POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Spring 2015
Professor Basak Kus
Public Affairs Center 318
bkus@wesleyan.edu
http://bkus.faculty.wesleyan.edu/
Twitter: @Basak_Kus

Course Description

The course offers theoretical tools for understanding and analyzing politics. It will focus heavily on the United States. We will examine questions such as: What is the state? How did the modern state come to be? How is the state related to other institutions and social actors? What is citizenship? How do models of citizenship differ across nations? How does immigrant naturalization vary across nations? What does immigration have to do with sexuality? What is social citizenship? How does the US differ from the rest of advanced nations in terms of the configuration of the state-economy-society relationship? Why is the government so small in America? Why is the penal state so big in America? Why do Americans hate the welfare state- or do they? How did the US tax policy become what it is today? How do the rich and poor affect politics and policymaking? What is neoliberalism? How did neoliberal politics change the US, and the world? What accounts for the emergence, development, form and success of social movements? What did we learn from the Arab spring? What did we learn from the Occupy Wall Street? Why is it important to think about inequality?

You’ll be expected not just to do the readings but to follow newsworthy events in American politics. I expect you to read one or more of these news outlets on a regular basis: The New York Times, The Atlantic, The Guardian, The Economist, The Huffington Post, Daily Kos, Slate, Salon, and Politico. By the end of the class you will have a sense of the major debates within the field of political sociology, a grasp on the tools scholars use in these debates, and experience applying a sociological skill set to analyze current political events.

Course Structure

This course is organized as a seminar. As is the case with all seminars, the quality of this one will highly depend on the commitment of its participants. I expect everyone to come to class having closely read the assigned material and ready to discuss it.

Office hours:

My office hours are on Tuesdays between 12:00 and 12:45 and on Thursdays between 1 pm and 1:45 pm at PAC 318 (3rd floor). You can also make an appointment to meet at another time.

Please note that I will have extensive office hours on February 13th and February 20th (Friday). I would like everyone to sign up for a 15 minute time slot.
Evaluation:

• Attendance: 6 points
  
  o 0-1 absence:  6 points
  o 2 absences:  5 points
  o 3 absences:  4 points
  o 4 absences:  3 points
  o 5 absences:  2 points
  o 6 absences:  1 point
  o More than 6: likely to fail

• Participation: 6 points

  Being an active participant means you regularly share your thoughts, observations, and questions about the readings as you interact with each other and the material. If speaking in class is sincerely difficult for you, please come see me in office hours at the beginning of the semester, and we will try to find a way to boost your class participation.

  I evaluate your participation three times during the semester (every four weeks, roughly), and assign points according to the following scale (for a total of 6 points):

  Never participates - 0 points
  Rarely participates- 1 point
  Sometimes participates- 1.5 points
  Often/always participates- 2 points

• Journal: 13 points

  To facilitate discussion, students will submit discussion entries to Moodle prior to our meetings. This can be in the form of a short paragraph (about 200 words) or bullet points. In addition, I would like all of you to pose at least two questions. The entries should convey that the student has carefully read and thought about the assigned material. Entries are due by midnight the day for which the readings were due. Because one goal of this is to encourage active student involvement, late submissions will not be accepted.

  You are expected to submit a total of 13 journal entries. Each entry is worth 1 point.

• Critical summaries: 60 points

  You will submit three critical summaries. Submit your summary electronically by midnight before the class period for which the readings were due. These essays are expected to be 1000-1500 words. What is important in this exercise is not that you recapitulate all the details of a book or other text, but rather that you identify the main argument and sub-arguments, and discuss how and why the author makes that argument. These are some of the questions that may help you to develop your essay: What is the question being asked and answered? What is the author’s main argument? What evidence does the author use to support the argument? What are the author's conclusions? Is the argument persuasive? Is it important? What is missing? If you are discussing a few works at the same time, say something as to how themes are similar across readings, or how they diverge. Make sure that your writing is clear, and grammatically clean. Make sure to cite readings and direct quotes.
• **Research proposal: 15 points**

Your final assignment for this class is a research proposal, due the last day of our class (May 5th). I would like to consider all the topics we have discussed during the semester and come up with a question, which you would be interested in examining.

- The research question needs to be stated in clear terms.
- I would like to explain how you have arrived at this question, and explain why this question is important, and worth a study.
- I would like you to identify the relevant resources that you would be looking at, and compile a bibliography.

The proposal is expected to be between 900 and 1200 words. I expect you to come to my office and talk to me about your ideas right after we come back from the spring break.

**Grading scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Numeric Grade</th>
<th>GPA Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Late assignments**

Students who, because of unforeseen events, are absent from class and are unable to complete graded work should discuss with me their circumstances. You must convince your instructor that you have a good reason for not doing the work, such as proof from a physician or dean that you have been ill, or had to attend a scheduled university event etc. I will not make allowance for any incomplete work that is not satisfactorily accounted for.

