DSOCI 3343 POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY
Section 4255
TTH 08:00-09:15 CWH 103

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Required Readings
Kate Nash, ed., 2000, Readings in Contemporary Political Sociology.

Course Description/Objectives
Political sociology in its classical approach to politics stresses the relationship between the state and a range of social institutions. It understands politics as interrelated activities that shape and is shaped by established and organized practices in society. In this approach, the political concepts and practices at the level of the nation-state (such as power, legitimacy, parties, and forms of governing bodies) are analyzed in relation to other institutions in society, especially in relation to economy and class. In other respects, formerly neglected dimensions in political sociology (such as globalization, shift in the mode of capitalist accumulation, none-class based contentious participation, and historically repressed and identity-oriented politics like gays, feminists, and ethnic minorities) have received a broad scholarly attention, causing a much broader understanding of politics than the classical approach would allow. Central to this “new politics” is culture in its various manifestations as culture is broadly politicized today. Culture constitutes a new arena of contentious politics and reflects rapidly changing social relationships in contemporary society. Yet, as the classical approach to politics would argue, it remains a fact that the corporate-class politics persists in American society. Accordingly, in addition to exploring theoretical orientations, this course explores the two arenas in political sociology. We will explore such classical subjects as forms of political rule, conventional and contentious political participation, and corporate-class politics, focusing largely on the preponderant power of the upper-class corporate community and the ways in which it perpetuates its class rule in American society. Alternately, we will explore several major themes in the new politics. We will explore a new socialist politics, a new understanding of power, globalization and capitalist world order, new social movements and politically viable public sphere, radical pluralism in group differences and identities, democratization in culturally fragmented society, and a number of related issues that are crucial to contemporary political sociology. Strongly implicated in the new politics are the social-economic changes since the early 1970s, leading to a refreshing orientation to politics not only within the academia but also within the lived world of politicized individuals. The politicization of everyday life, to which the women’s liberation movement has contributed, has broadened the contentious arena of politics toward the realm of culture. Students are encouraged to approach the new politics in critical terms as this political view, especially the none-class politics, has been adopted and proposed by the cultural and political left without due criticisms. In all, this course aims at introducing students to a panoramic view of the discipline of political sociology in a limited time span. In examining both classical and new politics, students are expected to understand politics as an arena of contentious activities linked to the definite historical, institutional, and cultural modes of social life. Students are expected to cultivate a critical perspective toward the institutional and cultural politics, as the two arenas of political sociology are often incompatible.
Program Objectives
1. Students are to demonstrate competency in general theories, focused on theoretical applications in political sociology.
2. Students are to demonstrate competency in political sociology, relevant to social institutions and globalization as two of the substantive areas in the sociology major field.
3. Students are to demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively in writing.
4. Students are to demonstrate competency in critical thinking.

General Information
1. Class attendance and participation are important in this course. You are expected to be present and on time for class. Attendance will be taken frequently on a random basis. You will find exams difficult if you do not attend class on a regular basis. A pattern of absence and tardiness will adversely affect your course grade. If you anticipate periodic or prolonged absence in the course of the semester, you are advised not to take this course. You will not easily sail through this course without maintaining a regular attendance.
2. You are always welcome to elicit comments, critique, and opinions in class. I appreciate your reaction to the issues raised in texts and lectures. If you are befuddled, the class will welcome your efforts at clarification. Please bring the text under discussion to class. I often make textual references.
3. If you have a disability that will make it difficult for you to participate in class, to abide by the course policies or perform successfully, please advise me immediately. I will work with you and the Office of Multicultural and Disabled Services to provide you with reasonable accommodations. Similarly, please let me know if a problem arises during the course of the semester, so we can resolve it at the earliest possible time.
4. Needless to say, completing all readings, papers, and exams on time does not by itself warrant a passing grade. Your overall coursework must be of passing quality in order to pass this course. “A” is reserved for those who justify an outstanding work. Incompletes are given only in accordance with University guidelines and only under extraordinary and documented circumstances in which a student is unable to complete the latter portion of course work. There is no extra-credit work in this course; you are to focus on class requirements.

