

Political Sociology

Thursdays 2.30-5.30, Kingston 304

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Course description

This course examines key political issues in contemporary societies through engaging with a mix of classical and contemporary social and political thought. *Note that this is not a standard course in Political Sociology.* Rather than giving you an overview of authoritative texts about political institutions, organizations, and processes, I organized the course around some salient features of the current political moment related to state sovereignty, capitalism, and violence. The course is organized in two parts: The first part examines ideas and concepts around 'the state' and 'politics;' and the second part is dedicated 'the economy' and capitalism, and how these relate to contemporary political issues. Some of the questions we will discuss revolve around: The resurgence of concerns about state sovereignty vis à vis a globalized and networked economy; the relationships between economic crises and the resurgence of nationalisms; the renewed visibility of race and racisms in global politics; shifting understandings of citizenship; the legacies of violence on which modern political and economic orders have been built and the ways in which this matters for (understanding) the present; and finally, possibilities of imagining different economic and political organization.

Learning objectives

Through this course, you should gain core research skills related to understanding and using theory:

- *Knowledge and understanding:* By the end of this course, you should have an appreciation of how salient features of contemporary political issues are tied to larger

processes of social transformation which sometimes stretch deep into the past; as well as an understanding of major lines of social thought on these issues and how they have developed over time. (Wherever possible, I combine contemporary pieces with 'classical' texts to help you construct a mental map of intellectual traditions and lines of thought.)

- *Conceptual skills*: One of the main things I hope this course will accomplish is for you to learn how to think about your own research in relation to some of the biggest questions social and political theorists have asked about politics. Your own research, no matter how 'small' the question is, is always part of a bigger picture – understanding how so, and training you to bridge the scales between the puzzle piece you're working on and that bigger picture is what this course is centrally about.
- *Technical skills*: Finally, I designed the assignments to train you in some basic technical skills related to understanding, evaluating, using, and modifying theory.

Expectations & assignments

I expect you to read the texts listed under "required readings" and to complete the assignments. The reading workload amounts to about one book per week. In addition, there are 4 grade components:

- *Weekly research journal*: The purpose of this assignment is to teach you technical research skills related to understanding, evaluating, using, and modifying theory. Each week, you will document your engagement with the texts you read in this course in a structured format. You will complete one journal entry for each text I assign. Each journal entry is very brief — max. 1 page per text (single-spaced), bullet points for the first section are ok. I will grade the assignment on a pass/fail basis. You will structure it according to the following template which has two sections:
 1. *Summary section*: In this section, you note down the architecture of the author's argument. You have to structure it according to the following points (which social scientists usually use to evaluate arguments):
 - What's the author's main claim? How does the author arrive at their claim?
 - What new concepts and terms does the author develop? Name and define them, and state how they relate to the author's main claim.
 - What kind of evidence does the author present to convince us of their claim?
 - The last point is dedicated to everything else you've thought of while reading the text: What kinds of questions did you have while reading the text? What didn't you understand? How did the text make you think differently about the topic? What are your critiques? Etc.
 2. *Research section*: Here is where you briefly relate the text to your research topic. Here are some examples of questions you might want to think about: How

does your research relate to the questions the author poses? Did the author develop concepts which could be useful for your own research, and if so, how would they help understanding some aspect of your research topic?

- *“In the news:”* You will prepare materials (e.g. news clippings) on a contemporary issue to illustrate one of the readings we discuss that week, and prepare 5 questions for our in-class discussion. The idea here is that it’s always easier to think through examples, so we’ll use the news event to start talking about the readings of the week.
- *Participation:* This is a graduate course and how much you will get out of it depends a lot on how much you put into it. I will grade how well you are prepared and whether you make a genuine effort to contribute to the collective learning process in our in-class discussions.
- *Final essay* (20 pages, double-spaced): For your final essay, you will develop one aspect of your own research in relation to one or more of the theoretical perspectives you’ve learned about in this course. Come see me during office hours and I’ll give you feedback on your ideas.

Grading, submission & deadlines

All written assignments have to be submitted through onQ. Grading and due dates are as follows:

Grade component	Due dates	Weight
Research journal	weeks 2–12	20%
Presentation & discussion	weeks 3–12	20%
Participation	weeks 2–12	20%
Final essay	week 14	40%

For your final grade, your numerical course average then will be converted to a letter grade according to the Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale.

Readings and resources

I will distribute a course pack in the first session of this course. Note that this material is copyrighted and is for the sole use of students registered in the course. This material shall not be distributed or disseminated to anyone other than students registered in the course. Failure to abide by these conditions is a breach of copyright, and may also constitute a breach of academic integrity under the University Senate’s Academic Integrity Policy Statement.

