Syllabus

Soc. 131: Political Sociology

Fall Quarter 2018
Instructor: Prof. Howard Winant
Teaching Assistant: Kendall Ota

Class Times and Locations:
Lecture – Tuesday/Thursday, 1230-145PM, Phelps1260
Section Thurs, 700PM, Phelps 1160

Winant's Office Hours: SSMS 3308, T 1000AM-1200PM
Ota Office Hours: TBA
E-mails: hwinant@ucsb.edu; Ota: kota00@umail.ucsb.edu>
URL: http://www.soc.ucsb.edu/faculty/winant

INTRODUCTION

It is both an opportunity and a challenge to study political sociology in the present moment. In the year 2018 the United States, and the world at large, are experiencing the largest political and social crisis to occur in many decades. Our democracy, our cohesion as a society, and our national future are in doubt, more threatened than they have been in living memory. We are seeing the emergence of a reactionary populism (sometimes called “authoritarian populism”), that reproduces aspects of the most volatile, violent, and dangerous movements of our past. The Trump “base” and the “alt-right” unmistakably echo the “redemption” movements of the 1870s and later (linked to the early KKK), the
mass anti-immigrant movements of the same period that brought about the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), the mass deportations of Mexican-Americans (many of them US citizens) during the 1930s, and the “America First” fascist movement led by Charles A. Lindbergh in the years before Pearl Harbor (12/7/1941), to name just a few.

At the same time, there is a flowering of progressive, egalitarian, and social justice movements that also has historical parallels: to the mass movements of workers, elderly, and poor that generated FDR’s New Deal in the 1930s, and to the civil rights, anti-war, “second-wave” feminist, and gay liberation movements that shaped progressive and “identity” politics from the 1960s to the Obama period.

Many people still do not recognize the seriousness of the situation. Due to the inertia of their own experience they do not see either the threats or the opportunities emerging in the present. For many, the daily routines of their lives have not shifted very much: their families, their jobs, their everyday lives, continue in much the same ways. The mall is still open, the game is on TV, Netflix offers more entertainment than ever before, and there is plenty of social media (still a new phenomenon in US politics and culture). So shifts in power, and transformations in the social context in which power is exercised, may not be recognized by those who do not perceive their lives to be changing. But for those who are vulnerable to those changes and those threats, for those who are immigrants, say, or having trouble paying the bills, who are confronting police violence or dealing with an unwanted pregnancy, the new patterns of power appearing in society today may be very disturbing indeed.

We have to ask, "What are Trump et al’s reactionary politics reacting TO?" Is it not those very same progressive movements -- the ones that sought to include people of color and women, and to generate a more socially just, egalitarian, and ecologically sustainable society -- that are threatening to Trump voters? White men (not all white men), sociologist Michael Kimmel says, are experiencing a feeling of “aggrieved entitlement,” as their traditional security is eroded, as their job prospects or good pay slip away, as their segregated neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces become multiracial, and as women no longer acquiesce to their demands for sexual and domestic subordination. Of course, counter-trends exist too: many white women voted for Trump. The massive evangelical rightwing represents a huge social movement in its own right, and while there are progressive evangelicals and evangelicals of color, the bulk of the movement is white, anti-abortion (and thus opposed to feminism), anti-LGBT, and in denial about climate change.

***

These are some of the current issues in US political sociology. They shape the present-day social configuration of power in this country. Political sociology is the field of sociology that studies the social context of power relationships. Power is always exercised through social relationships. Politics, therefore, is a sociological theme: power operates as a dynamic set of interactions among human individuals, groups, and institutions. Among these relationships we find democracy and dictatorship; authority and coercion;
(in)equality and exploitation; domination and subordination. We also find resistance, contentious culture (say, Fox vs. MSNBC), and identity politics. Many institutions and social structures also express these relationships, “condensed,” into familiar patterns: social classes; the state and citizenship, family, the nation, elites, parties, social movements, interest groups, masses, etc.

In this course we examine the dynamics of these relationships and structures. We study their operations and the ways in which they develop and change. Since political sociology is a rather large subject, it becomes necessary to concentrate our attention selectively on certain themes. Here we concentrate on the following subjects:

1. The election of Donald Trump and the crisis of democracy in the United States
2. The field of political sociology
3. Politics “from below” – everyday life and identity politics
3. Social networks and social media

This is a rewarding and demanding course. It is built on respect and standards. Participating in it effectively, and getting a good grade, means thinking deeply about where you stand and how you understand US society today. It means being willing to raise and respond to uncomfortable questions. It means deeply engaging and reflecting on the course material. I don’t expect everyone to agree with me, and indeed I welcome open and honest debate about the issues I have just listed. For that reason the Soc 131 class has been organized with a new teaching approach and with a “current events”-oriented course content. This approach is outlined below in the syllabus, particularly in the “Discussion Section” and “Written Work” material below.

