Sociology 129  
Political Sociology  

Spring 2002  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 1-2pm  
WJH 105  

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Course Description  
This class will examine major theoretical questions about power, politics, and the state from a 
sociological perspective. The course will introduce you to the major ideas and debates within the 
filed of political sociology, and give you some of the tools needed to analyze power and politics.  

We will read a wide range of research on the dynamics of political institutions and processes. 
We begin the course with two sections analyzing theories of power and the state. In these 
sections, we will read and discuss classic statements and illustrative cases from the major 
theoretical traditions, including power and powerlessness in Appalachia, revolution in Latin 
America, racism, welfare, and the rise of the Nazi party in Germany. We will then look at a 
number of major topics within the field, including historical questions concerning state formation 
and nationalism, social movements, globalization, political culture and participation, and civil 
society. We will talk substantively in these sections about the origins of the Civil Rights 
movements, changes in voting and political participation, campaign finance in recent elections, 
and the place of the United States in a global society.  

Readings  
The following books have been ordered at the COOP, and are also available at a discount from 
online retailers such as ecampus.com and Barnes & Noble (bn.com):  

- Quadagno, Jill. 1996. The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on 
  1933. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.  
- McAdam, Doug. 1982. Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgence, 

Additional readings are available either in a reading packet on reserve at Hilles and Lamont libraries (marked RV in the syllabus), or online directly through Hollis (marked OL in the syllabus).

**Course Requirements**
The course includes both lectures and in-class discussions. Preparing for each class by doing all the assigned readings, class attendance, and active participation are expected from all members of the class.

**Discussion Questions:** I will make 2-3 discussion questions relevant to upcoming topics in the class available on the course website weekly. Students are responsible for a 3-5 paragraph response to one of these questions by Monday of the following week. Responses should be submitted online through the website.

**Research Paper:** You will conduct an extended piece of research culminating in a 15-20 page paper due at the end of the semester. Specific requirements will be discussed in class, and I suggest that you meet with me early in the semester to discuss your project plans. There are three important deadlines: (1) a proposal for the paper is due March 15th, (2) a detailed outline of the paper is due April 26th, (3) the final paper is due May 15, the last day of reading period.

**Final Exam:** The final exam will consist of essay questions based on class readings, lectures, and discussions. It will be an open notes exam.

Final grades will be determined as follows:
- 15% class participation
- 25% discussion questions
- 30% research paper
- 30% final exam

**Class Schedule and Readings**

**I. CONCEPTUALIZING POWER**

February 5: Power in Theoretical Perspective

February 7: The Three Faces of Power


February 12: Film—Harlan County USA

February 14: A Case Study of Power in Southern Appalachia


II. MAJOR THEORETICAL TRADITIONS

February 19: Marx- Class Struggle and Political Power


February 21: Application of the Marxist Approach- Democracy in Latin America


February 26: Weber- Legitimation and Authority


February 28: Application of the Weberian Approach- the War on Poverty in the U.S.


March 5: The Tradition of John Stuart Mill- Theories of Rational Choice


March 7: Application of the Rationalist Approach- The Nazi Party in World War II


March 12: Feminist Approaches


III. MAJOR TOPICS IN POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

March 14: The Sociology of the State

Skocpol, Theda. “Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research,” pp.3-43 in Bringing the State Back In, edited by Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol. New York: Cambridge University Press. (RV)


[March 15: final paper proposal due]
March 19: State Formation


March 21: Revolutions


** SPRING BREAK **

April 2: Social Movements


April 4: Application of Social Movement Theory: The American Civil Rights Movement


April 9: Nationalism


April 11: Globalization


April 16: Civil Society: The Bottom-Up Approach
April 18: Civil Society: The Top-Down Approach


April 23: Political Participation


April 25: Political Culture


[April 26: detailed outline of final paper due]

April 30 & May 2: Political Influence


[May 15: final paper due]