



Political Sociology

European School of Political and Social Sciences (ESPOL) - 2014-2015

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Course Syllabus



I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Course Convenor

Room Room no. 302, Bvd Vauban 70 (3rd floor)
Email address: giulia.sandri@univ-catholille.fr
Office Hours: Wednesday 17.30-19.30

Timetable

Lectures: Time: Monday, 14H10-17H30
Dates: 12/01; 19/01; 26/01; 02/02; 16/02; 02/03; 09/03;
16/03
Venue: C108 St. Raphaël

Content and Structure

Political sociology is the study of the social organization of power. This course covers the major themes and debates in political sociology—a diverse field both in terms of the range of topics addressed and the theoretical perspectives used. Our main purpose will be to do an overview of the major perspectives and arguments comprising the field, including classical and contemporary readings. The issues studied in this field include the nature of power and the state, relations between state and society, social movements, political organization and civic participation, political culture, voting behavior, and citizenship.

As a discipline, political sociology is at the intersection of sociology and political science: It addresses issues related to politics, similarly to political science. However, it differs from political science in a variety of ways. Political sociologists tend to emphasize the relationships between political institutions and other social institutions and society in general, rather than focusing on political institutions in their own right; political sociology tends to have a broader and also historical scope. There is a lot of interdisciplinary reading involved in this area. The main focus of the discipline has been on the political processes which take place within human societies. Political sociology deals with the relationship between state and society on the basis of mutual interaction and with power as the ultimate aim of all political processes. Political sociology deals with the study of the social basis of political competition (including social cleavages and identities), of social and political attitudes (including political culture), of processes of political engagement and competition (including elections and protest politics), of the social basis for the formation, change, and maintenance of political institutions (including democracy and welfare states).

Therefore, the course explores the social dimensions of power and political institutions. It examines social power and focuses on the political attitudes, values and behaviour of people in different societies. Students will study the politicization of social cleavages (divisions) such as class, race and ethnicity, gender, religion, and nationality; changing social values and attitudes; and political engagement and participation (such as turnout and protest politics). The course builds on some of the concepts, theories and knowledge introduced in the introduction to political science course — notably the study of representation, electorates, parties, civil society, who rules in a democracy, and public policy. The course is mainly empirical, but includes some positive (as opposed to normative) theory, i.e. theories that aim

at explaining why people behave as they do. The aim of each topic covered by the course is to assess the evidence for competing explanations of particular features of social and political life. The course largely deals with contemporary societies and recent developments, but appreciation of historical developments is often necessary to understand these. The course is also comparative, with the readings drawn from research on countries across the world, but most frequently on Western Europe and North America. The course will be divided into two main parts. The first part provides a brief overview of the main concepts and theories dealing with power, state and society and thus with the key issues in political sociology at systemic level. In the second part of class we will enter the domain of micro-political sociology and analyze the internal dynamics of the political community (citizens' socialization, attitudes and political behaviour at individual level) as well as the behaviour and functions of the main political actors (parties, political organizations and elites).

Course Objectives

The course provides an overview of the central questions and research topics in the field of political sociology. It is focused on examining the nature of political power, the cultural dimension of politics, and the dynamics of political change. Political sociology can be taught many different ways. It can be taught in terms of social movements or of power elites and we will do some of that. It can be taught in terms of theories of the state but they are so vast that a dedicated course should be devoted to their study. It can be taught in terms of organizational theory but we are more interested in power and politics than in the workings of bureaucracies. It can be taught along the lines of contemporary political organizations and we will do some of that. It can be taught at a national level of analysis, which is where the majority of this course will operate, or at the level of urban growth machines or international relations. It can be extended into post-structural and feminist analyses of the microphysics of power, the politics of the body, identity politics and discourse analysis, but we will not cover these issues – at least for the moment being. This course focuses on a few aspects of the field. The first relates to the different general approaches to relations between politics and society. The second relates to the analysis of two main components of current political systems: the political community (namely the citizens and how they get involved in society and politics) and the political actors. The third relates to the sociological and political theorization of power and political participation.

The purpose of this module is to explore the main sociological explanations of political behavior. We will examine how different explanatory models (rational choice theories, structuralist approaches, etc.) shed light on few main questions: (1) Which sociological factors shape people's political preferences and actions in democratic regimes? (2) How does political mobilization take place? (3) How political organizations (parties) and elites shape the interaction between citizens, society and power? A strong emphasis will be put on empirical studies and historical analyses. We will also look at cutting edge research on voting and voting behavior. Therefore, the aims of the module are:

1. To analyze the politicization of social cleavages, e.g. class, race and ethnicity, gender, religion and nationality.
2. To highlight (the consequences of) changing social values and attitudes.
3. To understand processes of political engagement and participation and political behaviour in general.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this course, students are expected to have acquired a familiarity with major features of contemporary societies that are relevant to politics, especially for developed democracies. More particularly, upon completion of this course, students will:

- Have a basic understanding of sociological theories of the state;
- Acquire an understanding of recent social and political science explanations of political processes and events;
- Acquire, more generally, a grasp of the competing approaches in the field;
- Be able to relate this theoretical understanding to empirical data and analyses for various states;
- Apply sociological principles to make sense of current world events and to contribute to social debates;
- Comprehend different opportunities to influence political decisions by average citizens.

