

## **SOC260 H1S – Introduction to Political Sociology**

**Winter 2026**

**Schedule:** Friday 11:10 – 13:00

**Location:** See ACORN

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Please take the time to regularly consult the page of this course on Quercus, to be aware of the announcements, clarifications and potential updates on this syllabus. Beyond that, communication in-class and by other means will be delivered consistently to ensure that everyone has the needed information.

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### **Land Acknowledgement**

The University of Toronto is located on Indigenous land. For thousands of years this land has been the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca and, most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. The region is protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum, which is an agreement to share and protect the land and its resources. Across Turtle Island many Indigenous peoples work toward decolonization by resisting colonial practices and building international solidarity with all colonized peoples globally. I encourage you to learn more about the past movements and initiatives and contribute positively in their present and future struggles.

### **Course Description**

This course explores a composite conception of the political, considering it as a specific subject of social sciences while avoiding a substantialist approach. Here, the political is understood as a set of social phenomena that require analysis within the social configurations in which they are embedded. Rather than treating it as a given object, we aim to reintegrate the political into contemporary scientific debates around its definition. To this end, the course emphasizes the value of interdisciplinarity in the study of politics. While rooted in sociology, we will draw

insights from political science, history, political philosophy, and anthropology to enrich our understanding.

This course places significant importance on the diversity of intellectual traditions that have shaped our current understanding of the political. Rather than restricting ourselves to authors and theories originating from Europe and North America—regions traditionally perceived as the cradle of the "founding fathers" of political science, whose contributions we acknowledge as significant—this course takes the initiative to broaden our perspective to equally enriching contributions from various territories and intellectual traditions.

Political sociology, as we will see throughout this course, can provide us with a deep understanding of the world around us. It is particularly well-suited to shed light on prevailing power dynamics, the structures that shape them, the institutions that contribute to their regulation, and the conflicts surrounding this regulation. Using several theoretical frameworks, we will interpret and analyze these dynamics in depth.

### **Prerequisites**

The prerequisite to take this course is SOC100H1. The exclusion is SOCB30H3 and SOC335H5. Students without the prerequisite or with the exclusion will be removed at any time discovered and without notice.

### **Learning Objectives**

There two types of learning objectives for this course, skills-based (1-5) and Content-based (6-8):

1. Develop critical thinking skills
2. Learn to discuss ideas and differentiate between opinion and argument
3. Learn to read scholar texts purposefully and make connections between them
4. Develop the ability to write in an evidenced manner
5. Reintegrate the analysis of the political in the historical and social context
6. Understand the basic concepts and debates in political sociology
7. Recognize the various perspectives and approaches to political sociology

### **Evaluation Components**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>In-class participation</b>	Ongoing	16%
<b>Personnel political reflection</b>	February 3	14%
<b>Film Commentary</b>	February 13	5%
<b>Midterm</b>	February 27	30%
<b>Final exam</b>	Exam period	35%

### ***In-class participation (16%) [every class]***

Participating actively in class activities is the most efficient way to learn the course content. Students are expected to read all the readings and participate in (group) discussions and activities which will occupy a significant portion of each session.

Your participation will be assessed based on both your attendance and your contribution to class activities. If you require any special accommodations for class participation, please notify me by email as soon as possible.

The grade is divided into two components:

- 8 points (maximum): rewards attendance in the 11 different sessions of the course (0.75 points per session).
- 8 points: students are required to submit four written commentaries on four different weekly sessions, each focusing on a specific point, explanation, or idea from one of the assigned texts that they found difficult to understand. In each commentary (worth 2 points), students must:
  - Clearly describe the concept or passage they struggled with.
  - Explain, in their own words, what they believe they understood.
  - Reflect on why this particular idea or point was challenging to grasp.
  - These commentaries should be posted on Quercus, under the Modules section, in the discussion box for the corresponding week in which the text is being analyzed.
  - Each commentary must be posted no later than 10:00 AM on the day before the class in which the text will be discussed.

All students benefit from one unjustified absence ticket that they can use without consequences on the final grade. An absence declaration is required to justify all other absences. Unjustified absence from any other session results in the loss of 0.75 points related to attendance. It is not possible to post a comment related to the reading of the week on Quercus for an absent student.

### ***Personal political reflection (14%) [February 3]***

You will prepare a 1200-word paper (excluding the bibliography). In this assignment, you are asked to present a political reflection based on your personal experiences and political convictions. The required format is an opinion article, not an academic paper. This means your writing should be well-argued and coherent, but instead of relying on academic literature to support or challenge your analysis, you will draw primarily on your own views and lived experience.

