Soc. 131: Political Sociology

Fall Quarter 2019
Instructor: Prof. Howard Winant
Teaching Assistant: Andrew Paterson (BREN); apaterson@umail.ucsb.edu

Class Times and Locations:
Lecture: Tuesday/Thursday, 1230-145PM, Chem 1171
Sections  -- #54585 Thursday 600-650pm  Physics (Building 387) Room 1011
                           -- #48850 Thursday 700-750pm  Physics (Building 387) Room 1011

Winant's Office Hours: SSMS 3308, T 1000AM-1200PM
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INTRODUCTION

It is a challenge to study political sociology in the present moment. In the year 2019 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 current US government unmistakably echoes 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; the WWII “relocation” to concentration camps of 125,000 Japanese Americans, half of them citizens; and the “America First” fascist movement led by Charles A. Lindbergh in the years before Pearl Harbor (12/7/1941).

At the same time, there is a flowering of progressive, egalitarian, and social justice movements that also has historical parallels: to the “general strike” of enslaved Black people during the Civil War, the mass movements of workers, elderly, and poor who brought about FDR’s New Deal in the 1930s, and the civil rights, anti-war, feminist, and LGBT 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. These threats include:

• The climate crisis, which might make the world uninhabitable;
• The crisis of economic inequality, in which a tiny number of people monopolize most of the wealth and income;
• The crisis of democracy, in which many millions of people are deprived of political voice and thus freedom and justice;
• The crisis of American well-being: health quality is declining, life expectancies are declining for the first time in US history, addiction is rampant, and medical care less available and more costly.

I could go on and talk about education, immigration, war and peace, crime and punishment, etc. But you get the point. The US is in crisis. (And oh, BTW, so is the rest of the world.)

Still, 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 (although Amazon is closing in), 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. Still, everyone’s life is being changed by the crisis, whether they know it or not.

Furthermore, many are especially vulnerable: those who are recent immigrants, say, or those having trouble paying the bills, those 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.

I mentioned flowering social justice movements: the climate movement, the feminist movement, the Movement for Black Lives, the immigrants rights movement, the labor movement are some of these. Yes, there are many White people in these movements too,
not just people of color. Millions of men identify with feminism. There is hope for White people and men. Yes, global heating threatens life on this planet.

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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:

1. Ecocide/Climate Crisis/Living on earth
2. Race and premature death
3. Gender and social reproduction
4. Creating a good life for all

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://bigwords.com), [http://www.booksamillion.com/](http://www.booksamillion.com/), [http://www.powells.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**

There are two discussion sections. They will meet Thursdays either 600-650pm or 700-750pm, in Building 387 (aka Physics) Room 1011. Check on GOLD to see which section you are in.

This 50-min/week section is a required part of class. Attendance is taken and figures in your grade (see below).

Section is an important 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 open to discussing political issues in a more personal way. 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**

*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.

**Attendance and participation in class and section:** Attendance and participation are expected in both the lecture-discussion and section. Attendance is taken by means of a signup sheet. Regarding participation: we get to know you and we pay attention to your engagement in the class. Attendance and participation count for 10% of your final grade.

**Written Work:** Written assignments for this course are of two types: book reviews and a final paper. There are no exams.

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. [No .pdf please.] Always keep a copy of all the work you submit, preferably on hard drive or flash drive as well as in printed form.
You will write a book review of each of the four books assigned in the class. Book reviews should be 3-4 pp. (no more than 1500 words), double spaced, with adequate margins, and should refer to the text as appropriate. The book reviews will be submitted on Gauchospace before the deadlines listed below. Each book review counts for 15% of your final grade. A sample book review will be posted on the course Gauchopace page.

Final Paper: There is no final exam. Instead, students will prepare a paper of c. 10 pages (about 3500 words), responding to the following prompt:

US society, and in many ways human society, is experiencing a profound crisis today. Looking at the crisis from a political sociological perspective we can see it in different ways: for example, as a failure of leadership on the part of the powerful, or a failure of democracy and self-government on the part of the people. It can be understood as the consequence of disregard for nature and science, as an outcome of the greed and selfishness intrinsic to capitalism, or as a consequence of racism or sexism. This is not a complete list of possible reasons for the crisis.

