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SOCI 485.01: Political Sociology

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Political Sociology
SOCI 485
Spring 2017
T,Th 2:00-3:20

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What are politics? Are they the debates leading up to an election which chooses between a Democrat and a Republican? Certainly they are that, but they are also much, much more. In general, political sociologists analyze social bases of power and policy determination, institutional interrelationships, intellectuals and ideologies, political trends and change, and political participation and membership. More than anything else, political sociology studies power, authority, and legitimacy usually on a “macro” scale.

Political Sociology was one of the first areas to be investigated in the “classical” era, and therefore is a very broad sub-discipline. One part of the subdiscipline deals with social movements that aim to establish a group’s power, authority and legitimacy, and in doing so, challenges the dominant society. Although much of political sociology deals with current movements, because the goal of movements is to achieve some sort of social change, the methodology used by political sociologists tends toward longitudinal, historical, and comparative research. By longitudinal research, we are referring to contemporaneous observations or participant observations over a lengthy period of time, while historical research pulls sociological lessons from movements taking place in the past, often serving as a means for understanding, through comparison, current events.

Because of the enormous field of social movements within political sociology, we will cover only a few of the possible movements that may help us understand current events in context.

Student Learning Goals

- ❖ ***Understand:*** Demonstrate informed and reasoned understanding of democratic ideas, institutions and practices presented in a portion of the literature on political sociology dealing with social movements, with attention to concepts such as state, power, authority, domination, autonomy, citizenship, and capitalism.
- ❖ ***Deepen the Understanding:*** Analyze and evaluate the significance and complexities of engaged citizenship by examining current and historical social bases of power, ideologies, institutional interrelationships, political trends and change, policy determination, and political participation and membership from a variety of viewpoints, developing your critical thinking skills;
- ❖ ***Apply:*** Using the theoretical approaches and research methodologies developed by political sociologists, analyse current and historical social and political events, drawing from original source materials.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Understand: Demonstrate informed and reasoned understanding of democratic ideas, institutions and practices presented a portion of the literature on political sociology dealing with social movements:

McAdam, Doug, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald. 1996. *Comparative Perspectives On Social Movements : Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

This book will serve as the primary text, but we will read only about half.

Mann, Michael. 2004. *Fascists*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

There is an enormous body of literature on fascism, and choosing among them was difficult. Here, Michael Mann gives a good literature review in the introductory remarks, and then examines several different fascist movements arising in the interwar years, allowing us to compare and contrast the differences, and applying the theoretical framework discussed by McAdam, et al.

Alinsky, Saul. 1971. *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals*. New York: Vintage Books (Random House).

Rules for Radicals is a classic book on organizing from a social change perspective. We read this book in my undergraduate course on “Theories of Organizing.” More recently, conservatives have attacked the liberals and the left as “Alinsky radicals”—everyone from Barack Obama to Frances Fox Piven. But you will see that conservatives seem to have taken many of their tactics almost directly from the book.

For the segment on Social Democracy or Democratic Socialism, we will read several articles on Moodle, as I could not find a book that serves the same purpose as either McAdam, et al. or Mann.

In addition, there will be several articles and short news pieces placed on Moodle, depending on the interests of the class.

Deepen the Understanding: Analyze and evaluate the significance and complexities of engaged citizenship by examining current and historical social and political events from a variety of viewpoints, developing your critical thinking skills

To meet this learning goal, you will write questions developed from the reading, which will serve as the basis for class discussion. Your assignment is to derive a discussion question based on your assigned reading and/or class material. Please be sure to imagine what sort of question would lead to a good discussion, giving enough information so that the class can understand it.

Until Week 5, the questions should relate the assigned reading to a current or historical event. From Week 5 onward, you will apply one of the three theoretical traditions to the assigned reading on fascism, social democracy, or environmental or sovereignty movements.

