

POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY
117 THOMAS BUILDING
SUMMER, 2006
MTWRF 12:45P - 02:00P

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Course website: <http://www.personal.psu.edu/aml286/>

Course Description and Objectives: The primary goal of this course is to provide students with the tools and knowledge necessary to examine and interpret the effect of political institutions and practices on the individual, as well as the individual's ability to shape these conditions. To this end, we will appraise existing theories and empirical evidence to enhance our discussion of several of the major debates within the incredibly broad specialization area of Political Sociology. In particular, we will closely consider the contemporary American political system and popular controversies over elections, corporate power, and the media from a sociological perspective. More importantly for most students, another aim of this course is to help students in developing their active reading, critical thinking, and analytic writing skills.

Course Materials:

Readings: Penn State's Electronic Reserves and paper handouts

Texts:

Hess, Andreas (ed.) *American Social and Political Thought*. 2003. NYU Press.

Domhoff, G. William. *Who Rules America?* 2006 (5th Ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Orum, Anthony. *Introduction to Political Sociology*. Reprinted. Available in PSU Bookstore.

Orwell, George. *1984*. 1948. Signet Classics.

If you are unable to purchase the text for financial reasons, please see me immediately.

Calendar

Week One: Introduction and Power

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| May 16 | Introduction to Political Sociology <i>Read:</i> Syllabus |
| May 17 | Neutrality in the Social Sciences <i>Read:</i> Hirschman, "Morality and the Social Sciences" (Hess, #67) Wolfe, "Whose Keeper? Social Science and Moral Obligation" (Hess, #68) |
| May 18 | What is Power? <i>Read:</i> Egan & Chorbajian, "Introduction" (Hand-out) Domhoff, "Class and Power in America" (Chapter 1) |
| May 19 | What is Power? Cont'd |

- May 20 American Exceptionalism
Read: Ceaser, “Reconstructing America...” (Hess, #1)
 Hofstadter, “Anti-Intellectualism in American Life” (Hess, #2)
 Tocqueville, “Democracy in America” (Hess, #7)
 Lipset, “American Exceptionalism...” (Hess, #8)

Week Two: Elitism vs. Pluralism

- May 22 Pluralism
Read: Dahl, “A Preface to Democratic Theory” (Hess, #37)
 Dahl, “Who Governs?” (Hess, #38)
Due: Reading Notes #1
- May 23 Elitism: The Corporation
Read: Marx, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” (Hand-out)
 Mills, “The Power Elite” (Hess, #36)
- May 24 Elitism Cont’d: The Corporation
- May 25 Elitism
Read: Domhoff, “The Corporate Community” (Chapter 2), “The Corporate Community and the Upper Class” (Chapter 3), and “How the Power Elite Dominate Government” (Chapter 7)
- May 26 **Guest Speaker:** John Iz, NBC *Nightly News*
Read:
 Domhoff, “The Role of the Mass Media” (pgs. 124-130)
 Perrucci & Wysong, “The Pacification of Everyday Life” (Hand-out)
 Herman & Chomsky, “Manufacturing Consent” (Hand-out)

Week Three: Forms of Rule

- May 29 **NO CLASS – Memorial Day**
- May 30 Forms of Rule: Democratic, Totalitarian, Authoritarian
Read: Orum, “Basic Forms of Political Rule” (Chapter 5)
 Marcuse, “The New Forms of Control” (Hand-out)
- May 31 Totalitarian States
Read: Orwell, *1984*
Due: Reading Notes #2
- June 1 Political Parties
Read: Domhoff, “Parties and Elections” (Chapter 6)
 Orum, “Political Parties and Political Partisanship” (Chapter 8)
- June 2 Political Campaigns
Due: Networks of Power Assignment

