Political Sociology

Sociology 641
Spring 2015

9:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Thursdays
Department Seminar Room, 128 Davison Hall

Instructor:
S. R. Brechin, Professor of Sociology
Department of Sociology, Rutgers University
133 Davison Hall; Office hours by appointment
Cell: 315 409 9827
steven.brechin@Rutgers.edu
srbrechin@gmail

Overview

Political sociology is a field of inquiry that is broad as it is deep. Much ground is claimed at the intersection of the political and sociological. This well-established sub-discipline presents an embarrassment of riches leading to opportunities but also severe challenges. There is much to discuss but determining what and what not to discuss is a difficult decision given our few short weeks together. As a result, there are important topics that will not be covered in much depth or at all. But hopefully each of you will appreciate the foundation of knowledge we will build together and the imagination behind this fascinating line of inquiry.

This seminar is designed to provide a graduate introduction to political sociology. We will, however, cast our gaze largely on the Western democratic experience in a rapidly globalizing world. It attempts to answer the basic question – what are the relationships between citizens, society and the state? And how is globalization changing those relationships? In attempting to answer these basic questions we will cover considerable ground. While the state will be prominent in our readings this seminar is not one on state development. Likewise, social movements will be discussed but this is not a seminar on social movements. Similarly the role of citizens will be discussed it is not a seminar on citizenship. Rather we will focus on earlier foundations of the subdiscipline, building up to current theoretical discussions and critiques. We begin the seminar by taking a look at various conceptualizations of power. Here we discuss Luke’s three dimensions of power along with Bourdieu’s political sociology and the power of symbols. The main body of the seminar is organized into three sections: 1. Classical Foundations; 2. Four mainstream theories/literatures; and 3. Cutting-edged theoretical developments. We begin with its classical foundation, reviewing a few of the key contributions by some of major architects of sociology as a discipline – Karl Marx/ Friedrich Engels, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim/ Alexis de Tocqueville along with other prominent thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci and Karl Polanyi. We continue by reviewing the authors and their writings that shape four general contemporary theories of political sociology – Pluralism Theory/Theories, Elite Theory, Class Domination Theory, and State Autonomy Theory/Historical Institutionalism. The final third part of the class will explore the rise of more recent theoretical developments such as Habermas’s view of the public sphere/public-political sphere; Recent discussions and critiques of civil society, Michael Foucault’s views on discipline and punishment/bio-politics/governmentality; Beck, Giddens, and Lash’s Reflexive Modernization Theory/ Risk Society; Beck and others on Cosmopolitanism; and John Meyer’s World Society Theory.
Learning Goals:

The learning outcomes center on obtaining a marked appreciation for the classical roots of political sociology, its mainstream theories/lines of inquiry and more contemporary literatures and theories. I view this seminar as providing the basis upon which future readings and insights can be more easily built.

- Appreciate the breath of subject manner in Political Sociology
- Develop a clear understanding of its classical roots or foundation
- Develop a good working knowledge of its four established mainstream theories
- Develop a good working knowledge of several current edge theoretical developments
- Appreciate the foundation developed for future engagement related to your own work
- Identify significant new research questions and approaches relevant to political sociology

Several methods will be used in to measure achievement of these objectives:

- Participating in in-depth weekly discussions of assigned readings
- Identify critical questions that emerge from readings and discussion
- Writing critical reports on assigned readings per section
- Discussion of current events relevant to substance of the seminar
- Writing a final research paper on a related topic of interest to you

Diversity Statement:

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

Expectations:

I will expect regular participation in seminar discussions. This means having read the readings assigned for the seminar that day and being prepared to discuss them, to raise questions for each other and debate arguments, findings, and interpretations of meanings and possible consequences for socio-political life. It is likely I will ask each of you to generate several questions related to the readings to aid our discussions. For fun and hopefully some animation of the literature we will read, we will discuss current events, so please come with current news, stories, writings, videos, and events of interest related to our political world. There will be three short papers assignments; one on each major sections of the seminar, and one longer term paper on a topic of your choosing will complete the requirements. Extensions will not be given for paper assignments unless there are extremely compelling circumstances.

