Sociology 924: Political Processes – Spring 2007

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Office hours: Tue 13:30 – 15:30 p.m.

Themes and purpose of the course

Calls for a process-oriented analysis of politics have become more frequent over the past two decades. Yet, very often these programmatic calls provide no specific blueprint for the study of processes. “Political processes” remain elusive objects of investigation. The purpose of this seminar is to explore conceptual and methodological claims from a process-oriented viewpoint. Our empirical focus will be on political phenomena as ubiquitous as leadership, the organization of interests, the emergence of identity and large-scale violence.

Requirements

1. Class participation.

The class format is lectures and in-class discussions. All students are expected to attend weekly class meetings and to participate actively in discussion throughout the semester. Readings within each subsection should be read in the order listed in the syllabus. Books and the course packet are on reserve in College library (H. C White).

2. Classroom presentations and presentation memos.

During the semester, you are required to give two classroom presentations and to write one memo for each one of your presentations. These memos must summarize the main points of your presentations and should be e-mailed to all participants on the preceding Tuesday no later than 5:00 p.m. For this purpose, you will use the Class List: soc924-1-s07@lists.wisc.edu. You are requested to distribute your memos two days in advance of the session so that the other participants have the opportunity to engage your comments and to reflect on the readings further.

Each presentation will be on one or more required readings assigned for the session. The two presentations must be on different sections of the course. For instance, if your first presentation discusses a reading from Part III (Identities in Formation), your second presentation will need to be on a reading from Part IV (Violence). In the first session, I will distribute a sign-up sheet for these presentations.

The presenter should assume that everyone has carefully read the material. The main purpose of the presentation is not to offer a detailed summary of the reading(s), but to engage the reading(s) and to launch the discussion by evaluating the main issues and arguments under examination. Therefore, the “summary part” of your presentation should remain brief. Presentations should not exceed ten minutes. In your memos you will synthesize the main points of your presentation. These presentation memos should be no longer than five double-spaced pages.

3. Five memorandums (comments or questions) on the reading(s).
In addition to your two presentation memos, you will need to prepare comments about the readings for five of the sessions. These comments must be brief (no more than 200 words). You will e-mail them to the class using Class List: soc924-1-s07@lists.wisc.edu on Wednesdays no later than noon. Please number your memos.

4. Term paper.

You will be expected to write a term paper on any topic connected to the broad theme of the course (“Political Processes”). This can be a research proposal, a grant proposal or a paper addressing a clearly defined substantive problem. The length should be in the 15-20 page range.

A prospectus for this paper is due in class for Thursday, March 1. The term paper is due no later than May 10. I will not accept late papers.

To help you organize your thoughts and make the best use of the seminar format from a research viewpoint, the last two sessions will be devoted to your papers: you will briefly present an outline of your paper and the class will react on the basis of this outline. The point of this exercise is to provide you with collective feedback and suggestions.

Grades

The grade will be based on the following breakdown:

- quality of participation in class discussion = 20 points
- classroom presentations on two required readings = 20 points
- five memorandums (comments or questions) on the readings = 20 points (each memo is worth up to 4 points)
- term paper = 40 points

Reading materials

The readings in each section are grouped under two categories: required and recommended. All participants should be prepared at class time to comment and critique the required readings. Additional readings are recommended for delving deeper into a topic and preparing for preliminary examinations.

The required readings have been ordered at the Rainbow Book Store Co-operative (458 West Gilman, one block off of State Street).


In addition, I have prepared a course packet of photocopied reading material required for the course. This course packet is available at the Social Center Copy Center (6120 Social Science Building).

The readings in this course packet are on electronic reserve.

Both the required and the recommended readings are available on reserve at the College Library.
**Week 1: Introduction**

**I. Leadership as process**

**Week 2**


**Recommended:**


**Week 3**


**Recommended:**


Week 4


Recommended:


II. The Organization of interests

Week 5


Recommended:


Week 6


Recommended:


**Week 7**


**Recommended readings:**


**Week 8**


**Recommended**


**III. Identities in Formation**

**Week 9**


Recommended:

**Week 10**


Recommended:


**VI. Violence**

**Week 11**


Recommended:


**Week 12**


**Recommended:**


**Week 13**


**Recommended**


**Week 14**

Term paper presentations.

**Week 15**

Term paper presentations.