READING


These books are on 2-hr reserve at the Davidson Library. They are available for purchase at the UCEN bookstore (buy them quickly, because they never order enough). They may also be ordered on line (sometimes at a discount) at http://bigwords.com, http://www.booksamillion.com/, http://www.powells.com, or at other online outlets of your choice. (Note: I’m not sending you to Amazon, which is both a sweatshop and a monopoly in my view.)
DISCUSSION SECTION

In this class we take a new approach to discussion section. Instead of having three separate, required sections, we are going to have just one -- not required -- section. It will meet Thursday 700-750pm, in Phelps 1160.

The agenda of the section will be open, but it is intended to be a forum where people can discuss issues of politics and society. These will be keyed to material we are covering in the main class, but the section will also be a place where people can discuss personal or political issues. The same guarantee on “participation,” stated in the next part of this syllabus, applies to the section, just as it does to the main class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance, Study, Honesty and Plagiarism: You will not do well in this course if you do not attend regularly and engage with the material. Attendance is taken in the main lecture class by means of a sign-up sheet. Class attendance and participation account for 10% of the final grade. As noted, attendance at the discussion section is not required. (It is, however, strongly encouraged.) Failure to study or attend the main class will result in poor grades, as surely as night follows day.

Participation and the “no dissing” rule: Participation can be a major issue in a course on political themes. We are dealing with topics that can be highly emotional, so students sometimes feel uncertain about saying what is on their minds. They wonder if what they think and feel is "correct" and whether they might offend others. It is logical to feel this way, but it is also important to feel safe enough to speak in class. In more than 30 years of teaching sociology I have rarely encountered an intentional effort by a student to offend anyone else. Therefore I make the following commitment to you: I will protect your right to present your views, even if they are unpopular, so long as you are not being dishonest or disrespecting anyone else. This guarantee is designed to facilitate discussion of sensitive topics in class.

Honesty: I view honesty as particularly important in efforts to teach and learn about political sociology. My commitment to academic and personal honesty is absolute, and I expect a similar commitment from you. This class cannot be used for provocation or deception, including self-deception. Your views are welcome, subject only to the condition just stated about honesty and respect for others.

Plagiarism and cheating have become major issues in higher education in recent years, unfortunately. Plagiarism is defined as occurring “...when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.” This means taking material from somewhere else (like the web, a book, or another student) without citing that source. Not only directly quoting, but also paraphrasing someone else can be plagiarism too, if the original source is not
acknowledged. The way to stay out of trouble is this: When in doubt, cite the source.

*Plagiarism or cheating in this class may lead to your failing, or worse.* It can mean a mandatory disciplinary hearing before the Dean of Students, or indeed suspension from the university.

This course meets two Sociology major requirements: the [Social Inequality and Stratification](#) course requirement, and the [Inequality, Institutions, and Networks](#) course requirement.

**GauchoSpace:** To navigate this course you must use GauchoSpace. You found this syllabus on GauchoSpace. There you will also see links to the assignments, and links as well to assigned internet-based sources. Assignments are submitted and graded/returned on GauchoSpace, and my powerpoint lecture slides are posted on GauchoSpace at the end of each week.

****

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** There are three written assignments for this course, all in take-home essay form. All assignments will be submitted and returned (with comments and grade) on GauchoSpace. Written work should always be word-processed and double-spaced, with adequate margins. All written work should be submitted in Microsoft Word format. Always keep a copy of all the work you submit, preferably on hard drive or flash drive as well as in printed form.

The course requirements are as follows:

**Introductory Essay Assignment:** Respond to the following prompt. Your answer should be 3-4 pp. (no more than 1500 words), double spaced, with adequate margins, and should cite sources as appropriate. You may draw on any legitimate source – your texts, your supplemental reading in print or on the web, so long as you cite thoroughly (See guidelines on “When and How to Cite a Source” below). This assignment is due on GauchoSpace before 600PM on Sunday October 14 (3rd week of class), and will count for 20% of your final grade.

**PROMPT:**

*Why did Trump get elected? What made his presidency possible? Do not answer these questions with your personal opinions. Answer them with an argument that relies on research.*

**Mid-term Exam:** Students will complete a mid-term take-home exam. The exam will consist of two essay answers, each 3-4 pages (1000-1250 words), or a total of 6-8 pages (2000-2500 words) in length. You answer two questions of your choice from a list of five questions. The midterm questions will be available on GauchoSpace on Sunday, October 21 (week 4), and the essay answers will be due on GauchoSpace before 600PM on
Sunday, November 4 (week 6). It will count for 30% of your final grade. Be sure to keep a copy of your exam.

Final Paper: There is no final exam. Instead, students will prepare a paper of 10-12 pages, responding to the following prompt.

