Course Description
This seminar will introduce the major themes, concepts, and debates in political sociology, with an eye toward giving you a basic understanding of the political and economic issues we see in the news every day and the ability to monitor and influence decisions that have a very real impact on your life. While the field is vast, overlapping to some degree with almost every other area of sociology, political sociologists have traditionally studied the relationships between the State and other collective actors in society (e.g. interest groups, political parties, social classes, and social movements). At the broadest level, political sociologists are concerned with answering two fundamental questions:

1) What is the relationship between the state and other collective actors in different kinds of political systems?
2) How does the political-economic organization of social systems change over time?

For about half of the semester we will be focused on the first question, which is basically a question about the sources and distribution of power: Who has power in society and how do they wield it? This kind of question lends itself to synchronic analyses of power across social actors and societies—like taking a snap-shot of the power dynamics in a particular constellation of participants, at a particular point in time. Most of the readings in this section will focus on the US, in explicit or implicit comparison with other nation states. As we move through the course, we’ll begin to focus more on the second question about change. This question also deals with power but is more focused on how struggles between powerful actors change the system as a whole. It requires a more diachronic (developmental) analysis of power over time, be it within particular societies or in world-systemic transformations. While much of what we will be talking about is theoretical, our discussions in class and your writing assignments will focus on how these theories play out in real life situations, addressing contentious issues such as the political power of corporations, religion and politics, neo-liberal globalization, military intervention, the role of the State in addressing social inequality, and the tension between security and civil/human rights.

Course Requirements
1) Regular attendance and active participation in class discussions. While I do not take attendance, my assessment of your level of engagement with the class will constitute a significant part of your grade. This will include occasional assignments to bring discussion questions, newspaper articles, visit a website, etc. If you have to miss class, please make sure to get notes from a fellow student and keep up with all readings and assignments.

2) Three short (5-7 pg.) papers. Out of a list of four possible topics, each person will sign up to write three shorts papers over the course of the semester. The papers address four important debates in political sociology: 1) the nature of power, 2) the degree of corporate influence in politics, 3) the tension between liberty and equality, and 4) the degree to
which national security justifies/demands the constriction of civil and/or human rights. In these papers you will be asked to elaborate the various positions in the debate and then to take a position on the question yourself and defend it.

3) Final exam. The final will be an in-class essay exam held during the scheduled exam period. You will probably need to draw on material from earlier in the semester as well, but the question(s) will primarily address the issues related to globalization, which we will cover in weeks 13-15. You will be given a review sheet ahead of time with potential exam questions, and if there is interest, I will also hold an optional review session during the study days to help you prepare.

Grading
Your final grade for the course will be derived according to the following weighting of individual requirements:

- Participation 15%
- Short papers (20% each) 60%
- Final Exam 25%

Course Format
While I will do some lecturing to help put the readings in a larger context, most of our time will be spent in discussion, working together to understand, apply, and critique the various theories and ideas we are covering. I will do my part to facilitate discussion, help you understand the key arguments being made in the readings, and challenge you to think intelligently and critically about the issues they raise and use them to interpret current events. But the quality of the discussion will really depend on your engagement, interest, and preparedness, so please do your best to come to class having completed the readings assigned for that day and prepared to discuss them.

Academic Integrity
It is each student’s responsibility to understand and adhere to the accepted norms of intellectual honesty in their academic work. Any form of cheating, plagiarism, dishonesty, or collusion in another’s dishonesty is a fundamental violation of these norms. To see the College's policies in this area go to: [http://www.bc.edu/integrity](http://www.bc.edu/integrity). Two other sources to consult about proper citation rules and exactly what constitutes a breach of policy are: “Plagiarism Examples and Guidelines: A Quiz” at [http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity/quiz/#Example_four](http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity/quiz/#Example_four) and the American Sociological Association’s “Quick Style Guide” at [http://www.asanet.org/page.ww?section=Sociology+Depts&name=Quick+Style+Guide](http://www.asanet.org/page.ww?section=Sociology+Depts&name=Quick+Style+Guide).