Academic Integrity

Queen's students, faculty, administrators and staff all have responsibilities for supporting and upholding the fundamental values of academic integrity. Academic integrity is constituted by the five core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (see www.academicintegrity.org) and by the quality of courage. These values and qualities are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the "freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas" essential to the intellectual life of the University.

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with and adhering to the regulations concerning academic integrity. General information on academic integrity is available at Integrity@Queen's University, along with Faculty or School specific information. Departures from academic integrity include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification. Actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning, to loss of grades on an assignment, to failure of a course, to requirement to withdraw from the university.

Accommodation for disabilities

Queen's University is committed to achieving full accessibility for people with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact the Queen's Student Accessibility Services (QSAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the QSAS website.

Course schedule & readings

Week	Date	Topics
1	Jan 9	Introduction
*	***	Part I: State, Sovereignty, Citizenship
2	Jan 16	State, authority, sovereignty
3	Jan 23	Territory & sovereignty
4	Jan 30	Race, gender & sovereignty
5	Feb 6	Making people & things legible
6	Feb 13	State, culture, citizenship
7	Feb 20	Reading week
*	***	Part II: Capitalism, Inequality, Nationalism
8	Feb 27	Primitive accumulation & violence
9	Mar 5	Legacies of violence
10	Mar 12	Economies of worth
11	Mar 19	Economic crises & nationalism
12	Mar 26	White supremacy & white nationalism
13	Apr 2	Surviving capitalism

Jan 9: Introduction

No readings.

Jan 16: State, authority, sovereignty

- Weber, Max (2009). "Politics as a vocation". In: From Max Weber. Ed. by Gerth, H. H., and C. Wright Mills. New York: Routledge, pp. 77–128.
- Mitchell, Timothy (1991). "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics". In: The American Political Science Review 85.1, p. 77.

Jan 23: Territory & sovereignty

- Simpson, Audra (2014). *Mohawk interruptus: Political life across the borders of settler states*. Durham: Duke University Press, Chs. 1, 2, 5, 6, and "Conclusion."
- Bonilla, Yarimar (2017). "Unsettling Sovereignty". In: *Cultural Anthropology* 32.3, pp. 330–339.
- Elden, Stuart (2013). *The Birth of Territory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, "Coda: Territory as political technology."

Jan 30: Race, gender & sovereignty

- Foucault, Michel (2003). *Society must be defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*. New York: Picador, "Lecture eleven: 17 March 1976"
- Mbembe, Achille (2003). "Necropolitics". In: *Public Culture* 15.1, pp. 11–40.
- de Genova, Nicholas (2018). "The "migrant crisis" as racial crisis: Do Black Lives Matter in Europe?" In: *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41.10, pp. 1765–1782.
- Simpson, Audra (2016). "The State is a Man: Theresa Spence, Loretta Saunders and the Gender of Settler Sovereignty". In: *Theory & Event* 19.4.

Feb 6: Making people & things legible

- Scott, James C. (1998). *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press, "Introduction," "Part 1. State projects of legibility and simplification."
- Browne, Simone (2015). *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*. Duke University Press, "Everybody's got a little light under the sun" & "Branding Blackness."
- Bowker, Geoffrey C. and Susan Leigh Star (2000). *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, "The Case of Race Classification and Reclassification under Apartheid."

Feb 13: State, culture, citizenship

- Kapoor, Nisha (2018). *Deport, deprive, extradite: 21st century state extremism*. London and New York: Verso, excerpts tbd.
- Canaday, Margot (2009). *The straight state: Sexuality and citizenship in twentieth-century America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, "Introduction," "A new species of undesirable immigrant."

Feb 20: Reading week

No class.

Feb 27: Primitive accumulation & violence

- Marx, Karl ([1867] 1990). *Capital: A critique of political economy*: Vol. 1. London and New York: Penguin, "Part 8: Primitive accumulation."
- Beckert, Sven (2014). *Empire of cotton: A global history*. First edition. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, "Capturing Labor, Conquering Land," "Slavery Takes Command," "A War Reverberates Around the World."
- Mitchell, Timothy (2002). *Rule of experts: Egypt, techno-politics, modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, "Introduction," "Principles true in every country."

Mar 5: Legacies of violence

- Wang, Jackie (2018). *Carceral capitalism*. Cambridge: MIT Press, "Introduction" and Chs. 1–4.
- Harvey, David (2004). "The 'New' Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession". In: *Socialist Register* 40, pp. 63–87.
- We'll watch and discuss Ava DuVernay's documentary "13th" in class.

