

Political Sociology

SOC 226

MWF 11:00 - 11:50

1022 Lincoln Hall

Professor Jeremiah Bohr

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Office Hours: W 2-4pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Political sociology is the study of how power is distributed within and between societies, the social causes of power distribution, and why some choices are made over alternative options in political contexts. Engaging these questions, the primary aim of this course is to come to a better understanding of why the US has so much more poverty than other developed countries. Along the way, we will also gain a better understanding of some of the issues motivating the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street movements: taxation, regulation, and elite dominance of the economy. During this semester you will learn core concepts and theories from political sociology, participate in discussions analyzing political power, and practice your skills writing for a public audience.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Monica Prasad (2012). *The Land of Too Much: American Abundance and the Paradox of Poverty*. Harvard University Press.

i-Clickers are required for this class. You may use either an original i-Clicker or an i-Clicker2 in this class. (Please be sure to register your i-Clicker using your **netID** (the part of your email address before the '@illinois.edu'.) Be aware that “clicking for someone else” is considered a form of cheating and will result in grade reduction. You can register your i-Clicker at <http://www.iclicker.com/support/registeryourclicker/>.

Additional readings will be made available to you online.

EXAMS

There will be three exams in this course, covering material from both lecture and assigned readings. Each will be non-cumulative and consist of a series of multiple choice and short answer questions. We will conduct review sessions prior to each exam.

READING QUIZZES

There will be five reading quizzes throughout the semester. These quizzes will test your knowledge of all reading material assigned since the previous quiz (including material assigned for the day the quiz is given). It is therefore very important that you keep up with reading assignments throughout the semester, and raise any questions you have in class or during office hours. These quizzes will be open-note but time-limited. You may not make up quizzes unless you have a legitimate reason for missing class that day. Medical excuses will need documentation, and you will need to consult me prior to your absence for any other reason. Each quiz is worth 25 points; your lowest quiz score will be dropped from your final grade. This means you may skip one quiz without any penalty.

OP-ED PAPER

During the semester, you will have the opportunity to write an assignment intended for a public rather than academic audience. You will have flexibility regarding your topic choice, and you will write multiple versions of the paper through a peer review process. We will discuss differences in style for public versus academic writing. The first draft is due **Friday, April 10**, so it is very important that you attend class that day. More details will be given in class.

FRIDAY FORUMS

Every other Friday, we will have a collective conversation focused on making connections between concepts discussed in class with real-world events. These discussions will be student-led, and everyone will rotate turns as discussion leaders. Topics may revolve around formal or informal politics and range from local to state, national, international, or global scales.

During the week that you are forum leader, you will:

- Select a current events topic and devise at least two discussion questions for the class.
- **At least 24 hours prior to your assigned date**, you will post to the Compass discussion board:
 - A summary of your topic
 - Why you found this topic interesting and an aspect of political sociology it connects to
 - Links to relevant materials on the topic (news articles, blogs, videos, etc.)
 - Two discussion questions
- If you would like to introduce slides/images/videos for us to view as a class, please email me the files or links at least 24 hours ahead of time.

GRADING

Exams (three)	225 points
Reading Quizzes (four)	100 points
Op-Ed Paper	75 points
Forum Participation	50 points
Attendance & Participation	50 points

Total **500 points**

A+	485 points and above
A	465-484
A-	450-464
B+	435-449
B	415-434
B-	400-414
C+	385-399
C	365-384
C-	350-364
D+	335-349

D	315-334
D-	300-314
F	299 points and below

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses and will result in a failing grade for the course, as authorized by the Code of Policies and Regulations Applying to All Students.

SCHEDULE

Week 1 – Introduction to the Course

- W (1/21) First day of class
- F (1/23) What is Political Sociology?