Grading: Participation 30%
Three Short Papers: 30% (10% each)
Final Term Paper: 40%

Short Paper Assignments: You will prepare three 5 page essays (double spaced) – one for each of the three key sections of the seminar. You may draw on several additional sources from those assigned in class to augment your effort if you would like. I suggest each of you work on your draft paper weekly,
reducing the need to complete the entire short paper at the due date. The material will also be fresher each week as opposed to reconstructing the earlier material later.

Short Paper 1: Compare/contrast/ critique the readings of Part I: Classical sociologists and their contributions to political sociology. What to you are the key insights and why?

Short Paper 2: Compare/contrast/ critique the readings of Part II: Major contemporary theories of political sociology. Once again, what are key the insights to you and why?

Short Paper 3: Write a more focused paper on a topic of your choice from Part III. Here you have some flexibility to investigate a topic. Please focus on one of the week’s topics that intrigues you and write more on that specific topic, such as: Habermas’ public sphere; Critiques of civil society; Foucault’s ‘political sociology’; Reflexive Modernization/Risk Society; Cosmopolitanism; or World Society Theory. Your paper should present and critique the topic. I would also briefly like to know why you find it of interest. This can can overlap with your final paper but it does not have to do so.

Paper 4: Final Term Paper on a topic of your approved choice: ~30 pages (double spaced) with references, ASA style. This is a typical term paper where you will write on a topic related to political sociology of great interest to you. We will take class time to discuss everyone’s topic ideas and papers. Ideally, you will be able to build upon the foundation we established. I view these four writing projects as a means to help you to prepare you for constructing theoretically relevant qualifying papers.

Classroom etiquette: Needless to say, I expect professional behavior in the seminars particularly in sharing our ideas and opinions with one another. I view all questions relevant and will be treated with respect. Our seminar must be an inviting space for the exchange of ideas without fear of personal criticism.

Reading Sources
Weekly readings will be available online or disc

Weekly Schedule

Introduction

Week 1: Thursday January 22: Introduction
Introduction to the seminar
Introduction to political sociology
Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. 1-59 (distributed beforehand)
Part I: Classical Contributions to Political Sociology

Week 2: Thursday, January 29: Classical Beginnings – Karl Marx/ Friedrich Engels along with Antonio Gramsci

Marx-Engels Theories of the State
Readings: Draper, 1997, Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution – State and Bureaucracy
Forward: p. 11-27
Readings: Draper: Chpt. 1: The Democratic Extremist, p.31-59 [skim]
Readings: Draper: Chpt. 3: Emancipation from Hegel, p. 77-95 [skim]
Readings: Draper: Chpt. 8: Toward a Class Theory of the State, p. 168-193
Readings: Draper: Chpt. 11: The State and Society, p. 237-262

Gramsci’s idea of State-Civil society relationships – Cultural Hegemony, War of Position and War of Manoeuvre; Passive Revolution, etc.

Gramsci is complex and difficult to read and interpret….his 30+ notebooks written in prison eventually contained thousands of pages that he never personally was able to edit to improve coherence and resolve contradictions; his works were edited by others outside of prison; still his ideas are viewed as both brilliant and controversial.