Use of references is only necessary when citing specific facts (e.g., historical events, recent developments, statistics) that are not widely known or require sourcing.

Your essay should focus on a contemporary political issue or debate that personally interests you—either directly or indirectly. Making a meaningful connection between the topic and your personal experience is highly encouraged and will be valued in the evaluation.

Your paper should defend a clear thesis that reflects your own position. The overall structure should include:

- An introduction (approximately 5–10% of the total length): Begin by introducing the political issue you wish to discuss. Explain why this issue matters to you personally—how it connects to your experiences, values, or concerns. Then, articulate why this topic is relevant or significant to others, whether to a specific social group, community, or society at large. Finally, clearly define the specific aspect of the issue that your opinion piece will focus on. At this point, you can present your thesis.
- A main body presenting your arguments: present the key issues related to the political topic you have chosen. For each issue, clearly articulate your personal viewpoint, providing thoughtful explanations and well-reasoned arguments to support your position. Alongside your perspective, introduce opposing views that you do not share, explaining why you disagree and demonstrating why your position is more compelling. Ideally, your entire discussion should contribute to building a coherent and persuasive overarching argument that supports your thesis.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Clarity in presenting the issue, your thesis, and the position you are opposing.
- Coherence in the structure of your text.
- Logical consistency and persuasiveness of your argumentation.

The paper must be submitted by February 3 at 5:59 p.m.

### ***Film Commentary (5%) [February 13]***

Watch the film *I, Daniel Blake*, available on Quercus (Week 6 resources), and write a 600-word commentary addressing the following points:

- How is the welfare system portrayed in the film?
- What role does the administration (bureaucracy) play in Daniel Blake's situation?
- What is the role of administrative agents?
- How does Daniel Blake respond to administrative decisions?

### ***Midterm (30%) [February 27]***

The objective of the midterm is to assess students' understanding of the key concepts and arguments discussed in lectures and assigned readings. The exam will consist of two components:

- Multiple-choice questions (15% of the final grade), designed to test factual knowledge and conceptual clarity.
- One open-ended question (15% of the final grade), requiring a written response that demonstrates critical thinking and the ability to apply course concepts.

The midterm will primarily cover material from **Weeks 2 to 5**, but students are expected to be familiar with major theories, concepts, and ideas introduced in the first half of the course, as some questions may draw on earlier content.

### ***Final exam (35%) [exam period]***

The final exam will primarily cover material from **Weeks 6 to 11**, but students are expected to have a solid understanding of key concepts and theories introduced in **Weeks 2 to 5**, as some questions will draw on earlier content.

The exam consists of two components:

- Multiple-choice questions (worth 20% of the final grade), designed to assess comprehension of core ideas and factual knowledge.
- One open-ended question (worth 15% of the final grade), requiring a written response that demonstrates critical thinking and the ability to apply course concepts.

Students should be prepared to engage with both recent and foundational material in order to successfully complete the exam.

## **Course Policies**

### **Reading Materials**

This course does not require a textbook. Instead, you will be assigned texts to read prior to each class. All assigned readings are accessible on Quercus. Additional materials can be provided upon request.

### **Website of the course**

The course website on Quercus provides access to the syllabus, course materials, assignments. Check Quercus regularly to stay informed about important changes in the course.

<https://q.utoronto.ca>

### **Evaluation Criteria**

The university's evaluation standards are outlined as follows:

**A) Excellent:** Demonstrates strong original thinking, effective organization, the ability to analyze and synthesize, a superior understanding of the subject matter accompanied by sound critical evaluations, and evidence of a broad and comprehensive knowledge base.

**B) Good:** Shows a solid understanding of the subject matter, some demonstration of critical thinking and analytical skills, a reasonable grasp of relevant issues, and familiarity with the pertinent literature.

**C) Adequate:** Reflects a student making satisfactory progress in their academic experience, showing comprehension of the subject matter and the ability to address straightforward problems within the material.

**D) Marginal:** Displays some awareness of the subject matter and minimal development of critical and analytical skills.

**F) Inadequate:** Reveals little to no understanding of the subject matter, significant weaknesses in critical and analytical skills, and minimal or irrelevant engagement with the literature.