Week 2 – Power & Institutions

- M (1/26) Power and Authority
- Sign up for Friday Forums
- W (1/28) Institutions
- Scott – *Seeing Like a State* (optional)
- F (1/30) FRIDAY FORUM #1

Week 3 – Theoretical Approaches I

- M (2/2) The State
- Prasad, chapter 1, “The Farmers’ Tour”
- W (2/4) Pluralism
- Dahl – *Who Governs?*
- F (2/6) Elite Power
- Mills – *The Power Elite*
 - **READING QUIZ #1**

Week 4 – Theoretical Approaches II

- M (2/9) Adam Smith
- Smith – Selections from *Wealth of Nations* and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*

W (2/11) Karl Marx
• *Communist Manifesto* pgs. 31 – 53 (Compass)

F (2/13) FRIDAY FORUM #2

Week 5 – Theoretical Approaches

M (2/16) Max Weber
• Weber – “Politics as a Vocation” (optional)

W (2/18) Keynes vs. Hayek, part I
• Prasad, chapter 3, “A Demand-Side Theory of Comparative Political Economy”

F (2/20) Keynes vs. Hayek, part II
• Hayek – *The Road to Serfdom*, pages 39 – 50, 66-70 and *The Road to Serfdom in Cartoons* (Compass)
• **READING QUIZ #2**

Week 6 - Review

M (2/23) Review for Exam I

W (2/25) **Exam I**

F (2/27) FRIDAY FORUM #3

Week 7 – Ideology & Public Opinion

M (3/2) Ideology

W (3/4) Public Opinion

F (3/6) Legitimacy
• Martin, “The Outbreak of a Tax Protest Movement”

Week 8 – Taxation & Regulation

M (3/9) Tax Systems
• Prasad, chapter 5, “The Land of Too Much”

W (3/11) Regulation and the State
• Braithwaite, “Neoliberalism or Regulatory Capitalism” (optional)

F (3/13) FRIDAY FORUM #4

Week 9 – The Welfare State

M (3/16) Welfare & Inequality

- Prasad, chapter 6, “Progressive Taxation and the Welfare State”

W (3/18) Welfare State Typologies

- Prasad, chapter 8, “The Democratization of Credit” (Skip 207-220)

F (3/20) American Welfare Programs

- Prasad, chapter 9, “The Credit/Welfare State Trade-Off”
- **READING QUIZ #3**

Week 10 – Spring Break 3/23 – 3/27 (no classes)

Week 11 – The Welfare State

M (3/30) The Politics of Welfare

- Steensland, “Cultural Categories and the American Welfare State: The Case of Guaranteed Income Policy” (optional)

W (4/1) The Future of American Welfare

- Prasad, chapter 10, “American Mortgage Keynesianism”

F (4/3) FRIDAY FORUM #5

Week 12

M (4/6) Review for Exam II

W (4/8) **Exam II**

F (4/10) Political Writing Exercise I

- **First Op-Ed Rough Draft due (bring hard copy to class)**

Week 13 – Citizenship & Participation

- M (4/13) Nationalism
- Grosby – *Nationalism: A Very Short Introduction*
- W (4/15) Citizenship
- Marshall, “Citizenship and Social Class”
- F (4/17) FRIDAY FORUM #6
- **READING QUIZ #4**

Week 14 – Citizenship & Participation

- M (4/20) Political Parties
- W (4/22) Voting
- F (4/24) Disenfranchisement
- Manza and Uggen – *Locked Out: Felon Disenfranchisement and American Democracy*

Week 15 – Social Movements and Contentious Politics

- M (4/27) Political Writing Exercise II
- **Second Op-Ed Rough Draft due (bring hard copy to class)**
- W (4/29) Tea Party & Occupy I
- Dryzek – “Rhetoric in Democracy: A Systemic Appreciation” (optional)
- F (5/1) Tea Party & Occupy II
- Milkman et al, “Understanding ‘Occupy’”
 - Be prepared to discuss which characterization you found most convincing and why
 - **READING QUIZ #5**

Week 16

- M (5/4) Review for Exam III
- **OP-ED PAPER DUE**
- W (5/6) **Exam III**