Week Four: Civic Engagement

- June 5 Civic Engagement and Civil Society
Read: Putnam, “The Strange Disappearance of Civic America”
< <http://putnam.notlong.com> >
Kerbel & Bloom, “Blog for America and Civic Involvement” (Angel)
Barber, “Strong Democracy” (Hess #40)
Due: Reading Notes #3
- June 6 Public Opinion and Voting
Read: Domhoff, “The Role of Public Opinion” (Chapter 5)
Piven & Cloward, “Does Voting Matter?” (Angel)
- June 7 Social Movements
Read: Orum, “Citizen Participation in Politics” (Chapter 9)
Piven & Cloward, “The Structuring of Protest” (Angel)
- June 8 Social Movements Cont’d
Read: Berlet & Lyons, “Right-Wing Populism in America” (Angel)
Klein, Bad Mood Rising: The New Anticorporate Activism (Angel)
- June 9 **NO CLASS**

Week Five: Policies

- June 12 The Welfare State
Read: Esping-Andersen, “The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism”
(Angel)
Due: Reading Notes #4
Draft of Major Paper
- June 13 The Media
- June 14 War
Read: Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime”
(Angel)
Kolko, “The Making of American Foreign Policy” (Angel)
Boal et al. “Blood for Oil?” (Angel)
- June 15 The Declining State: EU & UN
Read: Nairn, “Demonizing Nationality” (Angel)
- June 16 Globalization
Read: Steger, Five Central Claims of Globalism (Angel)
Petras & Veltmeyer, “‘Globalization’ or ‘Imperialism?’” (Angel)

Week Six: Revolution & Examination

- June 19 Revolution

Read: Resnick & Wolff, “Class Contradictions and the Collapse of the Soviet Union” (Angel)
Arrighi et al., “The Liberation of Class Struggle?” (Angel)
Foran, “Magical Realism: How Might the Revolutions of the Future Have Better End(ing)s?” (Angel)

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| June 20 | Star Power |
| June 21 | Conclusions |
| June 22 | Exam Review |
| June 23 | Final Exam Due: Revision of Major Paper |

Assessment and Grading:

With the small size of this summer course, we have an opportunity to move away from simple memorization of facts and vocabulary words and work on developing *your* own sociological ideas about political life. To facilitate this, only one of this course’s assessments will require memorization, *per se* (i.e., the exam). The following are the course assessments:

1. **Participation** (10%): Attendance is not mandatory, but participation is essential to having good class discussions. Therefore, you probably will not receive a very good participation grade if you don’t show up for class.
2. **Networks of Power Assignment** (10%): Due on 2 June.
3. **Reading Notes** (20%): With the exception of the first week and the last week (exam week), you will be required to turn in responses to critical reading questions. On Mondays, I will distribute a list of questions and on the following Monday, I will expect you to turn in your responses. Each of the four sets of responses will be graded on a five-point scale, totaling to twenty possible points.
4. **Major Paper** (30%): You will be required to write a paper of approximately 6-8 pg. in length. To encourage high quality thinking and writing, these papers will be assessed in two steps: your first draft (due 12 June) will count for 10% of your course grade and your revision (due 23 June) will count for 20%. More details on the papers soon.
5. **Final Exam** (30%): An exam testing material covered both in the readings and in class. The exam will incorporate multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

Summary:

10% Participation
10% Networks of Power Assignment
20% Reading Notes
30% Paper (First Draft, 10%; Revision, 20%)
30% Final Exam

100% Final Grade

Final Grades:

| | | | |
|----------|----|--------|----|
| 94%-100% | A | 90-93% | A- |
| 87-89% | B+ | 84-86 | B |
| 80-83 | B- | 77-79 | C+ |
| 74-76 | C | 70-73 | C- |
| 60-69 | D | <60 | F |

Late Policy: On any assignment, your grade will be reduced by one unit for each day late (e.g., 1 day, from A to A-; 2 days, B+; 3 days, B, and so on).

Missed Exam: Don't do it. A make-up exam will be given at my discretion and I reserve the right to change the format. As a general rule, death and hospitalization are the only excuses.

Cheating and Plagiarism: Not tolerated. You will receive a zero for the exam/paper in question with no chance of a make-up. You will also be reported to the University's Judicial Affairs office for possible further sanctions.

Civility and Respect: This course will include discussions of class, nationality, religion, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. I expect students to show respect toward all the subjects of our study. More importantly, I expect you to treat your classmates and your instructor with respect and dignity at all times – especially when you disagree with them.