Teaching and Course Format

The course is taught through lectures and seminars. Each week there will normally be one lecture and one seminar. It is essential that students attend all the lectures as they provide an indispensable guide to the field, together with presentation of the latest theories and findings.

Lectures: they take place once a week, and altogether there are 8 ex-cathedra lectures of 3 hours each. Students are however encouraged to participate and ask questions. Lectures are designed to outline the topic in general, highlight illustrative examples and discuss some salient points. They are meant to introduce to the topic at hand, to build the basis of informed seminar discussion and exam answers. Students are expected to attend both the lectures and the seminars.

Seminars: they will be held weekly in groups of up to 15-20 people. The Seminar Instructor is Mr. François Briatte (François.briatte@univ-catholille.fr). Altogether there are 8 seminars of 2h each, starting on Week 4 (first week of February). You are required to read the essential literature in preparation for the seminars and follow the news. Seminars are a crucial part of the course and attendance is compulsory. Seminars are designed to help you clarify and build on the lectures with the support of the seminar teacher. Informed discussion plays a vital role in seminars. It is therefore essential to process the relevant essential reading in preparation for each session. The seminars will offer a good opportunity for students to develop their ability to contribute to discussions and debates, hold informed conversations about the issues discussed and generally improve their presentation skills. Everybody will be involved in the discussions at the seminar. Each seminar session will be divided into three parts:

1. A brief presentation by the instructor on the topic of the seminar session.
2. A discussion by all the class on the readings and coursework to be completed for the given session.
3. A discussion by all the class on the “memos”.

The students will be required to write a short “memo” for the course. The syllabus covering the tutorials in political sociology will be provided shortly by Mr. Briatte and will offer detailed information on the memos.

Course Assessment

Assessment in this course is by means of a final written examination, seminar attendance and participation, and group memos in the framework of the seminars. Also, a mid-term 30 minutes written exam (quiz) on the content of the lectures and of the set seminar readings will be organized on week 7. The breakdown of components is as follows:

Assessment Type	Weight	Requirements
Exam	40% final grade	3 hours written exam, 4 open-ended questions
Seminar	60% final grade	Memo (counts as 2/4 of the seminar grade) Coursework on reading (counts as 1/4 of the seminar grade) Mid-term (counts as 1/4 of the seminar grade)

Since this course is taught in English, both lectures and seminars will take place in English and the entire final exam will be in English. The final examination takes place in May 2015 and covers all the material discussed during the lectures.

NOTES:

1. All sessions (lectures and seminars) start on time and you are expected to be present at the start.
2. All mobile phones must be switched off before entering lectures and seminars.
3. The use of tablets and PCs is allowed during class.
4. You are required to attend class and take notes.

Feedback

Students should note that feedback on their academic progress is available in a variety of forms. Students can approach both the course convenor and the seminar teacher in their set Office Hours, or otherwise by appointment (or by email), to talk about their academic progress, issues relevant to the course, or to discuss in more detail the feedback that they receive on set assignments and presentations in the framework of the course seminar.

II. COURSE OUTLINE & SCHEDULE

Week 1

Introduction: what is political sociology?

- A. Definitions & scope of analysis: politics and sociology
- B. An historical overview of the main theoretical approaches to political sociology

Week 2

Power, state and political systems

- A. The concepts of power, state and society
- B. Theories of State Formation
- C. Power and the classics of political sociology I: Marxist and Post-Marxist approaches to political sociology

Week 3

The political community I: behaviouralist approaches and political socialization

- A. Power and the classics of political sociology II:
 - a. Elitism and pluralism
 - b. Foucauldian and 'cultural politics' approaches
- B. The main approaches to the study of political behaviour
 - Merriam and Lasswell: the behaviouralist approach
 - The golden age of behaviouralism
 - Post-behaviouralism and Easton: a systemic approach
- C. Political Socialization

Week 4

The political community II: political culture, ideology and social capital

- A. Political culture and ideology
- B. Social capital and political trust
- C. Post-materialism

Week 5

The political community III: political participation (part 1)

- A. Political participation: forms and extent of current engagement in politics
- B. Political participation: conventional political participation
- C. A recent decline in conventional political participation? The case of declining party membership

Week 6

The political community IV: political participation (part 2)

- A. A decline in conventional political participation? The case of declining electoral turnout
- B. Explaining political participation

Week 7

The political community V: social movements

- A. Unconventional political participation: social movements and contentious politics
- B. Explaining unconventional political participation and social movements

Week 8

The political community VI: electoral behaviour and party politics

- A. Methodological approaches to the study of electoral behaviour
- B. Theoretical approaches to the study of electoral behaviour
- C. Columbia, Michigan and other models
- D. Parties and party systems: an overview

III. SUGGESTED READINGS & BIBLIOGRAPHY

Media

Since the social dimensions of power and the sociology of politics deal with more or less any current event either at local, national, European or international level, it is important to keep abreast of current developments and to follow the news on a daily basis. Read the newspapers (national ones and international ones, such as for instance the Financial Times, Le Monde Diplomatique, or Courier International).

