Course Description and Objectives

Political sociologists explore extraordinary range of political systems and political phenomenon. The purpose of the course is not to provide a comprehensive survey but rather to introduce you to key debates in the field, whet your appetite, and encourage you to use insights from political sociology in your research. The course is divided into three sections. In the first section, we will examine the basic concepts of politics and power. In this section, we will focus on the writings of Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, and Michel Foucault. Equipped with some understanding of power and politics, the second section will examine key political institutions and processes: state formation, nation building, democratization, and citizenship. The third section will focus on actors. We will start with ‘traditional’ actors, classes, parties, elites, social movements, and then move on to focus on more currents actors like lobbies, and experts.

I invested a lot of energy in creating a diverse and exiting syllabus. Ultimately, however, the class is designed to meet your interests and needs. If you have an interest in a process or an institution that is not addressed by the syllabus please let me know as soon as possible. I will be happy to make changes so as to better meet your needs (as long as I can see how these changes contribute to the course goals and meet other students’ interests).

Requirements and Expectations

This seminar is built around active student participation. All students are expected to attend weekly class meetings and participate in discussions. I will do my best to catalyze discussions, clarify obscure points when needed, and sometimes flesh out links between readings but student participation is absolutely central.

In addition to attendance, reading and participation, you will be required to complete the following tasks:

1) Each week, after the second, one student will be required to prepare a brief memo. The memo should include quick overview of the themes covered in the readings and identify key concepts (not more than a single page, double spaced). In addition, the memo will include a list of outstanding thoughts and questions for discussion (not more than a single page, double spaced). These memos will be posted online on the course blog at least 24 hours before the class (i.e., Sunday 2:00). The rest of the class is expected to read this memo before we meet.
2) A term paper for this class which can take different forms. One option is to write a brief research paper. This option is relevant if you have some prior acquaintance with the field and, perhaps, an idea for study. Alternatively, you can write a research proposal or a grant application that will serve as a starting point for research beyond this seminar. Finally, you can also submit an analytical literature review that explores particular topic of interest to you (in a way that makes a meaningful connection to the materials we study). Either way, the goal of the final paper is to advance your studies so the choice of what to do is yours. To make sure that you are on the right path you are required to attend my office hours ASAP but no later than week 7. In the final meeting of the semester, you will present your work to the rest of the class.

The materials covered in this course are not easy and developing a research proposal on materials that you just now encounter is a daunting task. Please use my office hours as frequently as possible so that together we can make it happen.

**Statement for Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

**Statement on Academic Integrity**

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: [http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/](http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/). Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: [http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/).

**Readings**

There are 6 required books for the course:


Other readings are available online either on JSTOR or on blackboard (the asterisk indicates items that are available via blackboard).

**Course outline and readings**

**Week 1 – August 26: Introduction—what is political sociology?**

**Part I. Concepts and definitions**

**Week 2 – September 9: What is politics?**


**Week 3 – September 16: Power, authority and domination**

* Weber, Max. TBA


**Week 4 – September 23: Foucault’s challenge**


**Part II. Institutions and Processes**

**Week 5 – September 30: State building**


**Week 6 – October 7: Other kinds of states**


Week 7 – October 14: **Nationalism and nation building**


Week 7 – October 21: **Citizenship**


Week 8 – October 28: **Democracy and Democratization**


**Note: research proposal is due in class.**

**Part III: Actors and their struggles**

Week 9 – November 4: **Class and class conflict**


Week 10 – November 11: Social movements


Week 11 – November 18: Parties


Parigi, Paolo and Laura Sartori. 2012. “Political party as a network of cleavages: disclosing the inner structure of Italian political parties in the seventies.” Social Networks, mmmm

Week 12 – November 25: Think tanks and lobbies


Week 13 – December 2. **Rule of Experts**
