Political Sociology 624 – Spring 2012

Instructor: Ivan Ermakoff
8116a Social Science Building
e-mail: ermakoff@ssc.wisc.edu

Office hours: Wed 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. (by appointment)

Course description

The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to sociological explanations of political behavior. We will examine how different explanatory models (rational choice theories, structuralist approaches, models of contagion, explanations in terms of social influence) shed light on three main questions: (1) Which sociological factors shape people’s political preferences and actions in democratic regimes? (2) What are the determinants of political upheavals and revolutions? (3) How does political mobilization take place? A strong emphasis will be put on empirical studies and historical analyses.

Prerequisites

Students need to have had an introductory course in sociological theory (for instance Soc 475). The course will be taught at an “advanced undergraduate” level. It can also be appropriate for graduate students who have little or no background in political sociology. This course assumes that you are interested in reading sociological material and in learning about political processes and behaviors.

Course requirements and grades

Each student may earn up to 100 points based on:

1. Attendance and quality of participation in class discussion: 15 points possible.

The class format is centered on lectures and on in-class discussions. Regular attendance and participation are required. Students must have completed the reading(s) listed for each session before the class in which we discuss them. You should not expect to do well in the course without regular attendance and thoughtful participation in class discussion. You will lose these points if you do not fulfill these requirements. Please communicate with me if you become ill or emergencies arise so that I will be aware of your circumstances.

Discussion is intended to help you get a handle on the readings. Some weeks you will divide into small discussion groups for part of a class.

Attendance is worth up to 7 points and thoughtful participation up to 8 points. Students can earn up to 7 points if they do not miss classes and up to 8 points if in each session they demonstrate a thoughtful reading of the texts by answering the questions which I raise in class.

Except in the case of students with special needs, no laptop or electronic device will be allowed in class.
2. Five short 2-3 page papers: 25 points possible.

For each paper, your assignment is to take one (and only one) required reading in the syllabus and write a short essay engaging the central argument(s) of the reading.

The paper is due at the beginning of the class in which we will discuss the reading. I will not accept papers handed in at the end of class. All the papers should be numbered (from one to five).

You may not submit more than one paper on the same day. If you submit two papers on the same day, you will lose half of the points earned for the second paper, which means that you should not wait until the last weeks of the semester to hand in your short papers.

NOTE: I request that you submit at least two papers before the mid-term exam.

Important requirement

In addition to the hard copy handed in at beginning of the class in which we will be discussing the reading, you will have to submit an electronic copy of your paper to the Turnitin web site: www.turnitin.com before class.

I will not grade papers that will not have been submitted to Turnitin.

Instructions for submitting the electronic copy


(2) Click on the New Users at the top of the homepage. The new user wizard will open and walk you through the profile creation process.

(3) To create a profile, you must know the class ID number (4779779) and the enrollment password (polsoc624-12). Once you finish creating your profile, you will be logged in to Turnitin. The name Political Sociology – Spring 2012 will show up on your homepage.

(4) Click this name to open your portfolio for this class.

(5) To submit a paper, click the submit button. The paper submission page will open.

(6) The submission title should be the title of the reading.

(7) Then click the browse button and locate your paper on your computer.

(8) After having selected your paper, click submit to upload your paper.

For further information, please follow this link for the student quickstart:

http://www.turnitin.com/static/training.html#quickstarts

This quickstart will help you get started with Turnitin and will walk you through the steps for submitting your first paper.

Directions for the short papers

These papers should not exceed 3 double-spaced typewritten pages and should have three parts:

1. The first part is a summary of the argument. This part should synthesize the main arguments. Which problem is being addressed? What are the author(s)’s major theses? Which terms and concepts
are central to the argument? How does the argument get supported? This summary should be short and synthetic. Long summaries are not better summaries. I encourage you to limit your summary to one page.

I will assess the quality of your summary in light of two criteria: (1) did you get the main points? and (2) How precise and accurate is your summary? It is crucial that you identify and clearly define key concepts. It is also crucial that you summarize the main points in your own words. You should not rely on quotes. The purpose of this exercise is to assess whether you clearly understood the concepts and the arguments under review. That is why quotes are not appropriate. Furthermore, your summary needs to be precise and accurate. If you say “According to Sewell, the ideology of the Old Regime was based on several contradictions,” and do not specify these contradictions, your summary remains wanting. The same remark applies if you are making basic interpretive mistakes. A good summary is a prerequisite for a good grade since in the remaining of the paper, you will be expected to comment on the reading.

