Sociological Theories of Power
920:570
Spring 2010
Tuesday 9:50-12:30, LSH A-256

Professor Ethel Brooks
Lucy Stone Hall, Room A-259
Office Hours: Tuesday 12:30-1:30 and by appointment
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Description
Sociology often takes as its object power relations without always calling them into epistemological question. This course explores the stakes in explicitly theorizing power by exploring its workings in multiple social domains. A central premise of this course is the notion that power manifests itself through processes and forms ranging from the workings of everyday life to institutions of governance, cultural practices and global economic relations. What would form a sociology of power take? What place does the practice of “speaking truth to power” have in the discipline of sociology? This course will consider the ways in which particular sociologies of pleasure, the body, migration, work, violence and nation-building rely on the maintenance, production and circulation of power, and in which ways sociological scholarship serves to call into question, dissemble and/or recreate power formations in its analysis. As sociologists, how do we understand and theorize power as a set of processes and formations that are at once geographical and theoretical, disciplinary and disciplining, national and gendered, sexual and juridical, sociological and political?

In this seminar, we will explore the sociological dimensions of power and challenges to power that often cross the line between academic and activist, in order to understand the ways that scholars have reconfigured power in theory and in everyday practice. How does sociology help shed light on changing political economies, nation-states, and movements of people through immigration, displacement, and exile; on globalization, diaspora, hybrid identities and changing sexualities? Over the course of the semester, we will read scholarship from sociology and other disciplines that challenges our ways of thinking about sovereignty, production, space and subjectivity. You will be asked to write a final research paper that examines in depth a particular facet of power and its workings from a sociological perspective.

Requirements
You will be expected to attend class, read carefully and participate actively in the weekly discussion. Attendance and participation, along with a weekly one-page discussion paper, will count for 30% of your grade. Other requirements include a 200-300 word abstract of your proposed final paper (15%) and leading discussion for one class (15%). The final research paper should be 6,000-8,000 words long and will comprise 40% of your grade.

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1 American Friends Service Committee Pamphlet, Speak Truth to Power (1955).
Readings
The following books are available at the Barnes and Noble Bookstore on Livingston Campus and on reserve at Kilmer Library:


Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Another Knowledge is Possible* (New York: Verso, 2008). [not available in the library]

Class Schedule

January 19: Introduction

January 26: Theories and Praxes
The Invisible Collective, The Coming Insurrection

February 2: Power and Exceptions
Giorgio Agamben, State of Exception

February 9: Power and Practice
Abstract for Research Paper due Today
Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice

February 16: Productions I
Edward Said, Orientalism

February 23: Productions II
Timothy Mitchell, Colonising Egypt

March 2: Rights
Saskia Sassen, Territory, Authority, Rights

March 9: Migrations
Lionel Cantú, Nancy Naples and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, The Sexuality of Migration

March 16: Spring Break!!!

March 23: Knowledge
Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Another Knowledge is Possible

March 30: Bodies and Subjectivities
Saba Mahmood, The Politics of Piety

April 6: Collaborations
Javier Auyero and Débora Alejandra Swistun, Flammable

April 13: Governmentality and Biopolitics
Michel Foucault, Security, Territory, Population

April 20: Rethinking Publics, Rethinking the Discipline
Dan Clawson, Public Sociology

April 27: Presentations and Conclusions
Research paper is due this week.