POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY
Sociology 920:290:01
Paul McLean

Department of Sociology
Rutgers University
Fall 2012

Location and time: Hill Center, room 116, Busch Campus
Office hours: M5:30-7:00pm and Th9:30-11:00am, Davison 101A; and by appointment
E-mail: pmclean@rutgers.edu

Political sociology encompasses a truly vast and disparate variety of topics and theoretical perspectives. As a result, it is hard to find much agreement about just what does or does not belong in a political sociology course. The areas studied by political sociologists, for example, include political parties, pressure groups, voting behavior, comparative political systems, warfare, democracy and economic development, political elites, political culture, the nature of the state, and the nature of power itself.

Political sociologists today may draw on the conflict- and economy-based view of politics articulated by Marx and his followers, the elite- and organization-based political sociology of Max Weber and Robert Michels and their followers, the political culture- and institution-based view of politics articulated by Alexis de Tocqueville, or any of these perspectives in combination. Indeed, the lines between these perspectives are blurry. Furthermore, although many political sociologists focus on political structures and political power in the United States today, in fact any number of contemporary or historical cases have been studied to deepen our understanding of how politics works and how political institutions function.

This class is designed as an overview of some of the different perspectives and key arguments comprising the field, including both classical texts and contemporary books and articles.

As a discipline, political sociology is close to political science, because both disciplines address issues related to politics. However, political sociology does differ from political science in a variety of imprecise yet substantial ways. First, political sociologists often emphasize the relationships between political institutions and other social institutions and groupings—whether kinship, social classes, prestige groupings, gender groups, or ideologies—rather than study political institutions on their own. Second, political sociology often tends to have a broader (especially historical) sweep than political science. Third, political sociologists tend to adopt more narrative and comparative methods of analysis, rather than formal or mathematical ones. Finally, political sociology is often (though not always) political in a normative and occasionally partisan way—something that is not seen as typically in political science. Thus political sociologists aim not only to understand political structures, ideas, and processes, but also to critique them.

Learning Goals

The substantive learning goals of this course are that you will: 1) learn about different conceptions of power in social life; 2) understand more about the political culture and contemporary operations of political power in the United States; and 3) learn to think sociologically about important political phenomena like nationalism, violence, and terrorism. The broader learning goals of this course are that you will: 1) learn how to think critically and comparatively, specifically about power and its operation; and 2) advance your ability to write persuasively.

Grading and Readings

Your grade in this course will be based on the following requirements: 1) a midterm test on October 15 (worth 30% of the final grade); 2) one 4-6 page paper, due during the eleventh week of the semester (25% of the final grade); 3) attendance and participation in class (10%); and 4) a final exam (35%). Failure to take the midterm, hand in the paper, or take the final exam, will result in automatic failure of the course.
I have ordered the following books for this course through the Rutgers bookstore:

3) Javier Auyero, *Poor People’s Politics* (Duke, 2001)

There are other required readings, available through the course’s sakai website. Many of them are used in the first few weeks of the course.

**Lecture Schedule and Weekly Reading Schedule**

**Week 1**

- **Introduction to the Course**
- **September 6:** Syllabus presentation, learning goals, special permission requests

**Part 1: Some Preliminary Considerations Concerning Power**

**Week 2 of RU Semester**

- **September 10:** The Three Faces of Power
  
  Read: John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*, pp. 3-29 (sakai)

- **September 13:** Hobbes’ Atomistic Vision of Power and Its Consequences
  
  Read: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, author’s introduction, and chs. 10, 11, 13, and 17 (sakai)

**Week 3**

- **September 17:** Hobbes’s Notions of Power and Sovereignty (continued)
  
  Read: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* [continue reading the posted Hobbes material on sakai]

- **September 20:** The Second and Third Faces of Power: Michel Foucault
  

**Week 4**

- **September 24:** Power as a Social Network Concept
  

Part 2: Classical Political Sociology Texts

September 27: The Classical Marxist View of Politics


Week 5

October 1: Neo-Marxism on the Idea of the State and Politics as Hegemony

Read: Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, pp. 144-53, 167-68, 180(bot)-182(mid), 242-247, and 260-64 (sakai)

October 4: The Concept of the State: Between Marx and Weber

Read: Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” in Evans, Rueschmeyer and Skocpol, eds., Bringing the State Back In (Cambridge 1985), pp. 169-186 (sakai)

Week 6

October 8: The Shift from Power to Domination and Authority: Max Weber


October 11: Weber on the Types of Legitimate Domination

Read: Max Weber, Economy and Society, pp. 212-30, 241-54 (sakai)

Week 7

October 15: MIDTERM EXAMINATION

October 18: Tocqueville on American Institutions and Political Mores

Read: Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Volume I: Part I, author’s introduction and chapter 3; and Part II, chapters 7-8

Week 8

October 22: Tocqueville on Race, Politics, and the Future in America

Read: Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Volume I, Part II, ch. 9; pp. 370-6, 398-426, 438-42, 464-70; and conclusion (pp. 479-85)
PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED VIA SAKAI ON OR CLOSE TO THIS DAY!

October 25: Tocqueville on American Political Culture and Moral Sentiments

Read: Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Volume II, Part I, author’s preface, chapters 5, 9-13; Part II, entire; and Part III, chapters 1-4, 8, 11-12, 17-19

Part 3: The Contemporary American Polity

Week 9

October 29: The Ruling Elite in American Democracy


November 1: NO CLASS—INSTRUCTOR OUT OF TOWN

Week 10

November 5: Mechanisms of Social Control in the American Political System

Read: Domhoff, Who Rules America?, chapters 2 and 3

November 8: Mechanisms of Agenda-Setting and Ideological Control

Read: Domhoff, Who Rules America?, chapters 4 and 5

Read: Thomas Frank, What’s the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America, selections (sakai)

Week 11

November 12: Electoral Control and Recent Voting Patterns in American Politics

Read: Domhoff, Who Rules America?, chapters 6 and 7

4-6 PAGE PAPER DUE TODAY, NOVEMBER 12!

November 15: How Could Things Change?

Read: Domhoff, Who Rules America?, chapters 8 and 9

Read: another possible reading TBA
Week 12

November 19: Bringing Tocqueville Up to the Present, and Back to the Past: Social Capital, and 19th Century American Associations


Read: Jason Kaufman, For the Common Good? American Civic Life and the Golden Age of Fraternity, introduction and chapter 4 (sakai)

November 20: The Idea of Political Culture


Part 4: Looking Beyond America for Critical Political Dynamics

Week 13

November 26: Clientelism as a Form of Organization in Urban Politics

Read: Javier Auyero, Poor People’s Politics: Peronist Survival Networks & the Legacy of Evita, pp. 1-13, 89-110, 119-136

November 29: The Client’s Point of View in Urban Politics

Read: Auyero, Poor People’s Politics, chapter 5 and “Conclusions”

Week 14

December 3: Nationalism as National Character, Nationalism as Discourse

Read: Rogers Brubaker, Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany, Introduction and chapter 4 (sakai)

Read: Rogers Brubaker, Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe, pp. 13-21 (sakai)

December 6: Thinking About (Political) Violence

Read: Roger D. Peterson, Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe, chapters 2 and 6 (sakai)
Week ‘15’

December 10: Some Sociological Thinking about Terrorism


**FINAL EXAM:**

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20, 12:00-3:00 p.m., HILL CENTER 116