**Class etiquette**

No laptops during class time! You may have disagreements with the author, your colleagues, or your instructor. It may at times become tense in class over certain topics that may appear to be of a personal nature. While I encourage you to openly express your thoughts, ideas, and experiences, I expect you to be respectful of others’ thoughts and opinions.

**Students with disabilities**

Students with disabilities enrolled in this course and who may need disability related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible. All discussions will remain confidential, although the relevant university office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.
Books to purchase

- Susan Mettler, *The Submerged State* (whole book)
- Isaac Martin, *Rich People's Movements*
- Dana Fisher, *Activism Inc.*
- Larry Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*
- Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, selections from *Winner-Take-All Politics*

**SCHEDULE**

**January 22:** Introduction to the course

**TOPIC 1: THE STATE**

**Jan 27: What is the state?**

- David Harvey, “The Marxian Theory of the State”
- Max Weber, selections from “Politics as a Vocation.”
- Michael Mann, selections from *Social Sources of Power.*

**Jan 29: How the Modern State came to be**

- Charles Tilly, selections from *Coercion, Capital and European States.*

**TOPIC 2: CITIZENSHIP**

**Feb 3: What is citizenship?**

- Irene Bloemraad, Korteweg, Yurdakul. “Citizenship and Immigration: Multiculturalism, Assimilation, and Challenges to the Nation-State”.
  http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134608
- Irene Bloemraad, selections from *Becoming a Citizen: Incorporating Immigrants and Refugees in the United States and Canada.* (chapters 1 and 3).

**Feb 5: Citizenship in culturally diverse societies**

- Yasemin Soysal, selections from the *Limits of Citizenship*
- W. Kymlicka and Wayne Norman, “Citizenship in culturally diverse societies”
  (Available online at Wes library)

*Discussion: Anti-immigrant protests in Germany; Charlie Hebdo Attack in France*
Feb 10: State, Citizenship and Sexuality


**Topic 3: SOCIAL CITIZENSHIP & THE WELFARE STATE**

Feb 12: Social citizenship and the welfare state


- Gosta Esping Andersen, selections from *The Three Worlds of Welfare State*

Feb 17: Social citizenship and the welfare state in the US

- Sven Steinmo, “American exceptionalism reconsidered”

- Sven Steinmo, “Why is government so small in America?”

Feb 19: What do Americans hate the welfare state?

- Martin Gillens, selections from *Why Americans Hate Welfare* (chapters 1 and 3)

- Loic Wacquant, “Crafting the Neoliberal State: Workfare, Prisonfare and Social Insecurity.”

Feb 24: Less known aspects of the American welfare state

- Susan Mettler, *The Submerged State* (selections)

**TOPIC 4: NEOLIBERALISM**

Feb 26: What is neoliberalism?

- Stephanie Mudge, “What is neoliberalism?”

- Marion Fourcade and Sarab Babb, “The Rebirth of the Liberal Creed”

- J. Williamson "A Short History of the Washington Consensus”.

March 3: What did neoliberal turn in politics entail in the US?


March 5: Class discussion

**SPRING BREAK**
March 24- Isaac Martin visit

Author meets critics session: Reading Rich People’s Movements
Evening: Isaac Martin talk and reception (venue and time, TBA)

TOPIC 5: CIVIC PARTICIPATION

March 26: Civic participation and social capital

• Putnam, Robert, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital."
• Theda Skocpol, "Associations Without Members"

March 31: Changing terrain of activism in America

• Dana Fisher, Activism Inc. (selections)

TOPIC 6: WHY DO STATES DO WHAT THEY DO?

April 2: The nature of policymaking

• Vivien Schmidt, “Institutionalism”

April 7: Social movement theories

• Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements”
• Poletta and Jasper, “Collective Identity and Social movements”

April 9: Media, social media, and social movements

• Ramesh Srinivasan, “ Srinivasan, R. “What Tahrir Square Has Done For Social Media: The Struggle For Political Power in Egypt”
• Zeynep Tufekci, “Networked Politics from Tahrir to Taksim: Is there a Social Media-fueled Protest Style?”
• Zeynep Tufekci, What Gladwell Gets Wrong
  http://technosociology.org/?p=178
April 14: Watching *The Square*

April 16: Class discussion

**TOPIC 8: INEQUALITY AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY**

April 21: Unequal democracy?
  - Larry Bartels, selections from *Unequal Democracy*

April 23: Winner-take-all politics?
  - Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, selections from *Winner-Take-All Politics*

April 28: Class discussion

April 30: No class. Professor Kus will be abroad.

May 5th: Final words. Research proposal due.