Political Sociology

SOCY S233
Summer 2020

Class meets Monday, Wednesday, Friday
June 29 – July 31, 2020

Instructor: Huseyin Rasit
huseyin.rasit@yale.edu

Office Hours: After class and by appointment

Course Description

In its essence, political sociology is the study of social power. Because the modern state has come to occupy our imaginations with its vast reservoir of power, social power is also commonly associated with it. But power is produced and sustained in a wider field well beyond the state. It operates through class, race, gender-based systems of domination, both structurally and in everyday interactions. It has been shaped in the modern history by the processes of capitalism and nation-state formation. Internationally, it has been skewed heavily towards the West through imperial and colonial domination. Some of these elements and processes are commonly ignored when discussing political sociology and power. We will instead problematize both the notion of power and the ways within which it operates. The aim here is to broaden our lenses beyond the naturalized understandings we possess today about state, capitalism, and international structures while acquiring the knowledge of the foundational concepts of political sociology.

We will start with an investigation of power and domination. What does power mean? How does it operate exactly? How does domination occur; how is it sustained? We will then move onto investigating the different axes of domination: class, race, and gender. We will attempt to understand how these axes structure power relations, and how they are interconnected. The second half of the course will focus on significant historical processes in the modern history. It will proceed through four main parts: a) state, state-formation, and nation; b) capitalism and market society; c) colonialism and imperialism; and d) resistance, revolutions, and social movements. As we will analyze these broad topics, we will constantly keep in mind that state-formation, capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism are not independent processes but have been reinforcing and reproducing each other in the last several centuries. We will also discuss, in Ursula Le Guin’s words, how all systems of power are human products, and thus, can be changed through human actions.

The class format will be a mixture of lectures, discussions, and debates. We will start each class with a short lecture about the social and intellectual context of the writers, their main arguments, and how they are tied to other works and general themes of the course. We will then engage in discussions about the texts and sometimes form debate groups to explore specific topics. These will help you to process, understand, and apply the readings to the questions the course explores and to your own broader intellectual interests.
Attendance Policy

Attendance is entirely mandatory. Due to the special nature of the summer session, no unexcused absence is allowed. If you need to go to Yale Health or hospital, resulting in your absence, you need to have them contact me. Other extreme reasons unrelated to your personal health should be discussed with me in advance. Please note that there is no Dean’s excuse during the summer session, and any case of repeated absence must be reported to the Dean’s Office.

Course Requirements

Attendance and participation (20%): Direct engagement with the texts and in-depth discussion are essential to get the most out of this course. Therefore, attendance and active participation are key components. Students are expected to do all the readings before the class and come prepared to discuss the material. In order to give you more time and space to immerse yourselves in the texts, I am keeping other assignments to a minimum.

Discussion questions (10%): You will post a discussion question/comment to Canvas before each class. This can be about an aspect of the text that fascinates you, something that you need clarification or further discussion in the class, or a response to comments/questions written by your fellow students. This should not be a long text and should not take much time as long as you do the readings.

Weekly reflection (10%): At the end of each week (except the last one), you will post a reflection on that week’s readings by connecting them to a contemporary event or situation around the world. After a short description of the event/situation chosen, you will analyze and interpret it through the lenses of the readings of the week. You can also choose to criticize the readings by using the empirics of the event/situation. This assignment is not meant to be much longer than one page.

1 mid-term paper (4-5 double-spaced pages, 20%): The mid-term paper is meant to be an engagement with the works in the first half of the course. I will distribute specific questions from which you will choose one to answer. You can also devise your own topic in consultation with me. The midterm will be due on Sunday, July 18.

1 final paper (10-12 double-spaced pages - 40%): The final paper will be a broader engagement with the course material. You will be given questions that cover several thinkers and topics. Some of the questions will be about theoretical engagement with the texts while others will be to apply what you have learned to real world events and situations. In the paper, you are expected to go beyond demonstrating comprehension of the material and to develop your own arguments about the texts, the ideas they present, and themes that link them together. The final paper is due on the last day of class (July 31).

Texts

The below is a representative list of books of which parts we will read. I will post most of the readings in electronic format to the course website (marked E-reserves in Course Schedule
section). I only suggest buying The Marx-Engels Reader in hard copy as we will follow the selections from there.

The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. by Robert C. Tucker – Hardcopy suggested
Max Weber, From Max Weber, ed. by Gerth and Mills
Steven Lukes, Power: A Radical View
W. E. B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk
Wendy Brown, States of Injury
V. I. Lenin, State and Revolution
Fred Block, Revisiting State Theory
Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, Bringing the State Back in
Perry Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State
Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities
Karl Polanyi, The Great Transformation
David Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism
Franz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks
Eric Hobsbawm, Social Bandits and Primitive Rebels
Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Note on Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the standards prescribed in the Undergraduate Regulations publication (http://www.yale.edu/yalecollege/publications/uregs/appendix/cheating.html) regarding cheating, plagiarism, and documentation. Appropriately using and documenting sources is an integral component of developing necessary professional and academic skills. Students are encouraged to access the resources available through the Writing Center website (http://www.yale.edu/bass/writing/sources/why.html) when preparing writing assignments. I am also always available to discuss these issues and help you throughout the coursework.

Disability Services

If you are a student with a documented disability who may require specific accommodations, please contact me (as well as the Resource Office on Disabilities, 203-432-2324), so that we can arrange the necessary accommodations.
Course Schedule (Reading load subject to change depending on our progress)

**Introduction, Power, Domination**

*Introduction, Power* (There is a relatively heavier reading load in this first day in order to make a strong entry into the course. You should be fine if you give yourself enough time to make these readings before the summer session begins.)

**Day 1: Monday, June 29**

**Day 2: Wednesday, July 1**

**Domination**

**Class, Race, Gender**

**Day 3: Friday, July 3**

**Class**

**Day 4: Monday, July 6**

**Race**
Day 5: Wednesday, July 8

**Gender**

Day 6: Friday, July 10

**State, State-Formation, and Nation**

**State**

Day 7: Monday, July 13

**State-Making**

Day 8: Wednesday, July 15

**Nation and Nationalism**
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. “Theorizing Gender and Nation,” in *Gender and Nation*.
- Chatterjee, Partha. *The Nation and Its Fragments* - Selections

Day 9: Friday, July 17

**Immigration and Citizenship**
- Choo, Hae Yeon, *Decentering Citizenship* - Selections

MIDTERM DUE: SUNDAY, JULY 19
Capitalism and Market Society

Day 10: Monday, July 20
Analysis of Capitalism

Day 11: Wednesday, July 22
Market Society and Neoliberalism

Colonialism and Imperialism

Day 12: Friday, July 24
Colonialism

Day 13: Monday, July 27
Imperialism
- Lenin, V. I. “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” in Essential Works of Lenin. Skim the first six chapters. Focus on Chps. 7-10 (pp. 236-270).
Resistance, Revolutions and Social Movements

Day 14: Wednesday, July 29
Resistance and Revolutions

Day 15: Friday, July 31
Social Movements

FINAL PAPER DUE: FRIDAY, July 31