Course Description & Goals

Political sociology is the study of power, politics, and the state. This semester we will examine major theoretical questions in the field, beginning with a discussion of key concepts in the sociological study of politics: power, the state, and nationalism. This discussion will serve as an anchor for the rest of the semester as we explore how political power is wielded in different contexts.

Throughout the course, we will use research on U.S. racial politics and civil rights as a core theme to understand how the state shapes society and how society shapes the state. First, we will explore this theme in historical perspective. These early readings will examine the rise and decline of the Civil Rights Movement, the Ku Klux Klan, and the public policies that have generated and exacerbated the racial inequalities that exist today. Second, we will examine race and civil rights in contemporary times with a particular focus on policing, #BlackLivesMatter, and white nationalism.

Although political sociology is a very international sub-field of sociology, this course will focus heavily (but not only) on the United States. You’ll be expected not just to do the readings but to follow newsworthy events in American politics, particularly as the campaign for the presidency heats up. That said, you are welcome to use any and all of your course assignments to explore the themes, debates, and topics that are most interesting and relevant to you, be they domestic or international. Our readings on diversity and civil rights are broadly applicable to a range of social and political issues across the globe. The more connections you make, the richer the course will be for all of us. By the end of the class you will have a sense of the major debates within the field of political sociology, a grasp on the theoretical and methodological tools scholars use in these debates, and experience applying a sociological skill set to analyze current political events.

Required Readings


Other readings are available on Sakai in the Resources tab.

**Important Dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, August 27</td>
<td>Blog Post Required</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, September 1</td>
<td>Blog Post Required</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, September 3</td>
<td>Blog Post Required</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, September 8</td>
<td>Blog Post Required</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, September 10</td>
<td>First Blog Review Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, October 8</td>
<td>Research Paper Topic, Question, and Method Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, October 27</td>
<td>Research Paper Literature Review Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, November 24</td>
<td>Research Paper Argument and Outline Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, December 3</td>
<td>Final Blog Assignment Due</td>
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<td>Last Day to Post to the Blog</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, December 11</td>
<td>Final Research Paper Due</td>
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**Course Assessment**

- 15% - Class Participation
- 40% - Blog Posts
  - 30% - Full Participation
  - 5% - First Review
  - 5% - Final Blog Assignment
- 45% - Final Research Paper
  - 5% - Topic, Question, and Methods
  - 5% - Literature Review
  - 5% - Argument and Outline
  - 30% - Final Paper

**Grading Scale** (Grades will **not** be rounded up)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-87</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-77</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>68-69</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>63-67</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
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**Course Requirements**

**Attendance Policy & Missed Classes:** I will not take attendance. Students are adults with various obligations that might require them to miss class from time to time. Also, students
are people, and people sometimes get sick and need to stay home and get better. While repeated absences will affect the course participation grade, you do not need to get in touch with me when you are absent. If, however, you have something going on that will result in many absences or missing a major assignment, please let me know sooner rather than later.

I do not share lecture notes or provide recaps of missed classes. If you want to know what was covered in class on a day you missed, you should (i) check Sakai for new resources and announcements, (ii) ask another student for notes and updates (you can use Sakai mail to contact to contact others even if you don’t have any personal email addresses), and (iii) come to my office hours if you have questions after that.

**Participation:** Your active participation is expected in class. Being an active participant means you regularly share your thoughts, observations, and questions in class. If speaking in class is sincerely difficult for you, please come see me in office hours at the beginning of the semester and we will strategize ways to boost your class participation. General guidelines for class include:

- Come to class on time
- Come to class having done the readings and brought them with you
- Bring your reading notes and your answers to the day’s guiding questions
- Be engaged (NO texting, email, Facebook, sleeping, etc)
- Ask thoughtful questions during discussions
- Volunteer answers to others’ questions
- Be respectful of others
- Question your own assumptions

**Course Readings:** You are expected to keep up with the reading as outlined there, regardless of whether or not we get a chance to discuss the material in class. To guide you in the readings, I have provided reading questions for each set of assigned works. You should come to class each day prepared to discuss the readings, your reactions, and your and your classmates’ blog posts.

**On-Going Blogging Assignments:** Active participation in our class blog is a central component of the course. The first four (4) classes of the semester, you are REQUIRED to post to the blog. In addition to these required posts you must submit ten (10) additional blog posts for a total of 14 posts. Your blog posts are due before the start of class each day (11:00am). You are also REQUIRED to comment on at least FIVE posts before the end of the term. Comments are due by 11:45am the day of class. Your comments should be about a post for the day’s readings. Additional details about the blog, what your posts should look like, and the blog assignments are posted on Sakai.

Blog: [http://cloud.lib.wfu.edu/blog/soc364f15/](http://cloud.lib.wfu.edu/blog/soc364f15/)
Login: [https://cloud.lib.wfu.edu:4430/blog/soc364f15/wp-login.php](https://cloud.lib.wfu.edu:4430/blog/soc364f15/wp-login.php)

**Final Research Paper:** Your final assignment for this class is a research paper. The paper must be 10-15 pages in length and address some aspect of civil rights, broadly defined. Additional details about this assignment are posted on Sakai.
Course Policies

**Students with Learning Disabilities:** If you have a disability that may require an accommodation for taking this course, please contact the Learning Assistance Center (758-5929) within the first two weeks of the semester. Please also notify me within the first two weeks of class if you require modified instructional procedures.

**Cell phones** should be turned OFF during class.

**Laptops:** To start the semester, laptops will not be allowed in class except when required for a specific activity. You should be prepared each day to take notes with pen and paper. When allowed, laptops should be used *only for note-taking or in-class assignments.*

**Honor Code Violations:** ANY suspected honor code violation will be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs.

