

SEMINAR IN POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Sociology 776/EPS 749

Fall 2007

Tuesdays 4-6:30p.m. CBC B225B

Professor Barbara Brents

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Hours: M 1-2:30, T 2-3:45, and Th by appt

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Course Description

Politics goes far beyond the endless battles between Republicans and Democrats. Political power in contemporary society entails a much more complex interplay of relations completely outside what we traditionally think of as political arenas. This course will explore current perspectives on the social contexts of the contemporary state and political power including machinations of class, race, gender and sexual power.

Course Goals

- To develop an understanding of the classical and current theoretical debates within political sociology applicable to understanding the relation between politics, policy and society. These debates include both classical liberalism, Marxist and Weberian foundations of contemporary debates, and the current class, institutionalist, and culturalist debates.
- To situate contemporary U.S. politics and policy in an historical frame, specifically with reference to the class, racial, gender, and sexual politics.
- To examine some of the most important sites of political contestation in the U.S. today, including the institutions of power/government as well as the boardrooms and the bedrooms.
- To gain an understanding of the power of both social and economic elites as well as the masses and social movements in influencing social and economic policies.
- To narrow the distance between theories of politics and the everyday functioning of it by situating the theories, theorists and researchers we study, as well as our own role as researchers and students, within these institutions and contestations of power.

Readings

McAdam, Doug. *Freedom Summer*. NY: Oxford University Press. 1988. ISBN-10: 0195064720

ISBN-13: 978-0195064728

Nash, Kate. *Contemporary Political Sociology*. MA: Blackwell 2000 ISBN-10: 0631206612

ISBN-13: 978-0631206613

Additional articles are on electronic reserve at the library at <http://ereserves.library.unlv.edu> . (You must have your library barcode to access the system) or available through <http://webcampus.unlv.edu/webct> at our class website.

Requirements

Class participation and presentations	20%
Class project	80%

Class participation

1. **Discussion leader:** You each will be assigned readings for which you will initiate class discussion, highlight some main points, raise critical issues, etc. The point is not to make a lengthy presentation, but spark discussion and facilitate understanding of the issues raised in the readings. Handouts are helpful. You should also address relevant "questions of the day" (see below). Expect to do two or three of these throughout the semester.
2. **Question of the day:** In one page or less, write at least one question for class discussion each week that arises from the readings. This question should preferably integrate or include the readings for the entire week. Add a few notes explaining the context of your question. You may want to use the class goals at the beginning of this syllabus to guide your questions. Post your question to the discussion board in WebCampus by noon the day of class. Make sure you read questions from other students before class. Be prepared to raise your questions and stimulate discussion.
3. **Attend class, read all class assignments and participate in all class discussions.** (If you are unable to attend class, please call in advance. Even with a phone call, more than two absences will count against your grade.)
4. **Project presentation:** Do a class presentation of your final research project.

Class project:

The majority of your grade will be based on a research project of your choosing. I encourage you to think about your own learning objectives and creative ways to accomplish these. You may choose to do a research paper that both reflects class content and contributes to your own graduate research. Or you may choose to do a series of smaller projects. If you are interested in getting a sampling of topics and research skills, you may want to do a mini power structure study, and/or a mini analysis of a social movement. If you want to learn the literature in a particular area, you may do an extensive literature review. If you are interested in social change, you may want to do a practical project for a local political group (which will include a written report to me). You could even do an art or film project. I encourage collaborative projects. You should first decide what your own goals are for the class, and then come up with some ideas on the best way to meet these. I have plenty of ideas as well.

I have two requirements for your project. First, whatever you do should be of graduate level quality and substance. Second, you must turn in at least one draft of your project in early November. This draft can be a zero draft (very rough early draft), but must have sufficient content and literature review so I can give you meaningful feedback. You may also turn in drafts or phases of your project for feedback more often, depending on your project. Once we set up the schedule, you must stick to it.

