

# ***POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY***

Sociology 140: Politics & Social Change  
University of California, Berkeley  
Fall 2023

**Laleh Behbehanian**

**Tuesday/Thursday 3:30–5:00** (101 Morgan)

**Email:** lalehb@berkeley.edu

**Office Hours:** Tuesday 11:30–12:30 & Thursday 10:30-11:30  
Drop-in (no appt needed) in 434 Social Sciences

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)

**8/24** *Course Introduction*

\*Read the course policies on Pp.7-9 of this syllabus *before* our first class meeting.

**8/29 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

**8/31 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

**9/5 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)

**9/7 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**

**9/12 The Neoliberal State**

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

**\*READING RESPONSE DUE**

**9/14 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)

**9/19** *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/>)

**9/21** *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)

**9/26** *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 9/26 - DUE by 5pm on Saturday 9/30**

**9/28** NO CLASS – Working on Exam 1

**PART II: STATE VIOLENCE**

**War, Borders & Money**

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

**10/3** *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)

**10/5 (II) Legitimate Violence**

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

(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/may/07/terrorism>)

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)

**10/10 War Makes States**

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

**\*READING RESPONSE DUE**

**10/12 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**

**10/17 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

**10/19 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)

**10/24 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**

**10/26 *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 10/26 - DUE by 5pm on Tuesday 10/31**

**10/31 NO CLASS – Exam 2 due by 5pm**

**11/2 NO CLASS – Submit hard copy of exam**

There is no class today to give you a break after the exam and before we begin Part 3. But you are required to **submit a hard copy of your exam** to my mailbox (**410 Social Sciences**) by **3pm** today.

**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)

**11/7 *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)

**11/9 *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)

**11/14 *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**

**11/16 Race, Class & Reproductive Rights**

Davis, Angela. 1981. "Racism, Birth Control and Reproductive Rights" in *Women, Race & Class*

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

**11/21 - 11/23 No Class – University Holiday**

**11/28 Crises of Social Reproduction**

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**

**11/30 The Pandemic & the Crisis of Care**

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 11/30 - DUE by 1pm on Monday 12/11**

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**GRADE DISTRIBUTION:**

**15%** Reading Responses

**25%** Exam 1 (Due 9/30)

**30%** Exam 2 (Due 10/31)

**30%** Exam 3 (Due 12/11)

## **ATTENDANCE, COVID & CLASS RECORDINGS**

Class **attendance is required** and is crucial for understanding course content and performing well on exams. Being present and actively participating in class is central to the learning process. Attendance will be taken at every class meeting, and it is students' responsibility to make sure they have signed the attendance sheet.

All students will be **allotted 4 absences** without penalty. Each additional absence will result in a 1% deduction from the final grade. These allotted absences are intended to accommodate for all personal issues, illness, or potential COVID exposure. There is no need to email me to notify me of or explain absences – the absence allotment is intended to accommodate for any/all reasons for missing class, and to relieve me of the administrative work of dealing with absence requests on an individual basis.

To accommodate for necessary absences, **class recordings** will be available in your Media Gallery in bCourses for **2 weeks** 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. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that recordings will be available for all classes, as technical issues may occur. Students are responsible for viewing any missed classes within two weeks, after which recordings will no longer be available. **No class recordings will be available during exam periods.**

Class begins promptly at 10 minutes after the scheduled hour (3:40 pm). 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 3:40. Students are expected to remain in the classroom until the conclusion of the class. If for some reason you need to leave class early, you should discuss this with me beforehand.

## **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 limited time to complete, and which will require extensive citation (in other words, your answers to the exam questions will require that you 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 (the link for doing so will be 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:**

Included in the course reader (and available on bCourses) are reading guides for all the assigned readings. 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). Utilizing these guides will enable you to focus on the most important issues and help clarify your reading.

## **READING RESPONSES:**

Students are required to submit **7 out of 9 reading responses**. These reading responses require 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 are a total of 9 reading responses (marked on the syllabus and the reading guides), out of which you are required to complete 7. 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 7, the lowest grade(s) will be dropped and only the highest 7 grades will count.

Reading responses *must* be uploaded to bCourses **by 3:00pm** (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 students have completed the reading *before* class. Responses submitted after 3:00pm 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.

## **TAKE-HOME EXAMS:**

The 3 exams for this course will be **take-home, open book examinations** that students have limited time to complete and which consist of short essays that assess mastery of the course materials. 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 with completing the course work. There are no extensions, but late submissions will be accepted with a grade penalty.

The **exams periods** (distribution and due dates) are listed below. Students 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: 9/26 – 9/30**

**EXAM 2: 10/26 – 10/31**

**EXAM 3: 11/30 – 12/11**

### **DSP:**

Students who require any DSP accommodations should forward their accommodation letter and contact me (email or office hours) at the beginning of the course. Students who wish to utilize DSP accommodations for the exams are required to contact me about this well in advance. *Requests for accommodation will not be considered during the exam period (after the distribution of the exam).* Please note that accommodations with specified percentages of additional time (i.e., 150% time) are for in-class exams only and do not apply to this course, for which we have no in-class exams.

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