Each question will be worth 5 points: excellent (5), good (4) satisfactory (3), marginal (2), and you didn't even try (0). You will post your question on Moodle no later than 8 p.m. Tuesday evening for discussion on Wednesday.

I will count the best six discussion questions toward the total of 30 points devoted to this category. This means that you don't need to submit more than six, although you can submit as many as you want. This also means I do not accept late questions or excuse for illness, since you have at least 10 opportunities to submit questions.

In addition, cultivation of the deeper understanding requires regular attendance and participation in the discussions, which are based on the submitted questions. Therefore, attendance will count as 20 points, which means arriving in a timely fashion and staying for at least 2/3 of the class, and actively participating in discussions, to the extent that you are comfortable.

Apply: Understand the theoretical approaches and research methodologies used by political sociologists, drawing from original source materials, using these theoretical approaches to analyse current and historical social and political events.

The final exam will assess your understanding of some of the topics covered in class. In this assignment, you will, more or less, write your own exam. You will choose to discuss one or two of the discussion questions submitted during the course of the semester, but being sure to address two of the three social movement theoretical perspectives introduced in the first few weeks of class that will aid in the understanding of the rise, maintenance, and decline of social movements.

You are required to submit an essay, five to ten pages in length, that will focus on a historical or current political movement or event that involved the achievement or denial of "voice." More information on content and grading will be available in Week 3.

The final exam is due on Moodle Tuesday May 9 by 5:20 p.m.

Discussion questions	30
Attendance	20
Final Exam	30
Total	80

72-80	A
64-71	B
56-63	C
48-55	D
Below 48	F

If you are a couple of points above or below, +/- will be added.

Housekeeping Issues

All assignments must be submitted on Moodle. If you have difficulty using this platform, please let me know and we'll go over it together.

Academic Dishonesty: Please make yourself familiar with the library resource on plagiarism: <http://libguides.lib.umt.edu/plagiarism> The BEST outcome for plagiarized assignments is a zero on the assignment and an opportunity to resubmit. The WORST outcome is expulsion from the University.

Deadlines: Regarding discussions, as noted earlier, you will have several opportunities to turn in discussion questions, and only the five best scores will be counted. Therefore, NO LATE discussion questions will be accepted, BECAUSE they DO form the basis for the class on Wednesdays.

Regarding the final exam, late submissions will be accepted only if you make an arrangement with me. The same thing goes for incompletes.

Respect: This course covers material that lies at the heart of many contentious debates in public life. All views are welcome. Because your opinion is also valuable, you are allowed and encouraged to express your disagreement. This means that you are encouraged to agree or disagree with any positions taken in the class, but you must do so respectfully. Lively debate is one thing; "trashing" is something else entirely.

POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY
Power, Authority, Legitimacy, and Voice in Social Movements
Spring 2017 Calendar

Week 1: Introduction to Course

Reading: McAdam, Introduction

Week 2: Political Opportunities

McAdam, Chapters 1, 2, 3

Week 3: Mobilizing Structures

McAdam, Chapters 6, 7, 8

Week 4: Framing Processes

McAdam, Chapters 11, 12, 15

Week 5: Fascism

Mann, Chapters 1 & 2

Week 6: Fascism

Mann, Chapters 3, 7, 8, 9

Week 7: Fascism

Mann, Chapters 4, 5, 6

Week 8: Fascism

Mann, Chapter 10
Articles on Moodle

Week 9: Spring Break

Plan on reading the entire *Rules for Radicals* during your break.

Week 10: Social Democracy, history

Reading on Moodle, TBA

Week 11: Social Democracy, today

Reading on Moodle, TBA

Week 12: Democratic Socialism and Saul Alinsky

Rules for Radicals

Week 13: Green Movements

Reading on Moodle, TBA

Week 14: Standing Rock

Reading on Moodle, TBA

Week 15: Review & Grad Student Presentations

Final Examination: The final exam is due on Moodle Tuesday May 9 by 5:20 p.m