Boston College

SC 570: Political Sociology

Fall Semester 2010
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LOCATION: McGuinn 415
    Wednesdays 12:00-2:20
OFFICE: McGuinn, Room 412
OFFICE PHONE: (617) 552-8148
OFFICE HOURS: TBD
EMAIL: gareau@bc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION
An intensive examination of foundational texts representing pluralist, elite, and class theories of
the state in industrialized capitalist democracies. The course includes lecture and seminar-style
discussion of the historical dimensions of political sociology as well as its application to current
areas of inquiry. After revealing its foundations, the course will explore how political sociology is
used in studies on governmentality, globalization and state crises, and environmental history.
Students will be expected to participate in course discussions, provide weekly write-ups, and write
a final paper.

There are several required texts in this course (available at the BC Bookstore):

1. Marx, K. The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (Marx 1998 [1863])
2. de Tocqueville, A. Democracy in America
4. Lindsay, M. Faith in the Halls of Power
7. O’Connor, J. Fiscal Crisis of the State
8. Gerth & Mills. From Max Weber

*** All other book chapters and articles are available on Course Reserves and at O’Neill Library

Written Work and Evaluations: Evaluations will be based on seminar participation and written work. Please
read the assigned materials in advance of our seminar meeting and be prepared to contribute to
discussions. Written work for the term includes two major essays, which will be due at the end of the 8th
week and during finals. Essay topics and specific due date for the final will be announced in class. Please
make sure to arrange at least one individual meeting with me during the first half of the quarter.

Seminar Presentations/Participation: Each of you will be expected to keep abreast of the reading, prepare and
make a presentation on materials from at least one of the scheduled sections. We have good deal of
material to cover so the success of the seminar depends on the active participation of everyone. While
there are any number of strategies for managing the volume of material, I encourage you to work
collectively and that everyone takes responsibility for seminar discussions. During the first meeting we shall organize ourselves and generate a schedule of presentations.

**COURSE DESIGN:**
SC 570 is a seminar-format class that combines lecture with group discussion. Students’ final grade will depend, in part, on the quality of their participation in class discussion. Obviously, adequate participation requires regular attendance. **You must be respectful of other’s viewpoints, experiences, orientation, etc. when discussing the concepts in this class.** Debate is inevitable and useful, but be respectful.

**You must come prepared with a one to two-page write-up on the day’s reading** **every class.** **General Outline:**
1. In the first paragraph, provide the general thread of argument, ideas, concepts, and/or themes that run through the readings for the week.
2. In the body of the paper, discuss in detail some of the key concepts and arguments. Discuss the readings in an integrative way; put the current readings in conversation with previous readings. **Dig deep into the readings; do not provide a superficial summary.** Rather, **engage with the reading** by giving a critical review of what you choose to focus on.
3. Then, give your view on some of these concepts. Which concepts/arguments make sense to you? Which do not? Use readings from previous weeks to support your claims.
4. This assignment will take some time to master, but it is a valuable skill, so work hard at it.
5. Readings should be studied before the class for which they are assigned. These assignments also count for your attendance, and you may not turn them in late or in absentia from the class. These write-ups will make valuable notes for your exams and potential future work on environmental issues.

Students are also required to **lead the discussion** with a 10-15 minute formal presentation at least twice.
ASSESSMENT
All grades in SC 570 are based on the percentages shown in Table 1.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND ASSOCIATED GRADES.
Students are responsible for the work listed in Table 2.

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<th>Table 1. Grade Scale</th>
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<th>Table 2. Student Work &amp; Percentage of Grade Earned</th>
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- **Week One (8 September, 2010)**
  - Introductions.

- **Week Two (15 September, 2010)**
  - Definitions of Politics and Power
    - Read: Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, Chapters 1 and 3 (Foucault 1995).

- **Week Three (22 September, 2010)**
  - Historical Materialism as Method, Marx, K. *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Marx 1998 [1863]).

- **Week Four (29 September, 2010)**
  - Weber on the Types of Legitimate Domination and Authority
    - Read: Max Weber, Part II *in Gerth and Mills* (Gerth and Mills 1946).
o **WEEK FIVE (6 OCTOBER, 2010)**
  o A Weberian-Marxist approach to Social Change:

o **WEEK SIX (13 OCTOBER, 2010)**
  o Weber today: Social Policy and US New Deal
  o Marx today: Capital and State Decline
    ▪ Read: O’Connor, *Fiscal Crisis of the State*, Introduction and Chapters 1-2, 4, 6, and 9  (O’Connor 2002).

o **WEEK SEVEN (20 OCTOBER, 2010)**
  o Tocqueville on American Institutions and Political Mores (Tocqueville 1967)
    ▪ Read: Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Volume I: Author’s introduction and chapter 3, 7-9, 11, and conclusion.

o **WEEK EIGHT (27 OCTOBER, 2010)**
  o Tocqueville on American Political Culture and Moral Sentiments

o **WEEK NINE (3 NOVEMBER, 2010)**
  o Bringing Tocqueville Up to the Present: US Civil Society and Social Capital

o **WEEK TEN (10 NOVEMBER, 2010)**
  o *Bowling Alone*, continued:
    ▪ Read: Sections 4-5.
  o Is Social Capital ‘Social’ and Is It Even Really ‘Capital?’
    ▪ Read: Ben Fine (2002).

o **WEEK ELEVEN (17 NOVEMBER, 2010)**
  o The Culture Wars: Contemporary Conservatism in America
    ▪ Read: Lindsay, M. *Faith in the Halls of Power* (Lindsay 2007).

o **WEEK TWELVE (24 NOVEMBER, 2010)**
  o Thanksgiving Break- No Class
- **Week Thirteen (1 December, 2010)**
  - The Ruling Elite in American Democracy and Recent Voting Patterns in American Politics

- **Week Fourteen (8 December, 2010)**
  - Globalization:
  - China and Shifting Hegemony in Globalization
    - Read: Arrighi, G. *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the 21st Century*, Introduction and Chapters 1, 6 and 11. Recommended also 3, 8, and 12 (Arrighi 2007).
References