*Please note that these are overarching guidelines and will be tailored to the specific requirements of each assignment.*

### **Grade scale**

A+: Above 90 ; A: 85-89 ; A-: 80-84

B+: 77-79 B: 73-76 B-: 70-72

C+: 67-69 C: 63-66 C-: 60-62

D+: 57-59 D: 53-56 D-: 50-52

F: 0-49

### **Missed tests and assignments**

Students who miss a paper deadline or a test will receive a mark of zero for that paper or test unless the reason is a circumstance beyond their control. **Within three days** of missing a paper deadline or test, students must send the instructor a request for consideration. Students must document their request with **one of the following:**

- Absence declaration via ACORN
- U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form
- College Registrar's letter (e.g., in case of personal/family crisis or emergency)
- Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services

Students who miss the test or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

### **Accessibility**

If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible. Please inform me of the situation as soon as possible so that I can arrange the necessary accommodations in time.

### **Email policy**

If you have questions about course grades, please contact the TA. Should the TA be unable to address your inquiry, they will reach out to Instructor for further clarification. Please allow 48 hours for a response during regular working hours (9 a.m.–5 p.m., Monday to Friday). If you haven't heard back within that time frame, feel free to send a follow-up email.

Use always your University of Toronto email and please, add the course code in the title.

For all other matters, please communicate with me directly whenever possible, as I prioritize direct interaction over email. I will be available after class to address any inquiries not clearly covered in the syllabus. If direct communication is not feasible, you may email me, and I will respond within three working days. As a general guideline, keep email exchanges brief and focused. For discussions requiring more depth, particularly regarding course material, I encourage you to visit during office hours.

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY AND CLASSROOM ETHICS**

### **1. Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

Academic integrity is essential to education and research at the University of Toronto. Upholding values of honesty, respect, responsibility, and fairness within this academic community ensures that a U of T degree accurately reflects an individual's academic achievements. Review the University of Toronto's **Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters** (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) for details. Examples of potential offences include but are not limited to:

#### **A. In written work (papers and assignments):**

- Using another person's ideas or words without proper attribution.
- Copying text verbatim from a source (including lecture notes or study group materials) without using quotation marks.
- Submitting your own work for multiple courses without prior approval from the instructor (self-plagiarism).
- Fabricating sources or information.
- Citing references to materials you did not consult.
- Allowing someone else to submit your work as their own without your consent.

## **B. During tests and exams:**

- Using or possessing unauthorized aids, such as a cell phone.
- Copying another student's answers.
- Allowing another student to view your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Altering a test or exam and resubmitting it for a re-grade.

## **C. Misrepresentation:**

- Falsifying or altering required documentation (e.g., medical notes).
- Forging institutional documents or grades.

## **2. Ouriginal**

All assignments submitted through Quercus will be reviewed using Ouriginal, a software integrated into the platform that applies text-matching technology to help maintain the University's high standards of academic integrity by identifying potential plagiarism.

Students who do not wish their assignments to be processed through Ouriginal must submit sufficient supporting materials (e.g., reading notes, outlines, rough drafts) alongside their work to demonstrate that their submission is entirely their own. Without these materials, their work will not be assessed.

## **GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

Students are encouraged to make use of technology, including generative artificial intelligence tools, to contribute to their understanding of course materials. Students may use artificial intelligence tools, including generative AI, to support their learning and assist in preparing assignments for this course; however, the **Personal Reflection** and **Film Commentary** must be written entirely by the students themselves without AI assistance. In all cases, please be aware that you are responsible for the work submitted.

If you decide to use artificial intelligence tools, know that you must properly cite it in the appendix. This documentation should include the appellations of the used tools, how you used them (ex. what questions you asked) and in what form they were incorporated in your work (ex. copying identical paragraphs or sentences, paraphrased paragraphs or sentences, etc.).

To cite properly content created by artificial intelligence, you can consult resources provided by the library of the University of Toronto (<https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/c.php?g=251103&p=5296636>) or those published by many other institutions, available online.

## **Course Schedule and activities**

**Week 1 – January 9 - Introduction: What is political sociology about?**

**Week 2 – January 16 – Defining Power and the Political**

**FIRST BLOCK- Understanding the State: Macro-Level Approaches and Theoretical Frameworks**

**Week 3 – January 23 – State and Society in the Marxist tradition**

**Week 4 – January 30 – State and Society in the Weberian tradition**

**Week 5 – February 6 – Colonial and Patriarchal Foundations of Modern States**

**Week 6 – February 13 – The welfare state**

**READING WEEK (February 16- February 20)**

**Week 7 – February 27 – Midterm**

**SECOND BLOCK - Shifting Scales: Transitioning from Macro to Meso and Micro Perspectives in Political Sociology**

**Week 8 – March 6 – State breakdowns: revolutions, rebellions and major political crises**

**Week 9 – March 13 – Relationship between political parties and social movements**

**Week 10 – March 20 – Political socialization and (de)politicization**

**Week 11 – March 27 – Synthesis and Extension of Course Content with End-of-Term Feedback**

**Week 12 – April 3 – No Class: Good Friday**

## **Reading list**

**Week 1 – January 9 – Introduction: What is political sociology about?**

No Readings

**Week 2 – January 16 – Defining Power and the Political**

- **Reading:** Pansardi, P., & Bindi, M. (2021). The new concepts of power? Power-over, power-to and power-with. In Essays on evolutions in the study of political power (pp. 51-71). Routledge.
- **Reading:** Clemens E. (2016) What is Political sociology? Cambridge and Malden: Polity. Pp. 5-24.