Class Requirements
Discussion Essays
1. You will submit four discussion essays on the designated dates, each discussing in your words themes and issues of the readings and lectures for the previous weeks. These essays are meant to foster class discussion, review course materials, and for you to articulate via writing your comprehension of learned materials. You may base your essays on the study questions distributed in class. You are to show succinctly that you have grasped the covered portion of course materials at the level appropriate to an upper-division college course. Please edit your essays before submitting them; essays are to be thoughtful and well written (grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. do count).
2. Your discussion essay should: (a) incorporate or refer to the assigned portions of texts, especially the Reader discussed in class; (b) be at least 1½ page long, single-spaced, stapled, and 11 or 12 font-size with proper margins no wider than 1.2 inch; (c) write your name and essay number on the back of the last page (i.e., I do not want to see your name when I read your paper); (d) begin writing from the top margin (i.e., do not waste space by writing essay title, course name, etc., on the front page); (e) begin with purpose statements, stating clearly in two or three sentences what your essay is going to analyze, show, apply, contest, or contrast; and (f) be written in paragraphs without line break (i.e., begin a new paragraph with a short indent instead). You will lose 6 points (10%) at the outset if you do not adhere to these specifications; there is no exception.
3. You can be selective in your essay theme but be as complete as possible. You may end your essay with a question related to the readings, discussions, or lectures that you would like for us to discuss in class. Avoid ending your essay by rephrasing what you already have written; you will lose points for
unnecessary repetitions or rephrases at any part of your essay. You can name authors but avoid using long or frequent quotes.

4. Keep in mind that discussion essay requires you to incorporate or refer to the themes/issues presented in the assigned texts and discussed in class. Essays deemed irrelevant to the content of the course will not be accepted. If you are using external sources in addition to the class materials, you must insert author’s name and publication year in parenthesis where it is appropriate and provide a separate page with a complete reference. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and subjected to the University disciplinary actions. Internet web pages are not acceptable sources for your essay; your essay will not be accepted if it is based on such information.

5. Discussion essays are not for sharing your personal experience unless you can show direct relevance. I suggest you do that in class. Essays are to be integrating (show how factual statements or concepts interrelate to support a perspective under discussion), comparative (contrast assigned articles and point out thematic differences and similarities), applying (interpret a political event from a definite perspective, or discuss how such a perspective might explain it), critical (take a position and argue against what you consider as critical deficiencies in particular themes), or inquisitive (discuss the kind of questions, answers, implications, inferences, assumptions, etc. relevant to politics that can be derived from your readings). In other words, do not simply repeat the points made in the texts and lectures in sequence but contrast, integrate, apply, explore, question, look for common themes, etc. For example, do not merely define conceptual terms or describe statements unless you are making a specific argument, and avoid narrating unrelated themes unless you are making specific contrasts under a general theme. Essays are to be organized, succinct, consistent, and as complete as possible.

6. You will have at least a week to work on a discussion essay following readings and lectures. Essays should be turned in on time, which means during class meetings on the designated due dates, and must be brought to class (not e-mailed to me or brought to the department office). I accept essays submitted earlier than the due date, but all late essays, if submitted within a week past the due date, are penalized -10%. I do not accept late essays after a week past the due date in which case you will score 0 point. This late-essay policy is strictly observed to ensure class fairness and timely progress. Always keep a copy of the essay you have turned in. If you need out-of-class assistance, please see me during office hours or make an appointment after class. I am always willing to assist you.

Study Questions

1. On Thursdays, you will be given two or three take-home study questions, covering the readings, discussions, and lectures. Study questions are meant to test your overall comprehension of learned materials, to enhance your analytic thinking, and to prepare you for exams. You are encouraged to organize your answers on a separate notebook (not due). Keep this notebook updated and review it for exams. You may utilize study questions as an outline or topic for your discussion essays.

2. Three or four paragraphs for each study question, on average, would suffice, but keep in mind that specific questions require specific answers. Avoid giving unnecessary definition to the terms you are using and get to the points immediately. You may discuss your answers in review sessions or during my office hours.

Exams

1. You will take three written exams, consisting of five questions of which you answer four. All exam questions are drawn directly from the study questions distributed in class for the midterm under examination. You will have eight or nine study questions before each scheduled exam. The third exam, which is not comprehensive, will be given at 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, December 11th, the day designated by the University for our class final.