Contract: The second week of the semester you must turn into me a "contract" for your project. If you would like to discuss your thoughts with me ahead of time, feel free to make an appointment with me, and bring to this meeting a draft contract. The contract should contain the following components:

- 1) what you are going to do in as much detail as you can say right now, including topic, sources, methods and as much focus as you can give it
- 2) when and how you will turn it in, including the mid semester extended outline due in October and zero draft due in November.

The contract will outline 80% of your course grade. You will lose 5% of your total project grade for every day your contract, mid semester, or November draft is late. If you need to amend your contract later in the semester, do see me!

Plagiarism and Academic dishonesty

Cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty (e.g. plagiarism) on any quiz, journal entry, or assignment is a serious offense. I will fully enforce the UNLV policy concerning academic misconduct and cheating.

Plagiarism is copying word for word from an author without quoting that author or paraphrasing an author without citing the author. If you are suspected of cheating in this course, I will file a formal complaint against you. Aside from getting an F in the course, other penalties for cheating include expulsion from UNLV and a designation on your permanent college transcript that you were found guilty of academic misconduct. Be aware that I routinely use electronic plagiarism detection tools, so unacknowledged "borrowing" of text from the internet or other electronic resources will not go undiscovered or unpunished.

Additional Notes:

Disability Resource Center

The UNLV Disability Resource Center (DRC) houses the resources for students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, you will need to contact the DRC for the coordination of services. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 137. Their numbers are 702-895-0866/Voice; 702-895-0652/TDD; and 702-895-0651/Fax. For additional information please visit <http://www.unlv.edu/studentlife/drc>.

Writing help

For study guides and strategies for surviving college classes, see the following web page:

<http://www.studygs.net/>. If need help writing, you have two good sources. UNLV has an excellent Writing Center at http://www.unlv.edu/Colleges/Liberal_Arts/English/Writing_Center/. The University of Wisconsin-Madison Writing Center Writers' Handbook. (<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook.html>) has an excellent handbook for academic writing. For help writing book reviews or even reading and synthesizing information from classes generally, go to the guides for writing reviews and use their suggestions for "Reading for Review" (<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/CriReadingBook.html>) to help you read, and "Critical Reviews" (<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/CriNonfiction.html>) for specific suggestions on how to write reviews.

Research assistance

The University Libraries offer free, brief clinics and workshops to help you increase your research skills and save time searching. Bring your topic to a Research Clinic for in-depth, one-on-one consultation with a research expert, or attend one of our more structured workshops on topics such as finding books and articles, successful search strategies, or Internet research. Check out the schedule at <http://www.library.unlv.edu/inst/events.html> or call 895-2123 for more information.

Copyright and fair use policies

The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. YOU ARE INDIVIDUALLY AND SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR VIOLATIONS OF COPYRIGHT AND FAIR USE LAWS. THE UNIVERSITY WILL NEITHER PROTECT NOR DEFEND YOU NOR ASSUME ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR EMPLOYEE OR STUDENT VIOLATIONS OF FAIR USE LAWS. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability as well as disciplinary action under University policies. To familiarize yourself with copyright and fair use policies, the University encourages you to visit the copyright web page at: <http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright>.

Religious holidays

As a general rule, a student missing a class assignment because of observance of a religious holiday shall have the opportunity to make up missed work. Students must notify the instructor of anticipated absences by the last day of late registration to be assured of this opportunity.

Tentative List of Topics

Aug 28

Introduction

Sept 4

Basic concepts

McAdam, Doug. Freedom Summer. Oxford University Press, 1988.

Prologue "In Search of Volunteers" pp 1-10

Ch 1 "America on the Eve of Freedom Summer," pp. 11-34.

Flacks, Richard, Ch 1 "History and the Everyday," pp. 1-24 Making History. NY: Columbia, 1988.

Foundations – Liberalism

Smith, Adam, The Wealth of Nations, NY: Penguin 1974 (1776) Book 1, Chs 1-3 pp. 109-126.