*Power and authority, in the US and around the world, are exercised by the state. Yet -- in democratic societies at least -- the state also includes and represents the nation, the people. In the US for example, we say that the state rules with the "consent of the governed." OK. But is this true in capitalist society? Is this true where working-class people, racial minorities, and women are concerned? In respect to working people: under capitalism do they have the same democratic rights and the same degree of political freedom that the owners of capital do? In respect to racial minorities: do they have the same democratic rights and the same degree of political freedom that white people do? In respect to women: do they have the same democratic rights and the same degree of political freedom as men do? Making use of any of the assigned readings in this course, explain why such political (in)equalities continue to exist – along class, race, and/or gender lines.*

The final paper is due on GauchoSpace during exam week: **Thursday December 13 before 600PM.**

Your written submission should be double-spaced, with adequate margins (2500-3000 words/10-12pp).

**GRADING RULES, LATE AND INCOMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS**

Assignments are afforded the following *percentages of the final grade:*

- Attendance: 10%
- Introductory Essay: 20%
- Midterm Take-Home: 30%
- Final Essay Take-Home: 40%

Attendance is taken in the lecture by means of a sign-in sheet.

Attendance at the Discussion Section is encouraged but not required.

Failure to complete any assignment gets you a 0% on that assignment. Turning in an assignment late gets you one grade-level reduction on that assignment (e.g., from A- to B+), unless other arrangements have been made with the instructor.
Incompletes ("I" grades) will not be given except by written arrangement with the instructor.

*Approach to written assignments:* I use the introductory assignment to check on whether you are "up to speed" in the course. The mid-term exam primarily tests your engagement with the course and the reading material assigned thus far, as well as the lectures and discussions up to that point. It is about what you have learned in the first half of the quarter. For the final paper I expect a general familiarity with the entire range of course material. In those cases where a student makes significant progress on the final exam, their grade for the course will reflect this (that is, I will give additional weight to the final). However, if the student does not perform better on the final than in other assignments, the final will still count 40% of the overall grade.

*WHEN AND HOW TO CITE A SOURCE*

You will be citing text in your written assignments for this class. Do so as follows:

*When:* Not only when you quote, but when you paraphrase or draw an idea from a text, you must cite the source.

*How:* Place the citation, including the page number, in parenthesis at the appropriate point in your essay. For instance: (Campbell 2018, 103). Then at the end of the paper, have a section called *Works Cited* or *Bibliography*. In that section, list the work cited, as follows:


Do the same thing with all your citations. If you use additional sources, treat them the same way. If you repeat sources, just use the parenthetical cite; you don't have to repeat the entry in the bibliography.

Please be aware that I require adequate citation of sources: books, articles, internet-based..., there are no exceptions. You have been warned. I take plagiarism very seriously. If you do not produce your own material, you will not only fail the class, but you may also be subject to university disciplinary action, which could include suspension.

****

*SCHEDULE OF CLASSES*
Week 1

Thurs, Sept 27
Introduction to the course; discussion of requirements, readings, section etc. What is political sociology? What are our issues in this course?
NO SECTION WEEK 1

Week 2

Tues, Oct 2
Clemens vi-44
FIRST SECTION MEETING: Thurs, 700PM, Phelps 1160

Thurs, Oct 4
Clemens 45-86

Week 3

Tues, Oct 9
Clemens 87-141

Thurs Oct 11
No reading assignment
Prepare initial essay assignment
Be prepared to discuss your work for this assignment in class.

INITIAL ESSAY ASIGNMENT DUE ON GAUCHOSPACE SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14, BEFORE 600PM.

Week 4

Tues, Oct 16
Ortiz 9-53

Thurs, Oct 18
Ortiz- 54-94

Week 5

Tues, Oct 23
Ortiz 94-142

Thurs, Oct 25
Ortiz 143-189

Week 6
Tues, Oct 30
Tufekci ix-27

Thurs, Nov 1
No reading assignment
Prepare Midterm exam
Be prepared to discuss your work for this assignment in class
MIDTERM EXAM DUE ON GAUCHOSPACE SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4, BEFORE 600PM.

Week 7

Tues, Nov 6
Tufekci 28-82

Thurs, Nov 8
Tufekci 83-132

Week 8

Tues, Nov 13
Tufekci 133-188

Thurs, Nov 15
Tufekci 189-222

Week 9

Tues, Nov 20
Tufekci 223-277

Thurs Nov 22
Thanksgiving holiday

Week 10

Tues Nov 27
Campbell ix-55

Thurs Nov 29
Campbell 56-102

Week 11

Tues., Dec 4
Campbell 103-167
Thurs, Dec 6
Last day of class
No reading due: discussion based on your work for your final paper

***

Thursday Dec 13

FINAL ESSAY IN RESPONSE TO A PROMPT DUE ON GAUCHOSPACE BEFORE 600PM.