Policy on missed exams and late assignments (please read carefully!): If you miss the exam or any other assignment because of an emergency (i.e. something that is both unavoidable and unforeseeable), make sure to contact me by email as soon as possible afterwards to arrange a make-up. If you know about an unavoidable conflict with any assignment ahead of time, you must make other arrangements with me in advance. Missing an exam or in-class assignment due to an unexcused absence will result in a grade of zero. Papers will be graded down by 5 percentage points for each day they are late unless other arrangements have been made in advance.
Readings
The following books will be available at the bookstore and on reserve at O’Neill Library:


The books were ordered a bit late, but they should be in the bookstore in a week or so. Until then, I will hand out copies of any readings from the books. Please note that because I will not be teaching this course next semester, selling them back to the bookstore may not be an option for all of them, so you may want to consider buying the more expensive ones on-line. To give you an idea of what the difference in cost might be, I have listed the full amazon.com price in [square brackets] for each book, and you can usually get them used for much less. If you do that, though, you should order them right away so that they arrive before we read them. *All other assigned readings will be on electronic reserve.*

**Weekly Schedule and Readings**

1. Jan. 14  What is Political Sociology?

2. Jan. 21  It’s All About Power

Readings:
- Neuman, Ch. 1 “Power, the State, Hegemony, and Struggle”


Readings:
Monday, Feb. 2: Power papers due, 5pm.

4. Feb. 4  Capitalism and the State: Intro to States & State Theory
Readings:
- Neuman, Ch. 2 “Democracy, Nationalism, and the Nation State”; Ch. 3 “Theoretical Frameworks in Political Sociology.”

5. Feb. 11  The Status Quo: Race, Class, and Gender Inequality in the US Today
Readings:
- Neuman, Ch. 4 “The Polity of the United States” pp.121-168.
Fact Sheets/Reports:
- “Women & Gender Fact Sheet” Handout.

6. Feb. 18  Capital vs. the State: Who Rules?
Readings:
- Domhoff, Ch. 1-4.
- Neuman, part of Ch. 8, “Cultural Institutions and Tolerance” pp. 335-59.

Readings:
- Domhoff, Ch. 5-7.

March 2-6: **Spring Break!**

**Monday, Mar. 9: State vs. Capital papers due, 5pm.**


Readings:


Readings:
- Neuman, part of Ch. 10 “The Politics of Business Policy” and Ch. 11 “Social Programs and Policies.”
- Friedman, Ch. XI “Social Welfare Measures” and Ch. XII “Alleviation of Poverty.”
- Giddens, *The Global Third Way Debate*. Ch. 1 “The Third Way: An Outline” pp.25-35 (Latham); Ch. 3 “The Third Ways of Social Democracy” pp.50-73 (Merkel)

**Monday, Mar. 23: Liberty vs. Equality papers due, 5pm.**

10. Mar. 25  **A Question of Democracy? The Importance of Civil Society**

Readings:


11. Apr. 1  **The War on Terror: Causes, Concepts, and Culprits**

Readings:


• Klein, *Shock Doctrine*, Introduction and Ch.1-5.

12. Apr. 8  **The War on Terror: National Security vs Human/Civil Rights**

Readings:


**For further reference:**


**Monday, Apr. 13: Security vs. Rights papers due, 5pm.**

13. Apr. 15  **Globalization: Road to Salvation or Disaster Capitalism?**

Readings:


• Klein, *Shock Doctrine*, Part 3 (Ch. 6-8) “Surviving Democracy: Bombs Made of Laws.”

14. Apr. 22  **Globalization, cont’d.**

Readings:

• Klein, *Shock Doctrine*, Ch. 9 “Slamming the Door on History”; Ch 10 “Democracy Born in Chains”; Ch 15 “A Corporatist State”; Ch. 16 “Erasing Iraq”; Ch 20 “Disaster Apartheid.”


  Film: “The Corporation”

15. Apr. 29  **The Global Justice Movement: Globalization from Below?**

Readings:


• WSF Charter of Principles.


Film: “This is What Democracy Looks Like” or “Fourth World War”

**Thursday, May 7: Final Exam at 9:00 am.**