2. Exam policy: (a) there is no early exam; (b) a makeup exam must be taken at an appointed time within a week following the scheduled exam; (c) all makeup exams are penalized (-10%) unless you provide a documented excuse verifying the necessity of your absence; (d) to ensure fairness, makeup exam questions are not the same as scheduled exam questions and would only reflect study questions; (e) under no circumstance a makeup is given after a week past the designated exam date; (f) a missing exam thereafter means “failure” (not “incomplete”) for that portion of coursework. There is no
exception to this exam policy. It is to your advantage not to miss an exam.

3. Please bring a blue book (exam book) and arrive 5 minutes early on the designated exam dates. I must sign on your blue book before the exam; a blue book without my signature on it is invalid and will not be considered. Do not attempt to cram up study questions. You will not be able to handle this, and I will not be able to help you. Notice exam dates and essay deadlines below, and plan your schedule accordingly.

Readings/Discussions
1. Class meetings will primarily include lectures, text reviews, and/or discussions. You are required to do assigned readings thoroughly prior to class; be prepared to discuss them and answer questions in class. You are likely to find some excerpts and articles difficult to follow. Several influential European writers you will encounter have a tendency of phrasing ideas in a complex form. You are not expected to grasp the details on your first reading. However, I do expect that you are acquainted with general conceptual terms and overall themes before you come to class. Be prepared to raise generic issues and questions in class. It is always a good policy to grapple with texts first on your own, rather than getting at them through the filters of what someone or I say about them.

2. Lectures are delivered on the assumption that you have completed your readings thoroughly. Be prepared to answer questions in class. Each lecture will identify issues/themes that the text under discussion raises, and it often centers on an extended clarification and elaboration of the material you have read. In addition, conflicting standpoints and relevant materials not discussed in texts will be introduced in class.

3. In order to ensure that you are keeping up with class and to set class discussion going, I will at times assign each of you to summarily discuss in class apportioned pages of your readings for about two minutes. The class should then be able to participate in it by identifying themes, clarifying them, or adding to the points made. You will be notified of your turn and apportioned pages in advance. Your discussions are apportioned to no more than a few pages of mostly self-explanatory portions of the readings, although you will need to complete all assigned readings to contextualize your discussions in class. This periodic assignment is not an additional work other than reading and taking a few notes. Each of you will have an equal number of turns unless you miss out your turn by being absent, and receive up to 50 cumulative points in the course of the semester.

4. All readings are assigned on every Thursday for the following week along with the study questions (AO, Anthony Orum; RD, Kate Nash Reader; WD, William Domhoff). Reading assignments for the first and second weeks are AO pp. 1-5, 8-35 (read before Thursday, Aug. 21); WD pp. xi-xvi, pp. 1-13 (read before Tuesday, Aug. 26); RD pp. 1-4; pp. 8-26 (read before Thursday, Aug. 28). You are required to have the readings prepared on time for class.

Deadlines and Exam Dates
1. 08/19 course introduction
2. 08/26
3. 09/02
4. 09/09
   09/11 1st discussion essay due on Thursday September 11
5. 09/16
6. 09/23 review discussion: Tuesday September 23
   09/25 Midterm Exam I: Thursday September 25, 8/21 to 9/23
7. 09/30
8. 10/07
9. 10/14
   10/16-10/17 fall break
10. 10/21 2nd discussion essay due on Tuesday October 21
    10/24
11. 10/28 review discussion: Thursday October 28
10/30  Midterm Exam II: Thursday October 30, 9/26 to 10/28
12. 11/04
13. 11/11
14. 11/18  3rd discussion essay due on Tuesday November 18
15. 11/25
   11/26-11/28 Thanksgiving
16. 12/02
   12/04  4th discussion essay due on Thursday December 4
   12/04  review discussion: Thursday December 4
Final Exam: 8 a.m. Thursday December 11, 11/04 to 12/04

Evaluation
1. Your course grade is based on:
   Four Discussion Essays..................60 points each, 240 points
   Discussions.................................60 points
   Three Midterm Exams......................200 points each, 600 points
2. The grading scale is: 792-900 (88%): A
   702-791 (78%): B
   612-701 (68%): C
   522-611 (58%): D
   > 521 (57%): F
3. Class attendance is considered if your cumulative points fall near or on the borderline.
Political Sociology

Study Question 1 (Exam I)

1. According to Marx, “state power does not hover in the midair.” That is, politics is considered in relation to the material infrastructure of society, especially in relation to antagonistic class relations. Discuss selectively the ways in which Mar/ Marxists approach the state in particular and/or politics in general. In other words, what does politics and/or state mean in the general frame of Marxism? Focus on a few themes and try to weave them in your answer. (Nearly all points made in class and the texts so far, Orum and Domhoff, are relevant here, such as social change, revolution, ideology, hegemony, working class party, power, class, etc.)

