

**SYLLABUS**  
POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY (SOC 333)  
POWER, CULTURE AND CHANGE  
THE ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY  
FALL 2016

*Freedom and democracy are only possible where the resolute will of a nation to not allow itself to be ruled like sheep is permanently alive – Max Weber, 1906*

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**COURSE OVERVIEW:**

This course examines the nature of political power, the cultural dimension of politics, and the dynamics of political change. Special attention is given to the ways political power intersects with structures of class, gender and race. A unit on the political economy of globalization will introduce students to the implications of US policies in an expanding political terrain. The goal for the course is to provide students with the tools necessary for critical analysis of, and active engagement in, U.S. political life.

Often when people hear the word “politics” they think of solely in terms of elections, governments, or squabbling between opposing political parties. Sociologists however have a much broader understanding of what counts as political. Looking at politics from a sociological perspective expands what is normally considered to be *political* and enables us to see the many ways that *social* forces impact the way power is distributed and exercised in our society. We begin to see the political relationships embedded in our most basic daily activities: where we shop, what we buy, what we eat, where we live, who we date, whether or not we go to college, what we pay for tuition, and even what we major in. In fact, *everything* we do (and don’t do) is connected to politics!

It is my goal that by the end of the semester, you will have a better understanding of the political dynamics of everyday life than when you started. So what exactly is political sociology and what distinguishes it from other disciplines like Political Science? As a starting point we can describe political sociology as directing our attention toward “how politics both is shaped by and shapes other events in societies. Instead of treating the political arena as independent from other happenings in a society, [political sociology] treats that arena as intimately related to all social institutions” (Orum, 1983:1).

Power is at the heart of a sociological analysis of politics and will be a major theme of the course. Throughout this semester we will engage in critical analysis of the institutional mechanisms and social processes through which political power is constructed, distributed, and maintained. Some of the questions we will wrestle with throughout the semester are: Who has power and how do they use it? How do liberals and conservatives think? Are democracy and capitalism compatible? Why are so many people apathetic about politics? Why are we at war? How can gender or race be “political”? And how do those without power make a difference?

### REQUIRED READINGS:

There will be five required books in this class – available at the ISU Bookstore (or at various online retailers). There will also be supplemental readings posted in on ReggieNet (RN). In addition, students are expected to read a daily newspaper (*The New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal*).

- Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: New Press. ISBN 978-1-59558-643-8
- Gaventa, John. 1980. *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press. ISBN 0252009851
- Lakoff, George. 2002. *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ISBN 0226467716
- Rivoli, Pietra. 2009. *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy: An Economist Examines the Markets, Power, and Politics of World Trade*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley. 2nd edition ISBN-10: 0470287160; ISBN-13: 978-0470287163
- Robert B. Reich. 2008 *Supercapitalism: The Transformation of Business, Democracy, and Everyday Life* (Vintage) (Paperback) by ISBN-10: 0307277992

### GRADES

Your final grade will be based on formal briefs, quizzes on readings and current events and a final exam. **Note: in order to receive a passing grade (D) in this course you must earn a D or better in each of the areas of evaluation.**

#### ***Briefs (50%)***

You will be required to write five two-page briefs, for each of the assigned books. Briefs are two page summaries of the central arguments the author makes. They will be due at the beginning of class – completed briefs will be your ticket to join the class. **Late Briefs will not be accepted.**

#### ***Current Events and Reading Quizzes (20%)***

These will be given on days when no briefs are due. They will cover current political events as well as any reading assigned for the week. **No make-ups allowed.**

#### ***Final Examination (20%)***

There will be a written final examination covering material from the entire course. Exam period will be announced in October.

#### ***Attendance and Participation (10%)***

Woody Allen said “90% of success is showing up.” I believe this true particularly in a class such as this. Your attendance each week is expected. My policy is to allow everyone one (2) absences for the semester. Beyond that your grade will be reduced one full letter grade for each additional missed class. **Missing more than four classes will result in failing the course.** Your active participation in class discussions is also expected and will be assessed based on the *quality* of your contribution to in-class and on-line discussions. If you are uncomfortable speaking publicly you should meet with me early in the semester. Keep in mind that *quantity* is not the same as *quality* when it comes to participation. Quality will be rewarded.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE:**

Below is a topical outline and tentative timeline that identifies the themes and primary reading for each week. I will announce any changes in class and via ReggieNet.

<b>Monday</b>		<b>Wednesday</b>
<b>Introduction</b>		
<b>Week 1</b> Aug. 22,24	Introductions	Neuman – text excerpt (ch.1) [RN] “How to Read a Book” [RN]
<b>Week 2</b> August 27,29	Domhoff - <i>Who Rules America?</i> Chapter 1 “Class and Power” pp. 1-21 [RN] Quiz	Discuss current events
<b>Unit I: Power</b>		
<b>Week 3</b> Sept. 5, 7	Labor Day – No Class	John Gaventa – <i>Power and Powerlessness</i> <b>Briefs Due</b>
<b>Week 4</b> Sept.12,14	Piven and Cloward – “Rule Making and Rule Breaking” (RN) Quiz	Foucault – Excerpt From <i>Discipline and Punish</i> (RN) Discuss current events
<b>Week 5</b> Sept. 19,21	Michelle Alexander <i>The New Jim Crow</i> <b>Briefs Due</b>	Michelle Alexander <i>The New Jim Crow</i> (Cont.)
<b>Unit II: Ideology and Consciousness</b>		
<b>Week 6</b> Sept. 26,28	Neuman - excerpt <i>Ideology</i> (RN) Domhoff - <i>Who Rules</i> “Introduction “ pp. xi – xx (RN) Quiz	Lecture: The political Spectrum Discuss current events Video: <a href="#">Newsroom</a>
<b>Week 7</b> Oct. 3, 5	George Lakoff - <i>Moral Politics</i> <b>Briefs Due</b>	George Lakoff - <i>Moral Politics</i> (cont.) (Cont.)
<b>Week 8</b> Oct. 10,12	Eliasson – Excerpt from <i>Avoiding Politics</i> [RN] Quiz	Kollmeyer – <i>Consensual Domination</i> (RN)
<b>Unit III: The Political Economy</b>		
<b>Week 9</b> Oct. 17,19	Marx and Engels "The Communist Manifesto" parts 1,2 and 4 (pp. 8-31;43-4) Quiz	Video: David Harvey (11min) Discuss Current Events
<b>Week10</b> Oct. 24, 26	TBA Video: “Inside Job”	“Inside Job” Continued Discuss film
<b>Week 11</b> Oct.31, Nov 2	Fredrick Hayek – <i>Road to Serfdom</i> [RN] Video: Hayek v. Keynes I &II Quiz	Milton Freidman – excerpt <i>Capitalism and Freedom</i> [RN]
<b>Week 12</b> Nov. 7,9	Robert Reich - <i>Super Capitalism</i> <b>Brief s Due</b>	Robert Reich - <i>Super Capitalism (Cont)</i> Video: “Is Wal-Mart Good for America”
<b>Week 13</b> Nov. 14,16	Polanyi – Excerpt <i>The Great Transformation</i> [RN] Quiz	Discuss current events Video: “Food Inc”
<b>Week 14</b> Nov. 28, 30	Rivoli - <i>Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy</i> <b>Briefs Due</b>	Rivoli - <i>Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy</i> (cont.)
<b>Week 15</b> Dec. 5,7	Video: Fixing the Future	Course Wrap-up and Review Exit Survey Course Evaluations