Drawing on the reading for this class, explain the crisis in terms of political sociology; that is, explain it in respect to the organization of power in society. An effective explanation should do three things: (1) It should summarize the dimensions of the crisis; (2) It should analyse the ways in which the organization of power in this society generated the crisis; and (3) It should suggest ways in which the crisis could be addressed by an alternative approach to the organization of power in this society.

Throughout your paper, refer to the assigned reading to ground your argument. (You may refer to other reading as well, but there is no requirement to do so).

COURSE “CULTURE”

Attendance, Study, Honesty and Plagiarism: You will not do well in this course if you do not attend regularly and engage with the material. Failure to study or attend the class/section 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. As you see from my introduction to this syllabus, I present my views. You are encouraged to present yours with honesty and respect for others.
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.

Sociology major requirements: This course meets two Sociology major requirements: the Social Inequality and Stratification course requirement, and the Inequality, Institutions, and Networks course requirement.

Mandatory Reporting: As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. I want to ensure that students feel they can speak to me, but I also want students to be informed that I have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as a professor. I am required to share information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime that may have occurred on UCSB’s campus or in the community. A result of my mandated report will be that students will receive outreach and resources from the campus Title IX office. Students may speak to someone confidentially by contacting CARE, Campus Advocacy, Resources & Education at the 24/7 advocacy line at (805) 893-4613 or visit them in person at the Student Resource Building.

GRADING RULES, LATE AND INCOMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments are afforded the following percentages of the final grade:

Attendance: 10%

Book reviews: 15% each (total: 60%)

Final paper: 30%

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

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 or TA.

Incompletes ("I" grades) will not be given except by written arrangement with the instructor.

**Approach to written assignments:** The book reviews test your engagement with the assigned text you are reviewing. At a minimum, the review must include an effective description of the book’s content and argument, plus a serious analysis of that content and argument from your point of view. (See sample book review on GauchoSpace.)

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 30% 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: (Bregman 2018, 74).


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.

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SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Week 1

Thurs, Sept 26
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 1
Wallace-Wells 1-36
FIRST SECTION MEETING: Thurs, 700PM, Phelps 1160

Thurs, Oct 3
Wallace-Wells 37-85

Week 3

Tues, Oct 8
Wallace-Wells 86-140
Video: AAAS Climate Change; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_nZjrPoAlbU [Note: selected videos may change]

Thurs Oct 10
Wallace-Wells 141-184

Week 4

Tues, Oct 15
Wallace-Wells 185-228
Additional videos:
• The Right to a Future, with Naomi Klein and Greta Thunberg; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5_dxzV9MTk
• Disruption (2014); https://vimeo.com/105412070

Thurs, Oct 17
No reading due. Work on book review.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Review of Wallace-Wells; due on GauchoSpace Sunday, 10/20, before 600pm

Week 5
Tues, Oct 22
Bregman 1-50

Thurs, Oct 24
Bregman 51-100

Week 6

Tues, Oct 29
Bregman 101-152

Thurs, Oct 31
Bregman 153-202

Week 7

Tues, Nov 5

Thurs, Nov 7
Ansell 1-74

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Review of Bregman; due on GauchoSpace Sunday, 11/10, before 600pm

Week 8

Tues, Nov 12
Ansell 75-112

Thurs, Nov 14
Ansell 113-191

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Review of Ansell; due on GauchoSpace Sunday, 11/17, before 600pm

Week 9

Tues, Nov 19
Arruzza et al 1-57

Thurs Nov 21
Arruzza et al 59-85

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Review of Arruzza et al; due on GauchoSpace Sunday, 11/24, before 600pm
Week 10

Tues Nov 26
Film

Thurs Nov 28
Thanksgiving holiday

Week 11

Tues., Dec 3
Activism week; be working on your final paper

Thurs, Dec 5
Last day of class
No reading due: discussion based on your work for your final paper

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Thursday Dec 12
FINAL ESSAY IN RESPONSE TO A PROMPT DUE ON GAUCHOSPACE BEFORE 600PM.