Blogs

In the framework of the seminars section of the course students will be required to read on a regular basis a series of political sociology blogs. Further details will be provided during the first session of the seminars. Students are strongly encouraged to take a look at the following blogs in order to grasp which are the main issues at stake in the field of political sociology, both in terms of political and scholarly debate:

- Consider the Evidence: <http://lanekenworthy.net/>
- Crooked Timber: crookedtimber.org/
- Five Thirty Eight: fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com
- The mischiefs of faction: <http://mischiefsoffaction.blogspot.co.uk/>
- Graphic Sociology: <http://thesocietypages.org/graphicsociology/>
- LSE EUROPP Blog: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/>
- LSE Review of Books: blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/
- The Monkey Cage: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/>
- Fruits and votes: <http://fruitsandvotes.com/>
- Politics in Spires: politicsinspires.org
- Sociological Images: <http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/>
- Teaching the Social World: <http://thesocietypages.org/teaching/>
- Understanding Society: <http://understandingsociety.blogspot.be/>

Academic Journals

Relevant articles to the topics analysed in this course can be found in all mainstream comparative politics journals. Specialized journals on political sociology include:

- Comparative European Politics
- European Journal of Political Research
- West European Politics
- Party Politics
- Politics and Policy
- Electoral Studies
- European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology
- International Political Sociology
- The Sociological Quarterly
- American Sociological Review
- Politics and Society

Useful Websites

For practical examples on the topics covered by the course and for finding empirical data:

- ANES (American National Election Studies): <http://www.electionstudies.org/>
- CESSDA (Council of European Social Science Data Archives): <http://www.cessda.org/>
- CDSP (Centre de données socio politiques) de Sciences Po : <http://cdsp.sciences-po.fr/>
- ESS (European Social Survey) : <http://ess.nsd.uib.no/>
- Eurobarometers : http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm
- EVS (European Values Study): <http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/>
- ISSP (International Social Survey Program): <http://www.issp.org/>
- WVS (World Values Survey): <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>

Recommended texts and readings

Students can read general textbooks and other materials from the top sociology and political science peer-reviewed research journals in order to complement the lecture notes. There is a huge and ever-expanding literature on political sociology. The following textbooks should prove very useful as core overview texts (* underlines the most relevant ones):

*Nash, Kate and Scott, Alan (2012). *The Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Baer, Douglas (2002). *Political Sociology*, Oxford University Press.

Brincker, Benedikte (2013). *Introduction to Political Sociology*, Hans Reitzel.

Dobratz, Betty, Lisa Waldner and Timothy Buzzell (2011) *Power, Politics, and Society: An Introduction to Political Sociology*, Pearson Education.

Faulks, Keith (1999). *Political Sociology: A Critical Introduction*. Edinburgh University Press.

Gamson, W.A. 1968. *Power and Discontent*. Homewood: The Dorsey Press, chapters 1 & 3.

Janoski, Thomas, Robert R. Alford, Alexander M. Hicks, Mildred A. Schwartz (2005). *The Handbook of Political Sociology: States, Civil Societies, and Globalization*. Cambridge University Press.

Nash, Kate (2010). *Contemporary Political Sociology*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Orum, Anthony and Dale, John (2008). *Political Sociology: Power and Participation in the Modern World*. Oxford University Press.

In French:

Philippe Braud (2008). *Sociologie politique*. Paris: L.G.D.J.

Roger-Gérard Schwartzberg (1971). *Sociologie politique*. Paris: Montchrestien

Jean-Yves Dormagen, Daniel Mouchard (2008). *Introduction à la sociologie politique*. Bruxelles: De Boeck.

Mayer N. (2010), *Sociologie des comportements politiques*, Paris, A.Colin.

1) Other suggested readings (just a few examples):

Almond, Gabriel A. and Sydney Verba. 1965. *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Crouch, Colin (1999). *Social Change in Western Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dalton, Russell (2008). *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (5th edition). Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Easton, David (1965). *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, New York: Wiley.

Franklin M. (2004), *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies Since 1945*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Inglehart R, Norris P. (2003), *Rising Tide. Gender Equality and Cultural Change around the World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Lipset, Seymour Martin (1963). *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*. New York: Anchor.

McAdam, Douglas. 1982. *Political Process and the development of Black Insurgency 1930-1970*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Morales L., Giugni M. (dir.) (2011) *Social Capital, Political Participation and Migration in Europe: Making Multicultural Democracy Work?* Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan.

Putnam, Robert (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster.

Skocpol, Theda. (1979). *States and Social Revolutions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Skocpol T., Williamson V. (2012), *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Olson, Mancur. (1965). *The Logic of Collective Action*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Parsons, Talcott (1969). *Politics and Social Structure*. New York: Free Press.

Tarrow, Sidney. (2011). *Power in Movement : Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ware, Alan (1996) *Political Parties and Party Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Weber, Max (1946). 'Class, Status, Party', in H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills (eds.) *From Max Weber: Essays in sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press;