Sept 11 **Foundations – Marxism**

Contracts are due!

Nash, Kate. Contemporary Political Sociology. MA: Blackwell 2000. Ch. 1, p. 1-9

Marx, Karl, "18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," pp. 276-284 in Jon Elster, Karl Marx: A Reader, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1986

Marx, Karl, "Communist Manifesto," pp. 259-266 in Jon Elster, Karl Marx: A Reader, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Option 1:

Domhoff, G. William, "Introduction," "Class and Power in America," and "The Big Picture," from Who Rules America? McGraw Hill: Boston, 2002. .

Explore <http://www.uoregon.edu/~vburris/whorules/index.htm> Val Burris' web site on Power Structure Research

Option 2:

Harvey, David, "Ch 9, From Fordism to Flexible Accumulation," pp. 141-172 and "Ch 20 "Economics with Mirrors," pp. 329-335 in The Conditions of Postmodernity. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990.

Sept 18

Foundations– Weber

Nash, Kate. Contemporary Political Sociology. MA: Blackwell 2000. Ch. 1, pp 10-19

Weber, Max, "What is a State." Excerpts from "Politics as Vocation," in Bernard E. Brown, Roy C. Macridis, (editors), Comparative politics : notes and readings. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1996, pp. 77-127.

Weber, Max, "Class, Status, Party," Excerpts from "Politics as Vocation" in Bernard E. Brown, Roy C. Macridis, (editors), Comparative politics : notes and readings. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1996, pp. 180-195.

Skocpol, Theda, "Bringing the State Back In," pp. 3-37 in Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, eds. Bringing the State Back In. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985.

Sept 25

Building the Liberal State Contemporary Theories

Manza, Jeff. "Political Sociological Models of the U.S. New Deal." Annual Review of Sociology 26:297-322

Jenkins, J. Craig and Craig Eckert, "The Right Turn in Economic Policy: Business Elites and the New Conservative Economics." Sociological Forum 15(2):307-338, 2000.

McCright, Aaron M. and Riley E. Dunlap. "Defeating Kyoto: The Conservative Movement's Impact on U.S. Climate Change Policy." Social Problems Aug 2003, 50 (3): 348-373.

Pedriana, Nicholas and Robin Stryker, "The Strength of a Weak Agency: Enforcement of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Expansion of State Capacity." American Journal of Sociology, 110(3):709-760, November 2004.

Prasad, Monica. The Politics of Free Markets, University of Chicago Press 2006. (Excerpts)

Oct 2

Fracturing the liberal state Contemporary Theories–Identity and Culture

- Nash, Kate. Contemporary Political Sociology. MA: Blackwell 2000. Ch. 1, pp 19-46.
- Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "Racial Formation" pp. 371-382 in in Seidman, Steven and Jeffrey Alexander, The New Social Theory Reader, NY: Routledge 2001.
- Luker, Kristin. 1998. "Sex, social hygiene, and the state: the double edged sword of reform." Theory and Society 27: 601-634.
- Beisel, Nicola and Tamara Kay, "Abortion, Race and Gender in 19th Century America," American Sociological Review 69(August):498-518, 2004.
- Brooks, Clem and Jeff Manza, "A Great Divide? Religion and Political Change in U.S. National Elections, 1972-2000. Sociological Quarterly 45(3):421-450, Summer 2004.

Oct 9

Social Movements

McAdam, Doug. Freedom Summer. NY: Oxford University Press. 1988.

Oct 16

Social Movements—From Resource Mobilization to Politics, Identity and Culture

Project mid semester extended outline/draft due

Nash, Kate. Contemporary Political Sociology. MA: Blackwell 2000, Ch. 3, pp. 100-155.

Jenkins, J. Craig, "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements," pp. 289-305 in Skocpol & Campbell, American Society and Politics, NY: McGraw 1995.