Mar 12: Economies of worth

- Weber, Max ([1920] 2005). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Routledge, "The spirit of Capitalism" and "Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism."
- Boltanski, Luc and Ève Chiapello (2007). *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Verso, "General Introduction," "The formation of the projective city," "Sociology contra fatalism."
- Turner, Fred (2005). "Where the Counterculture Met the New Economy: The WELL and the Origins of Virtual Community". In: *Technology and Culture* 46.3, pp. 485–512.

Mar 19: Economic crises & nationalism

- Farris, Sara R. (2017). *In the name of women's rights: The rise of femonationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, "Introduction," "Femonationalism, Neoliberalism, and Social Reproduction," and "The Political Economy of Femonationalism."
- Polanyi, Karl ([1944] 2001). *The great transformation: The political and economic origins of our time*. 2nd ed. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, "Introduction" by Fred Block.
- Anderson, Benedict (1996). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. 7th ed. London: Verso, "Introduction."

Mar 26: White supremacy & white nationalism

- Hochschild, Arlie Russell (2016). *Strangers in their own land: Anger and mourning on the American right*. New York: The New Press, excerpts tbd.
- Kimmel, Michael S. (2013). *Angry white men: American masculinity at the end of an era*. New York: Nation Books, "Introduction."
- Hughey, Matthew W. (2012). *White bound: Nationalists, antiracists, and the shared meanings of race*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, excerpts tbd.

Apr 2: Surviving capitalism

- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt (2015). *The mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2006). *The end of capitalism (as we knew it): A feminist critique of political economy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, "Introduction to the New Edition: Ten Years On."

An eclectic selection of relevant books which couldn't make it into this syllabus

- Adas, Michael (1989). *Machines as the measure of men: Science, technology, and ideologies of Western dominance*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Arendt, Hannah (1963). *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Viking Press.
- Barry, Andrew (2001). *Political machines: Governing a technological society*. London: Athlone.
- Beckert, Sven and Seth Rockman, eds. (2016). *Slavery's capitalism: A new history of American economic development*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bennett, Jane (2010). *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Bratton, Benjamin H. (2015). *The stack: On software and sovereignty*. Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press
- Carroll, Patrick (2006). *Science, culture, and modern state formation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Comaroff, Jean and John L. Comaroff (2012). *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America is evolving toward Africa*. Boulder, Colo. and London: Paradigm Publishers.
- Eubanks, Virginia (2017). *Automating inequality: How high-tech tools profile, police, and punish the poor*. First Edition. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Evans, Peter B., Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds. (1985). *Bringing the state back in*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Eliasoph, Nina. (1998). *Avoiding politics: How Americans produce apathy in everyday life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grewal, Inderpal (2017). *Saving the security state: Exceptional citizens in twenty-first-century America*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Harvey, David (2003). *The new imperialism*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, David (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hu, Tung-Hui (2015). *A prehistory of the cloud*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Joyce, Patrick (2003). *The rule of freedom: Liberalism and the modern city*. London: Verso.
- Joyce, Patrick (2013). *The state of freedom: A social history of the British state since 1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kimmel, Michael S. (2013). *Angry white men: American masculinity at the end of an era*. New York: Nation Books.
- Mbembe, Achille (2017). *Critique of Black reason*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Mbembe, Achille (2001). *On the postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Medina, Eden (2011). *Cybernetic revolutionaries: Technology and politics in Allende's Chile*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Mezzadra, Sandro and Brett Neilson (2013). *Border as method, or, the multiplication of labor*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Latour, Bruno and Peter Weibel, eds. (2005). *Making things public: Atmospheres of democracy*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Mann, Michael (1986-2013). *The sources of social power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MacKenzie, Donald A. (2006). *An engine, not a camera: How financial models shape markets*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT.
- Mitchell, Timothy (2011). *Carbon democracy: Political power in the age of oil*. London: Verso.
- Mukerji, Chandra (2009). *Impossible engineering: Technology and territoriality on the Canal du Midi*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Mukerji, Chandra (1997). *Territorial ambitions and the gardens of Versailles*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Puar, Jasbir K. (2017). *Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in queer times*. Tenth anniversary edition. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Piketty, Thomas (2014). *Capital in the twenty-first century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Ong, Aihwa (2006). *Neoliberalism as exception: Mutations in citizenship and sovereignty*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Ong, Aihwa (1999). *Flexible citizenship: The cultural logics of transnationality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Sanyal, Kalyan (2007). *Rethinking Capitalist Development*. New Delhi: Routledge
- Sassen, Saskia (2006). *Territory, authority, rights: From medieval to global assemblages*. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Srnicek, Nick (2017). *Platform capitalism*. Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity.
- Steinmetz, George, ed. (1999). *State/culture: State-formation after the cultural turn*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Zuboff, Shoshana (2018). *The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for the future at the new frontier of power*. London: Profile Books.