2. Based on your reading and class discussion, select three supporting theme/points that in your view best illustrate Foucault’s stance on “power.” Be sure to discuss them in elaboration of the statement below. Foucault reconceptualizes “power” in relation to “subject” and “knowledge” and articulates it in terms of its diverse implementations, its local strategies and effects, its dominations and resistances. (You may, if you wish, include the significance of Foucault’s stance on “power” in distinction from the classical/modern approach to power.)

Study Question 2. (Exam I)

1. Based on your reading, compare/contrast Weber and Durkheim on matters of politics and society. What differences do you see in their general theoretical orientations?

2. How is “corporate community” being characterized, its orientations, interests, constituency, network, cohesiveness, oppositions, etc.? Selectively discuss three points that in your view would characterize “corporate community.” (You may bring in examples and other relevant discussions presented in text).

Study Question 3 (Exam I)

1. According to Waters, the orthodox Marxist “class template” has become obsolete. He argues that there is an urgent need to see social stratification from several “new” developments in contemporary “post-class” society. Selectively discuss what Waters is trying to refute and why? What do you think? Do you agree with Waters?

Readings
AO: pp. DH Chapter 3; Article (Read before Tuesday).
Political Sociology

Study Question 1 (Exam II)

1. It is generally known that there have been dramatic changes in the mode of capitalist accumulation necessitated by the crises in Fordist mass production and Keynesian corporatism. It was the profit-oriented capitalist mode of production that introduced and dismantled Fordism. According to Harvey, there are significant consequences that follow from the transition to flexible accumulation (post-Fordism). Give a couple of reasons for the transition and discuss three consequences that mark flexible accumulation.

2. Answer either (a) or (b)

   (a) The overriding theme in the “moral vision” of democracy as advanced by political thinkers like Dewey and Barber and recently Cohen and Habermas emphasizes active participatory roles of the public in instituting genuine “deliberative” democracy. In short, they all stress the participatory role of the public “ought” to be the basis of substantive democracy. Does this not presuppose that people are ready and willing to deliberate together on politically important issues that affect their lives, say, by participating in civic organizations and social movements? Do you think that the contemporary public is broadly politicized? If you think that the public is generally depoliticized (politically inactive), can you give a reason why? In other words, what reasons can you think of which today prevent people from taking an active role in political decision-making? How in your opinion can the public be made politically active? The text points out that merely adopting the “empirical view” of democracy “can lead to an ideological justification of existing political forms.” Why? Does this mean that we need the moral vision of democracy after all? Why?

   (b) The text points out briefly that the historical rise of modern democratic societies coincided with the rise of capitalism. We have noted that this correlation is not accidental. How so? In your answer distinguish between restricted democracy and substantive democracy. You may also draw from the “economic foundations” of democracy discussed in the text. In what way(s) this economic foundation differs from that of totalitarianism and from the economy under authoritarianism?

3. Contrast democracy and totalitarianism. Include in your answer the basic differences across constitutional, procedural, ideological, and social foundations.

Study Question 2. (Exam II)

1. Selectively discuss two ways in which Domhoff (pp. 45-59) seeks to show an overlap between upper class social institutions and leadership in the corporate community leading to a high degree of class cohesiveness. In what way the presence of upper class serves to demystify the “American myth” about rising from rags to riches?

2. What rationale or argument does Domhoff (pp. 60-68) provide in support of the statement below? There is virtually no rival power base in the upper class control over corporate America and that the upper class power is ultimately based on its command over wealth; this leads to class awareness reinforced by shared social identities, networks, and values.

3. Selectively discuss three themes that you believe illustrate Giddens’ understanding of globalization. Include in your answer a reference to “life politics” and “fundamentalism.”