

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

**Winter 2025**

**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.

The diversity of perspectives explored goes even further. We will include theories of the political arising from different geographical regions and communities around the world. 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 a scholarly and evidenced manner
5. Reintegrate the analysis of the political in historical and ec
6. Understand the basic concepts and debates in political sociology
7. Recognize the various perspectives and approaches to political sociology
8. Putting the current issues facing the region into historical perspective

### **Session outline**

The core components that form the backbone of each session are:

- **Group Work:** Collaborate with peers to discuss and develop reflections to share with the rest of the class or to advance your assignments, depending on the session's objectives.

- **Group Discussion:** Engage in a guided discussion, moderated by the instructor, focused on the week's content.
- **Closing Presentation:** Each session will conclude with a lecture of varying length, summarizing and reinforcing the essential elements covered.

This structure will be adapted and modified as needed during the term.

## Evaluation Components

Type	Due Date	Percentage
<b>In-class participation</b>	Ongoing	15%
<b>Personnel political reflection</b>	February 14	15%
<b>Midterm</b>	February 28	35%
<b>Final exam</b>	Exam period	35%

### ***In-class participation (15%) [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:

- 6 points, simply rewards **attendance** in the 12 different sessions of the course.
- 9 points will be awarded according to **class participation** and to a **question related** to the reading of the week, at least two hours before the beginning of the class.

All students benefit from an 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 0.5 points related to attendance and 1 point related to participation. It is not possible to post the question related to the reading of the week on Quercus for an absent student.

### ***Personal political reflection (15%) [February 14]***

You will prepare a 1200-word paper (excluding the bibliography). In this paper, you will explore a topic of your choice by analyzing key elements of the text(s) and offering your personal interpretation of the ideas they present. You must then establish a connection between these ideas and your own experiences and/or personal thoughts on the subject. This second part of the paper is just as important as the first. Ideally, the discussion will be enriched by the exchanges we have had in class. If you have a personal interest or specific experience related to a topic we have not yet covered in class, you may choose that topic, provided you can justify its relevance.

More details will be announced on Quercus later. The paper must be submitted by February 14 at 5:59 p.m.

### ***Midterm (35%) [February 28]***

The objective of the midterm is to evaluate students' comprehension of the central concepts and arguments covered in lectures and assigned readings. This assessment will consist entirely of written responses and will not include any multiple-choice questions.

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

The final exam will consist of two components: multiple-choice questions, which will account for two-thirds of the total grade, and an open-ended question, contributing the remaining one-third of the grade.

## **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 through the Library Reading List. 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 enhance their learning or assist with assignments in this course, **except** for the **annotated bibliography** and the **final paper**. 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 10 - Introduction**

**Week 2 – January 17 – What is political? What is political sociology about?**

In-class activity: how to critically read a scientific paper

**Week 3 – January 24 – Defining power**

**Week 4 – January 31 – State formation and nationalism: bringing history back!**

**Week 5 – February 7 – Colonialism and dispossession**

**Week 6 – February 14 – Class struggle in capitalist society: An outdated question?**

In-class activity: collective reflection on key learnings to date

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

**Week 7 – February 28 – Midterm**

**Week 8 – March 7 – The welfare state and the new liberal threat**

**Week 9 – March 14 – Police and policing: What for?**

**Week 10 – March 21 – State breakdowns: revolutions, rebellions and major political crises**

**Week 11 – March 28 – Social movements: plurality and tensions in a movement**

**Week 12 – April 4 – Looking Back: Course Recap and Feedback**

## **Reading list**

**Week 1 – January 10 - Introduction**

No Readings

**Week 2 – January 17 – What is political? What is political sociology about?**

- **Reading:** Clemens E. (2016) What is Political sociology? Cambridge and Malden: Polity. Pp. 1-24
- **Reading:** Hamidi, C. (2023) Cherry Picking and Politics: Conceptualizing Ordinary Forms of Politicization. *Int J Polit Cult Soc* 36, 57–75.

**Week 3 – January 24 – Defining power**

- **Reading:** Weber M. (2019) Economy and society: A New Translation. Translated by Tribe Keith. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press. Pp. 108-138 (chapter 1: §5- §17) ; Pp. 335-341 ; Pp. 450-459 (chapter 4).
- **Reading:** Lynch R. A. (2010) Foucault's theory of power. In: Taylor D, ed. *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts*. Key Concepts. Acumen Publishing; pp.13-26.
- **Reading:** Bourdieu P. (2014). Lecture of 21 November 1991. *On the state: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989-1992*. Cambridge: UK. Polity Press. Pp. 305-321

**Week 4 – January 31 – State formation and nationalism: bringing history back!**

- **Reading:** Gerstenberger H. (2007) Impersonal Power: History and Theory of the Bourgeois State. Boston: Brill. Pp. 631-687
- **Reading:** Bourdieu P. (2014). Lecture of 17 January 1991. *On the state: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989-1992*. Cambridge: UK. Polity Press. Pp. 122-135
- **Reading:** Anderson B. (1991). Introduction. In: *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 2nd edn. 1983. London : Verso. Pp.1-7

**Week 5 – February 7 – Colonial and patriarchal foundations of capitalism**

- **Reading:** Patnaik, U., & Patnaik, P. (2021). Chapter 8. Capitalism and Colonialism. In: *Capital and Imperialism : Theory, History, and the Present*. Monthly Review Press. pp. 115-127
- **Reading:** Federici, S. (2009). The accumulation of labor and the degradation of women. In *Caliban and the witch* (pp. 61–132). Autonomedia.

#### **Week 6 – February 14 – Developmental and New liberal States**

- **Reading:** M. Woo-Cumings (1999). Introduction in *The Developmental State*. Cornell University Press, 1-31
- **Reading:** Harvey, D. (2005). The Neoliberal State. In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 64-86.

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

#### **Week 7 – February 28 – Midterm**

#### **Week 8 – March 7 – The welfare state and the new liberal threat**

- **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

#### **Week 9 – March 14 – Police and prisons: What for?**

- **Reading:** Vitale, A. S. (2021). The Police Are Not Here to Protect You. In *The End of Policing*. Verso.
- **Reading:** Boutros, M. (2024). The epistemic power of the police. *Theoretical Criminology*, 28(4), 495-515. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13624806241263916>

#### **Week 10 – March 21 – State breakdowns: revolutions, rebellions and major political crises**

- **Reading 1:** Hmed, C. “Abeyance networks, contingency and structures. History and origins of the Tunisian revolution”, *Revue française de science politique*, 2012/5–6 (Vol. 62), p. 797–820. DOI: 10.3917/rfsp.625.797
- **Reading 2:** 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.

#### **Week 11 – March 28 – Social movements: plurality and tensions in a movement**

- **Reading 1:** Kathleen M. Blee. 2018. *Understanding Racist Activism: Theory, Methods and Research*. Taylor and Francis, pp.121-145 (Chapter 10); 146-160 (Chapter 11).

- **Reading 2:** Malaena J. Taylor and Mary Bernstein. 2019. «Denial, Deflection, and Distraction: Neutralizing Charges of Racism by the Tea Party Movement», *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 24(20): 137-156.

**Week 12 – April 4 – Looking Back: Course Recap and Feedback**

No Readings