**Sick Policy:** If you are sick, please do not come to class. If you must miss a required assignment, quiz, or exam, visit Student Health. There you should ask for a document that excuses you from class for a specific period of time. This document is *required* to make up missed assignments or exams.

**Late Assignments:** Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances. Late assignments will be penalized half a grade (five points) for each day they are late. Late homework assignments will not be accepted except in exceptional situations.

**Grade Disputes:** All grade disputes must be submitted *in writing* within one week of the day the assignment is returned to you. In your written response, you must explain – giving specific examples from your assignment and my comments – why you believe you received the wrong grade. I will re-grade the assignment, but your grade may go up or down with the re-grade.

**Winter Weather Plan:** In the event that the university closes due to snow or ice, read and study the required course materials on your own. The professor will contact you with explicit instructions on making up the missed class. In some cases, course materials (e.g. a narrated PowerPoint) may be made available online.

**Disaster Plan:** In the event that the university closes due to pandemic or other disaster, read and study the required course materials on your own. Reading quizzes (distributed over Sakai, if the internet is available, or by postal service if the internet is not available) must be completed to test your comprehension of the readings. Submit any other required assignments via Sakai or by postal mail to the professor. You will be mailed or emailed any relevant exams with explicit instructions. The return date will be specified in the mailings. If the internet is available, the professor will be available for office hours using Webex and Google messaging (brownhe).
Course Readings and Schedule

Section 1: Key Concepts

Tuesday, August 25 - No Class

There is no class today because I will be at a conference. You are responsible for completing the readings and blog post for the next class.

Thursday, August 27 - Power


*Blog Post Required*

Tuesday, September 1 – The State (What it is)


*Blog Post Required*

Thursday, September 3 – The State (What it does)

Scott, James C. 1999. “Introduction” (pp. 1-3) and “Cities, People, and Language” (pp. 53-83) in Seeing Like a State.

*The entire introduction is up on Sakai. You only need to read pages 1-3.*

*Blog Post Required*

Tuesday, September 8 – Nationalism & States


*Blog Post Required*
Thursday, September 10 – Nationalism & States


*Bblog Review Due by 12:30pm*

Tuesday, September 15 – Nationalism & States


Section 2: Inequality, Protest, and the State in Historical Perspective

Thursday, September 17 – How States Create Inequalities


Tuesday, September 22 – How States Create Inequalities


Thursday, September 24 – The Civil Rights Movement


*The link on Sakai will take you to the ZSR entry for the eBook. From there you can download/print and read the assigned chapters.*

Tuesday, September 29 – The KKK


Thursday, October 1 – The KKK

Tuesday, October 6 – The KKK


Thursday, October 8 – The KKK


*Research Paper Topic, Question, and Method Due by 12:30pm*

Section 3: Inequality, Protest, and the State in Contemporary Politics

Tuesday, October 13 – How States Create Inequalities


*The link on Sakai will take you to the ZSR entry for the eBook. From there you can download/print and read the assigned chapters.*

Thursday, October 15 – How States Create Inequalities


*The link on Sakai will take you to the ZSR entry for the eBook. From there you can download/print and read the assigned chapters.*

Tuesday, October 20 – Race and Contemporary Political Divisions

McAdam, Doug and Karina Kloos. 2014. Deeply Divided: Racial Politics and Social Movements in Post-War America. Chapters 1-2

Thursday, October 22 – Race and Contemporary Political Divisions

McAdam, Doug and Karina Kloos. 2014. Deeply Divided: Racial Politics and Social Movements in Post-War America. Chapters 3-4

Tuesday, October 27 – Race and Contemporary Political Divisions

McAdam, Doug and Karina Kloos. 2014. Deeply Divided: Racial Politics and Social Movements in Post-War America. Chapters 5-6

*Research Paper Literature Review Due at 12:30pm*
Thursday, October 29 - Race and Contemporary Political Divisions

McAdam, Doug and Karina Kloos. 2014. *Deeply Divided: Racial Politics and Social Movements in Post-War America.* Chapters 7-8

Tuesday, November 3 – Contemporary Voting Rights


http://www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org/content/convincing-evidence-states-aim-suppress-minority-voting

Green, Jordan. 2015. “Testimony about Law’s Impact on Young and Black Voters Heard.”  

Thursday, November 5 – Race as Political Strategy

Watch or read the transcripts:


Tuesday, November 10 - Racial Extremism


*The link on Sakai for the Blee book will take you to the ZSR entry for the eBook. From there you can download/print and read the assigned chapters.*
Thursday, November 12 – Doug McAdam Visit

Doug McAdam will be joining us in class today. There are no readings but please review your notes from his book. Come hungry. We’ll be having lunch while we talk with Dr. McAdam about his work.

**Thursday, November 12:**
**Doug McAdam to Speak at WFU**
**Extra Credit Opportunity**

Tuesday, November 17 – Today’s Activism and Protest


**Wednesday, November 18:**
**Ta-Nehisi Coates to Speak at WFU**
**Extra Credit Opportunity**

Thursday, November 19 – No Readings

We will meet today but there will be no readings. Class activity will be announced in advance and will depend on the timing of Ta-Nehisi Coates’ events on campus today.

Tuesday, November 24 – #BlackLivesMatter


*Research Paper Argument and Outline Due by 5pm*
Thursday, November 26 – No Class

Enjoy your Thanksgiving break!

Tuesday, December 1 – The State and Surveillance


Thursday, December 3 – Race and the U.S. State


*Blog Final Assignment Due In Class*

*Final Research Paper Due – December 11 at 5pm*