Kitschelt, Herbert P., "Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies," pp. 320-338 in Skocpol and Campbell, American Society and Politics, NY: McGraw Hill 1995.

Taylor, Verta and Nancy E. Whittier, "Collective Identity in Social Movement Communities: Lesbian Feminist Mobilization," pp. 344-357 in Skocpol and Campbell, American Society and Politics, NY: McGraw Hill 1995.

Smith, Jackie, "Globalizing Resistance: The Battle of Seattle and the Future of Social Movements," Mobilization, 2001, 6, 1, spring, 1-19.

Soule, Sarah, "Going to the Chapel? Same Sex Marriage Bans in the United States, 1973-2000." Social Problems, Nov 2004 51(4):453-477.

Oct 23

Social Capital, Civic Culture and Urban Society

Portes, Alejandro. "Social Capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology," Annual Review of Sociology 1998: 24: 1-24

Adam, Frane and Borut Roncevic "Social capital: recent debates and research trends" Social Science information, 42 (2): 155-183, 2003. - extension of Portes 1998 overview - this one called

Borer, Michael Ian, "The Location of Culture: The Urban Culturalist Perspective," City and Community, 5(2):173-197 June 2006.

Zukin, Sharon, et. al, "From Coney Island to Las Vegas in the Urban Imaginary:" Urban Affairs Review 33(5): 627

Choose one of the following:

Svendsen, Gunnar L. H., "Studying social capital in situ: A qualitative approach" Theory and Society 35:39-70, 2006.

Paxton, Pamela, "Social Capital and Democracy: An Interdependent Relationship" American Sociological Review, 67:254-277 April 2002.

- Oct 30 **No class to attend Urban Sustainability Conference**
 Wednesday, October 24, 2007, UNLV Student Union 8:30-5:30
 Preregister at <http://urban21.unlv.edu> (schedule is also on that site)
- Nov 6 **Globalization**
 Nash, Kate. Contemporary Political Sociology. MA: Blackwell 2000, Ch. 2 pp. 47-99.
 Lechner, Frank J. and John Boli, "Introduction, Part V Political Globalization I: The Demise of the Nation State," p. 195-198 and "Introduction, Part VI Political Globalization II: Reorganizing the World," P. 243-254 in Lechner, Frank J. and John Boli, The Globalization Reader. MA: Blackwell, 2000.
 Giddens, Anthony, "Dimensions of Globalization" pp. 245-252 in Seidman, Steven and Jeffrey Alexander, The New Social Theory Reader, NY: Routledge 2001.
 Ohmae, Kenichi, "The End of the Nation State," pp. 207-211 in Lechner, Frank J. and John Boli, The Globalization Reader. MA: Blackwell, 2000.
 Diamond, Larry. "The Globalization of Democracy," pp. 246-254 in Lechner, Frank J. and John Boli, The Globalization Reader. MA: Blackwell, 2000.
 Sassen, Saskia, "Globalization or denationalization?" *Review of International Political Economy* 10(1): 1-22, February 2003.
 Wonders, Nancy A. and Raymond Michalowski, "Bodies, Borders and Sex Tourism in a Globalized World: A Tale of Two Cities—Amsterdam and Havana" *Social Problems* 48(4):545-571, 2001.
- Nov. 13 **Political violence and terrorism**
Rough or zero draft of your project due!
 Tilly, Charles. "Terror, Terrorism, Terrorists," Sociological Theory 22(1): March 2004.
 Oberschall, Anthony, "Explaining Terrorism: The Contribution of Collective Action Theory," Sociological Theory 22(1): March 2004.
 Goodwin, Jeff, "A Theory of Categorical Terrorism" *Social Forces* 84(4), 2006
 Lizardo, Omar, "Anti-U.S. Transnational Terrorism," *Journal of World Systems Research* XII (I) July 2006: 149-186.
- Nov. 27 **Presentations**
 Dec. 4 **Presentations**
 Dec 11 **All Final Projects Due!**