As a primer, please read/explore this website (thumbnail sketch):
http://www.theory.org.uk/ctr-gram.htm#role

Readings: Hoare & Smith (eds) Antonio Gramsci: Selections from the Prisoners Notebook
State and Civil Society, p. 206-276 [skim]
Reading: Joseph A. Buttigieg 1995. Gramsci on Civil Society. Boundary. (PDF)

Optional/Additional Readings- Marx/Engels:
For Summary of Marx-Engels thinking see:
The Manifesto of the Communist Party:
http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm
The Grundrisse [This is earlier/shorter version of Das Kapital]:
http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/

Overview & Criticisms:
Murray Bookchin http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/comman.html


If you prefer more direct sources from Marx-Engels themselves…see below:
Contributions to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, p. 16-25
On the Jewish Question, p. 26-52
The German Ideology, p. 146-202
Critical Marginal Notes on the Article, “The King of Russia and Social Reform”, p. 126-132
The Civil War in France, p. 618-652
The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, p. 594-617

Optional/ Additional Readings - Gramsci:


Readings: A more detailed analysis can be found: http://marxisttheory.org/antonio-gramsci-theories-of-hegemony-civil-society-and-revolution/

---

**Week 3: Thursday February 5: Classical Beginnings: Max Weber**

*The State, Politics, Political Interest Groups/Parties, Rationalization, Domination and Legitimacy*

- Special: Preface to the New Edition by Bryan S. Turner, pp xii-xxx
- Chapter VII: Class, Status, Party, pp. 180-195

- Part Three: Domination, Organization, and Legitimacy: Max Weber’s Political Sociology
- Chapter IX: Basic Concepts of Political Sociology
- Chapter X: Charismatic Leadership and Domination (skim)
- Chapter XI: Traditional Domination (skim)
- Chapter XII: Legal Domination: The Emergence of Legal Rationality
- Chapter XIII: Legal Domination Continued: The Modern State and the Struggle for Power

**Readings** from Owen and Strong (eds.) *Max Weber: The Vocation Lectures*
- Owen and Strong, “Introduction Vocation Lectures”, p. ix-xviii (skim)
- Owen and Strong, “On Politics as Vocation”, p. xxxiv-lxii
- Max Weber: “Politics as Vocation”, p. 32-94 (skim)
Some humor from Monty Python:  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOOTKA0aGI0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOOTKA0aGI0)  
[Note: we will watch this in class]

**Optional/Additional Readings:**

Glassman and Murvar, 1984, *Max Weber’s Political Sociology*,
Introduction, p. 3-11  
Chpt. 3. Kilker, Max Weber and Possibilities for Democracies, p. 55-68  
Chpt. 9 Bologh, Max Weber and the Dilemma of Rationality, p.175-186


**Week 4: Thursday February 12: Classical Beginnings - Emile Durkheim and Alexis de Tocqueville**

**Readings** on Durkheim:  
A. Giddens “Durkheim’s Political Sociology” *The Sociological Review* 1977  
  p. 477-519

**Readings:** Selections from Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*
  Gerald Bevan, Introduction, ix-lii;  
  V1, Part 2: Chpt. 7: “The Majority in the United States is All Powerful…” p. 287  
  V1, Part 2: Chpt. 8: “What Moderates the Tyranny of the Majority…” p. 305  
  V1, Part 2: Chpt. 9: “The Main Causes which Tend to Maintain a Democratic Republic…” p. 323 [skim]  
  V1, Part 2: Conclusion, p. 479  
  V2, Part 2: Chpt. 4: “How Americans Combat the Effects of ….″ P. 591  
  V2, Part 2: Chpt. 5: “The Use Americans Make of Public Association…” p. 595  
  V2, Part 2: Chpt. 6: “Connection Between Associations and …” p. 600  
  V2, Part 2: Chpt. 7: “Connections Between Civil and Political….” p. 604  

**Optional/ Other Readings**

Week 5: Thursday February 19: Classical Beginnings - Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*

**Readings:** Introduction by Fred Block. 2001/1944, *TGT*, p. xviii-xxxviii  
[Note: Ignore intro by Stigliz found in pdf]

**Readings:** Selections from *The Great Transformation*  
Chpt. 6: The Self-Regulating Market and the Fictitious Commodities: Labor, Land, and Money”, p. 71-80  
Chpt. 14: “Market and Man”, p. 171-186  
Chpt. 17: “Self-Regulation Impaired”, p. 210-217  
Chpt. 19: “Popular Government and Market Economies”, p. 231-244  