2. The second part of the paper presents the reading’s contribution: How does the author(s)’s argument expand, challenge, or refine previous readings or previous theories? To what extent does this argument contribute to the theoretical and empirical understanding of the issue under consideration?

3. The third part is a critique of the reading: This part should provide a critical evaluation of the reading. What are the strengths and the weaknesses of the argument? What is left ambiguous, underdeveloped or unaddressed in the present reading? Which type of investigation could overcome these limitations?

Both your analysis of the contribution of the reading and your critique of its strengths and weaknesses are your comments proper. I will grade your comments by taking into account their relevance and the extent to which they are precise and well-informed. If you say: “this reading is important” or “Sewell is wrong” but do not elaborate these two assertions in light of specific points or examples, your comments do not fulfill their goal.

Each paper will be worth up to 5 points: 2 points for the summary, 2 points for your comments (presentation of the reading’s contribution and critique), and 1 point for clarity.

3. A mid-term examination: 20 points possible.

This mid-term examination will be in the form of an in-class short answer and essay examination. The actual content of the midterm exam will be announced in class before the exam.

This exam will be held on Wednesday, March 7.

4. A final examination: 40 points possible

The actual content of the final exam will be announced in class before the exam.

Graduate students may choose between taking the final examination or writing a 20 page research paper. The term paper should be a research paper: I expect you to go beyond the readings studied in class. Graduate students who decide to write a research paper are requested to submit a one-page prospectus on February 29. This prospectus should indicate the topic and central theme of the paper with an accompanying bibliography. The paper is due on the last day of class (May 9). This deadline is imperative. No late paper will be accepted.

The final grade will be based on total number of points accumulated during the semester: 100-91 points is an A, 90-86 an AB, 85-81 a B, 80-76 a BC, 75-66 a C, 65-56 a D, below 55 a F.
The following books are available at the **Rainbow Book Store Co-operative** (one block from State St, on West Gilman). You are not expected to buy all of them, but may wish to add some to your personal library.

These books are on reserve at the College Library.


Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


All the other required readings are available on electronic reserve: [https://www.library.wisc.edu/course-pages/viewer/show/7127](https://www.library.wisc.edu/course-pages/viewer/show/7127)
(Jan 25): Introduction

Part I. Political behavior in democracies

2. “Human nature in politics” (Feb. 1)


3. The Civic Culture argument (Feb. 8)


Recommended readings:


4. Polarization and conflict (Feb. 15)

1.

2.

Recommended readings:


5. Social class, ideology and voting behavior (Feb. 22)

1.

2.

Recommended readings:

6. Strategic contests and democratic viability (Feb. 29)

1.


2.


Review for the Midterm Exam

Recommended readings:


Mar. 7: Midterm Exam

Part II. Political upheavals and revolutions

8. Relative deprivation (Mar. 14)

1.

For the short paper, two options are possible: (1) you can focus on one article only or (2) you can treat these two articles as one piece and comment on how they respond to one another.


2.


Recommended readings:


Directions for the short paper: (1) Read first Traugott’s chapter 1: this chapter by Traugott is intended to provide you with the basic chronological background of the 1848 revolution. This is not a substantive chapter. (2) Please focus your response paper on either Marx’s *Class Struggles in France*, or on the second reading by Traugott (chapters 2, 3 and 6) (not on Traugott’s chapter 1).

1.


2.


**Recommended readings:**


**10. State-breakdowns (Mar. 28)**

1.

Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chapters 1, pp. 47-51 in chapter 2, chapter 3.

2.


**Recommended readings:**

11. Ideology and Revolution (Apr. 11)


**Recommended readings:**


---

Part III. Processes of political mobilization (Apr. 18)

12. Mass behaviors and collective movements


**Recommended readings:**


13. Resource mobilization and political opportunities (Apr. 25)

**Direction for the short paper:** Please focus your response paper on either the Jenkins /Perrow’s piece or the Kitschelt’s piece.


2.


**Recommended readings:**


### 14. Political processes (May. 2)

1.


2.


### 15. Frames and collective interactions (May. 9)

1.


2.


**Recommended readings:**


**Recapitulation and Review for the Final Examination.**

**For graduate students: last date to turn in the term papers.** I will not accept late papers.

May 15 (Tuesday), 5:05 p.m.- 7:05 p.m. : Final Exam