity of participation and perspectives are always better and richer than those that are dominated by just a few.

## **Class Attendance**

While the basic expectation is that you attend class regularly, there will understandably be times when illness or other personal issues prevent you from doing so. However, you are expected to **attend at least 75% of our class meetings** (i.e. at least 18 of 24). Make sure that you sign the attendance sheet that will be passed around at every class. This is a basic *minimum* attendance requirement that is intended to accommodate for all cases of illness or personal issues, and there is no need to email to notify me of an absence. The reason for setting this basic minimum requirement is that I want you to come to class regularly (and hopefully you'll want to because it's enjoyable), while also accommodating for when you are not able to do so. For students who attend less than 75% of our class meetings, there will be a 3% reduction of the final grade. This penalty will increase to 7% if attendance falls below 50%, and 10% if it falls below 25%.

Note that class begins promptly at 10 minutes after the scheduled hour (2:10pm). Please be **present on time** as late arrivals disrupt the class. This means being seated and ready to begin (not running through the door) at 2:10. Students are expected to remain in the classroom until the conclusion of class. If for some reason you need to leave class early, you should discuss this with me beforehand (email me or let me know at the beginning of class). If you leave class early without discussing this with me, you will be marked as absent (regardless of signing the attendance sheet).

## **Class Recordings**

To accommodate for necessary absences, **class recordings** will be available in your Media Gallery in bCourses for **10 days** after the class session (*except during exam periods*). However, these recordings are limited in that they do not capture class discussions and therefore won't include all the class content. There is also no guarantee that recordings will be available for all classes, as technical issues may occur (if this happens you will need to ask a fellow student for notes). You are responsible for viewing any missed classes within 10 days, after which recordings will no longer be available. However, you generally want to view a missed class recording *before* our next class session as you may have a difficult time following what we cover without doing so. **No class recordings will be available during exam periods.**

## **COURSEWORK**

The final expectation is that you **complete all the assigned coursework**, which includes reading responses and 3 exams. The objective of the reading responses is to ensure that you read carefully before class. The objective of the exams is for you to undertake the third and final stage of learning – fully mastering the course content so that you can synthesize and clearly articulate those ideas and arguments.

## **Reading Responses**

You are required to complete **6 out of 8 reading responses**. These reading responses involve answering questions from the reading guides (the specific questions to be answered are noted at the bottom of the reading guides). Your answers to each question may be brief (a few concise sentences) but must clearly reflect that you carefully and thoroughly read the assignment. There is a total of 8 reading responses (marked on the syllabus and the reading guides), out of which you are required to complete 6. This is intended to accommodate for all situations of illness or

other crises, allowing you to skip 2 when necessary. For students who submit more than 6, the lowest grades will be dropped and only the highest 6 grades will count.

Reading responses must be uploaded to bCourses **by 1:30pm** (prior to our class meeting) to receive full credit. Submission by this deadline is required because the purpose of these assignments is to assess whether you have completed the reading *before* class. Responses submitted after 1:30pm will not receive full credit. There are **no extensions** for reading responses given that their purpose is to exhibit having read before class, and because there is an allotment for skipping 2 when necessary.

**Late submissions** will be accepted for up to **72 hours** (3 days) after the deadline for **partial credit**. No submissions will be accepted after 72 hours.

## **Exams**

The **3 exams** for this course will be **take-home, open book examinations** that you will have limited time to complete, and which consist of short essays that assess mastery of the course materials. The exams will be **cumulative**, covering material from the entirety of the course.

The time allotted for completing these exams is purposely limited because part of the objective is to assess how well students have kept up with course readings and lectures. Those who have done so will have sufficient time to complete the exam, while those who have not will be struggling to catch up. There are no extensions, but late submissions will be accepted with a grade penalty.

The **exams periods** (distribution and due dates) are listed below. You are expected to be aware of these dates and to schedule and prepare accordingly. ***You should check these deadlines against your academic and other obligations at the beginning of the course and ensure that you are able to meet them before deciding to remain in this class.*** No changes will be made to the scheduled exam periods.

**EXAM 1: 2/20 – 2/27**

**EXAM 2: 4/3 – 4/10**

**EXAM 3: 5/1 – 5/12**

## **DSP**

If you need any DSP accommodations, you should forward your accommodation letter and contact me (email or office hours) at the *beginning* of the course to discuss this. Students who wish to utilize DSP accommodations for the exams are required to contact me about this well in advance. *Requests for accommodations will not be considered during the exam period (after the distribution of the exam).*

\*Please note that accommodations with specified percentages of additional time (like 150% time) are for in-class exams only and do not apply to this course, for which we have no in-class exams.

## **OFFICE HOURS**

My office hours are held in my office (434 Social Sciences) on Tuesdays (10-11) & Thursdays (11-12) and you can sign up for them at <https://www.wejoinin.com/LalehBehbehanian>. Each week's sign up will be posted on Monday morning. Please be mindful of your peers and do not sign up for more than one meeting in a 3-week period so that I can try to accommodate as many students as possible. (However, if there are still available slots that haven't been taken by the morning of that day, you are welcome to sign up again.) Please also avoid signing up and cancelling at the last minute as this prevents others from utilizing that time.

## **POTENTIAL DISRUPTIONS**

If our ability to hold class in person is interrupted for any reason, class will be held via zoom until in person instruction resumes. All course requirements will remain in effect.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All submitted work must be your own. bCourses will automatically screen all submitted coursework for plagiarism through the Turnitin system which automatically compares the submitted document to all other student submissions (in current and previous years), as well as to all academic sources and publicly available web content. No forms of A.I. (like ChatGPT) may be used for this course. You must complete all course work independently, without reliance on these technologies. The only exception is that you may utilize technologies that assist with grammar or spelling. If there is any doubt that submitted coursework is your own, you will be required to meet with me to discuss that submission. The goal is for you to develop your own intelligence rather than relying on the artificial kind!