**Readings:** Block and Somers 2014: *The Moral and Practical Limits of Market Liberalism: Karl Polanyi’s Critique*  
Chpt.1: Introduction, p. 1-43

**Optional/Other Readings:**

Miguel Centeno and Joseph Cohen: *Global Capitalism: A Sociological Perspective* [Princeton]  
Janoski et al; Chpt. 29: McMichael, “Globalization”, p. 587-606  
Weston and Brechin (under review) Karl Polanyi’s Environmental Sociology

**NOTE: Paper 1 Due Next Week**

*Part II: Main Contemporary Theories of Political Sociology: Elite, Pluralism, Class Domination and State Autonomy/Historical Institutionalism*

**Week 6: Thursday February 26: Established Theories- Elite Theory C. Wright Mills among others**

**Short Paper 1 on Part I Due; Brief Discussion of Paper 1**

**Readings from *The Power Elite***  
Chpt. 1: “The Higher Circles” p. 3-29  
Chpt. 6: “The Chief Executive” p. 118-146  
Chpt. 7: “The Corporate Rich” p. 147-170  
Chpt. 8: “The Warlords” p. 171-197  
Chpt. 11: “The Theory of Balance” p. 242-268 skim  
Chpt. 12: “The Power Elite” p. 269-297  

**Optional/Additional Readings: [Brechin will Present]**


David Rothkopf’s *The Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World that they are Making* [updating C. Wright Mills to global level/ globalization]

Youtube video about his book: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHtNFZ6K0pE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHtNFZ6K0pE) [We will watch this in class]

**Week 7: Thursday March 5**: Established Theories: Pluralism/ New Pluralism and Related Theories: The Works of Robert Dahl and Seymour Martin Lipset and William Connolly; Discussion of Corporatist Models

**Reading**: Robert A Dahl: A Critique of the Ruling Elite Model (1958 *American Political Science Review*).

- Douglas Rae, Forward to 2nd Edition, p. vii-x
- Robert Dahl, Prefaces to the 2nd and 1st Editions, p. xiii-xvii
- Chpt. 1. The Nature of the Problem, p. 1-8
- Chpt. 2. The Patricians, p. 11-24 [skim]
- Chpt 7. Overview: From Cumulative to Dispersed Inequalities, p. 85-88
- Chpt. 8. The Ambiguity of Leadership, p. 89-103
- Chpt 12. Overview: Direct versus Indirect Influence p. 163-165

- Aristotle on Political Man and the Conditions of Democratic Order, p. vii-ix.
- Forward, p. x-xiv (skim)
- Introduction to the Anchor Edition, p. xix-xxxvi (skim)
- Chpt. 1. The Sociology of Politics, p. 1-24 (skim)


New Pluralism:


**Optional/Additional Readings**

Week 8: Thursday March 12: Established Theories - Class Domination Theory

   http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/class_domination.html


3. Readings from The Fracturing of the American Corporate Elite by Mark S. Mizruchi

Optional/Additional Readings

G.W. Domhoff, 1971 The Higher Circles: The Governing Class in America
(Stanford)

Page, Bartels and Seawright 2013. Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans
http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=8864478&fileId=S153759271200360X

Week 9: Thursday March 19: NO CLASS Spring Break

Week 10: Thursday March 26: Established Theories: State Autonomy Theory / Historical Institutionalism

Readings from: Evans et al. 1985. Bring the State Back In
   Chpt. 1: Skocpol – “Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research” p. 3-37
   Chpt. 11: Evans et al. “On the Road toward a More Adequate Understanding of the State” p. 347-366
   Chpt. 8: Katznelson “Working-Class Formation and the State: Nineteenth Century England in American Perspective” p. 257-284