## **FIRST BLOCK- Understanding the State: Macro-Level Approaches and Theoretical Frameworks**

### **Week 3 – January 23 – State and Society in the Marxist tradition**

- **Reading:** Karl Marx, “Wage Labor and Capital,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Tucker, pp. 203- 219
- **Reading:** Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Tucker, pp. 594-617

### **Week 4 – January 30 – State and Society in the Weberian tradition**

- **Reading:** Weber, Max. 1958. “Politics as a Vocation” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 77-128.
- **Reading:** Weber M. (2019) *Economy and society: A New Translation*. Translated by Tribe Keith. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press. Pp. 335-341 ; Pp. 450-459.

### **Week 5 – February 6 – Colonial and Patriarchal Foundations of Modern States**

- **Reading:** Federici, S. (2009). The accumulation of labor and the degradation of women. In *Caliban and the witch* (pp. 61–132). Autonomedia.
- **Watch In-class:** Short documentary film : *Invasion* by Michael Toledano, Sam Vinal & Franklin López, 2020 <https://unistoten.camp/media/invasion/>

### **Week 6 – February 13 – The welfare state**

- **Reading:** G. Esping-Andersen. 1990. Introduction and Chapter 1 in *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton University Press), 1-34.
- **Reading:** Aspalter, C. (2006) 'The East Asian welfare model', *International Journal of Social welfare*, vol 15, no 4, pp 290-301
- **Watch at home:** Fictional film: *I, Daniel Blake* (2016) by Ken Loach  
[https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/14bjeso/alm\\_a991107114353206196](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alm_a991107114353206196)

## **READING WEEK (February 17- February 21)**

### **Week 7 – February 27 – Midterm**

## **SECOND BLOCK - Shifting Scales: Transitioning from Macro to Meso and Micro Perspectives in Political Sociology**

### **Week 8 – March 6 – State breakdowns: revolutions, rebellions and major political crises**

- **Reading:** Goodwin, J. (2003). State-centered approaches to social revolutions: Strengths and limitations of a theoretical tradition. In *Theorizing Revolutions* (pp. 9-35). Routledge.
- **Reading:** Michel Dobry, Harald Wydra, Agnes Horvath, & Bjørn Thomassen. (2015). *Critical Processes and Political Fluidity: A Theoretical Appraisal*. In *Breaking Boundaries* (1st ed., pp. 93-111). Berghahn Books.
- **Reading:** El Chazli, Youssef. 2018. "It takes two (or more) to tango." In *Microfoundations of the Arab uprisings: Mapping interactions between regimes and protesters*, (pp. 135-158). Routledge.

### **Week 9 – March 13 – Relationship between political parties and social movements**

- **Reading:** Blings S. (2020). Niche Parties and Social Movements: Mechanisms of Programmatic Alignment and Party Success. *Government and Opposition*. 55(2), 220-240.
- **Reading:** Somma, N. M., & Donoso, S. (2021). Chile's Student Movement: Strong, Detached, Influential—And Declining?. In *Student Movements in Late Neoliberalism: Dynamics of Contention and Their Consequences* (pp. 241-267). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

### **Week 10 – March 20 – Political socialization and (de)politicization**

- **Reading :** Schwarz, C. H. (2019). Political socialisation and intergenerational transmission: life stories of young social movement activists in Morocco. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 26(2), 206–230.  
<https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1080/13629387.2019.1665277> .
- **Reading :** Windisch, S., Simi, P., Blee, K.M., DeMichele, M. (2022). More Than Walking Away: Barriers to Disengagement Among Former White Supremacists. In: Perry, B., Gruenewald, J., Scrivens, R. (eds) *Right-Wing Extremism in Canada and the United States* . Palgrave Hate Studies. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

### **Week 11 – March 27 – Synthesis and Extension of Course Content with End-of-Term Feedback**

- **Reading:** Hamidi, C. (2023). Cherry picking and politics: Conceptualizing ordinary forms of politicization. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 36(1), 57-75.

### **Week 12 – April 3 – No Class: Good Friday**