   Preface, p. vii-xiv

Optional/Additional Readings

Works by Charles Tilly, such as: *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992*

Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*

**NOTE:** Paper 2 due next week [recommend completing early; heavy reading next week]

**Part III: Recent Theoretical Developments:**

**Week 11: Thursday April 2: Habermas – The Public and the Public-Political Sphere and Public Opinion in Democratic Action**

**Short Paper 2 Due**

Brief Discussions of paper 2

Habermas and The Public Sphere

**Readings:** Habermas. J. 1962 The Social Structure of the Public Sphere


**Readings:** Critique by Nancy Fraser, Rethinking the Public Sphere (skim) [http://www.jstor.org/stable/466240](http://www.jstor.org/stable/466240)

**EXTRA**- If you find Habermas difficult….take a look at this piece

Habermas et al 1964 The Public Sphere – Encyclopedia New German Critic

Public Opinion and American Democracy- Selected Readings


**Readings:** Soule and Olzak, 2011, When do Movements Matters? ASR, Vol. 69 (August 473-497)

**Optional / Additional Readings:**

Benhabib, S. 1992/1994. Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition, and
Week 12: Thursday April 9: Civil Society and Civic Engagement

Readings: Theda Skocpol, 2004 Diminishing Democracy: From Membership to Management Chpt. 6: “What Have We Lost” p.221-253


Additional/Optional Readings on Civil Society/Civic Engagement/Social Movements:

Michael Edwards Civil Society 2nd Edition


Sidney Tarrow. Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics Cambridge


Scott L. McLean, David Andrew Schultz, Manfred B. Steger. 2002. *Social Capital: Critical perspectives on community and “Bowling alone”* NYU Press. See introduction and/or chapter 1 by Amy Fried – on Tocqueville’s strange disappearance

http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=XkkxIHetIrsc&oi=fnd&pg=PA21&dq=Alexis+de+Tocqueville+political+sociology&ots=l376syd6zM&sig=mlAFaNULfc0v8RExqRRGT91XPAl#v=onepage&q=Alexis%20de%20Tocqueville%20political%20sociology&f=false

**Week 13: Thursday April 16:** Foucault – Power/Knowledge; History of Sexuality; Bio-Power, and Governmentality

**Readings:** Paul Rabinow (ed.) – *The Foucault Reader*
- Introduction, p. 3-30
- Truth and Power, p. 51-75
- Docile Bodies, p. 179-187
- The Means of Correct Training, p. 188-205
- Panopticism, p. 206-213
- Complete and Austere Institutions, p. 214-225
- Space, Knowledge and Power, p. 239-256
- The Right of Death and Power Over Life, p. 258-272

**Readings:** Burchell/Gordon/ Miller: *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*

Readings: Michel Foucault, “Governmentality” p. 87-104 (skim) [note: ignore 53 to 86; jump to pg. 87]

**Optional/Additional Readings:**
http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03085140120042271
Burchell/Gordon/ Miller: The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality
Michel Foucault, “Politics and the Study of Discourse” p. 53-72
Michel Foucault, “Questions of Method, p. 73-86
Readings: Eco-Governmentality
Week 14: Thursday April 23: Reflexive Modernization, Risk Society, Cosmopolitanism, and World Society Theory


Readings: Georg Krucken and Gili S. Drori (eds.) World Society: The Writings of John W. Meyer (Stanford)
   Chpt. 2: J. Meyer: Reflections: Institutional Theory and World Society, p. 36-63
   Chpt. 7: J. Meyer: Globalization: Sources and Effects on National States and Societies, p. 156-169.

Optional / Additional Readings:

Short Paper 3 Due Next Week

Week 15: Thursday April 30: Future Directions

Paper 3 Due (brief discussion)


Summary/Wrap-up

Presentations of term papers

Due Date for Final Papers:

Final Term Paper: TBA [Papers may be submitted earlier]