

POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY: 3MM3- FALL 2020

Instructor: Neil McLaughlin
Email: nmclaugh@mcmaster.ca
Lecture: Monday 7:00pm to 10:00pm
Room: Virtual Classroom

Office: KTH 620
Office Hours: Monday, 6:00pm to 7:00pm

Course Description

This class will provide an introduction to various political sociology theories and debates and teach students to choose between competing scholarly/journalistic and partisan sources in order to develop informed and nuanced positions on selected controversies in the field and in our society at large. Writing, careful reading and balanced and nuanced argumentation will be stressed. The class will deal with debates about how the US and Canada differ sociologically, socialism in America, debates about protest versus electoral paths to reform, political extremism such as Nazism and Stalinism, the spread of conspiracy theories and questions of the social psychology of extremism and controversies about political correctness and/or corporatization in higher education.

Course Objectives

Class Objectives

- 1) Read and comprehend a significant number of peer reviewed political sociology articles and connect them to lectures and class themes. Students will be asked to write short essays answering questions about the 6 major themes in the class, connecting the readings to your answers.
- 2) Gain familiarity with selected theories: theories of extremism, the neglected political sociology of Du Bois, the comparative political sociology of Seymour Martin Lipset, the work of France Fox Piven, theories on credentials and/or neo-liberalism and the politics of professors in higher education, theories about conspiracy theories, the social psychology of authoritarianism and American exceptionalism.
- 3) By the end of the class, students will have basic familiarity with theories about why there is no socialism in America, will know some of the key socialist intellectuals in 20th century America, they know what Fascism and Stalinism is, will know who George Soros is and be able to discuss the controversies about him, will know about debates in the political sociology literature on protests and voting registration in the United States, will have basic knowledge about debates

on political correctness and political diversity on campuses, have a sense of key issue in academic freedom-free speech debates on campuses and know something about funding in Canadian higher education compared to the US.

Required Materials and Texts

All readings are available on Avenue to Learn, listed below week by week, and posted clearly marked on Avenue to Learn by week.

Class Format

Class details: I will record A Zoom greeting with my face and voice, for the beginning of each class, and then record an audio and PowerPoint presentation for all lectures broken up into manageable chunks (20 minutes, or 30 minutes, or 50 minutes – for a total of closer to 3 hours each week) and post everything on Avenue. All lectures and PowerPoints will be available in advance of the class time (I am aiming for a couple of weeks in advance maybe more especially for the first half of the class but I can promise they will be there for the class time). You can listen to the lectures and go over the PowerPoints on your own time. You need not be available for the class time, Mondays 7:00pm to 10:00pm.

I will be available on Zoom, however, during this time as well as an hour before for office hour. I will set aside the first hour and a half of class time, to answer specific questions about the class and material, on Zoom, live. The second hour and a half, will be available for Zoom discussions of the material for students who want to dig deeper into the material. There are no grades for these sessions – they are optional. I do think that making time to ask questions and engage with me, and with others, will make it easier to write A quality answers to the questions about the lectures but this is optional. I will post answers to questions that are asked in these sessions that are relevant to everyone: details and clarifications about the material and the sessions. The discussion sessions, however, will not be posted, in order to encourage as open discussion as possible. You need not buy any articles or books for the class: the readings are all on Avenue, paid for already by your tuition that gives us access to peer-reviewed scholarship. I will only be using Zoom and Avenue to Learn. This and internet access is all that you need. I will post the specific questions you need to answer closer to the deadlines which are now clearly marked on Avenue. I will also post instructions for getting newspaper articles and opinion magazine articles as well as a lecture on Zoom on the use of media sources related to questions of credibility and political diversity and bias. I will also post grading rubrics for the essays, before they are due.

Course Evaluation – Overview

5 short essays (10%, 30%, 15%, 15% and 30%) based on the readings and lectures with some requirement to read and cite opinion magazines and newspapers.

Course Evaluation – Details

10% Essay of between two and three double spaced pages commenting on Seymour Martin Lipset's political sociology based on the readings in response to question posted on Avenue to Learn (due noon Sept 28th).

30% Essay between five and six double spaced pages commenting on the issue of radical change and socialism in America based on the readings with two opinion magazine articles and two newspaper articles cited. (due noon, October 19th).

15%. Essay between two and three double spaced pages commenting on the issue on protests and conspiracy theories and in United States and Canada based on the readings with two opinion magazine articles and two newspaper articles cited (due Noon, November 2).

15%. Essay between two and three double spaced pages commenting on the issue on communism and fascism and the social psychology of authoritarianism in United States and Canada based on the readings with two opinion magazine articles and two newspaper articles cited (due noon, November 23).

30% Essay between five and six double spaced pages commenting on the issue of political diversity at McMaster based on the readings and the Haidt video with two opinion magazine articles and two newspaper articles cited as well as two specific "cases" from McMaster discussed (either class experiences you have had in two classes, or two general controversies at McMaster or one of each depending on your choice) (due noon December 16).

All assignments require a cover page, and biography with references with a style of your choice, and an attachment with the articles you are using none of which count for the above page target and limit. Fuller details on format are posted on avenue to learn, along with the due dates.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

The outline of readings and the dates for topics below is approximate and may change as the class progresses. Announcements of changes and revisions will be made in class.

Intro: Monday Sept 14

Seymour Martin Lipset, "Steady Work: An Academic Memoir," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1996, 22: 1-27.

Lipset's American Exceptionalism: Monday Sept 21

Seymour Martin Lipset, "Historical Traditions and National Characteristics: A Comparative Analysis of Canada and the United States," *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, Vol 11: 1986: 113-155.

Seymour Martin Lipset, (1959). "Democracy and Working-Class Authoritarianism," *American Sociological Review* Vol 24:4: 482-501.

Seymour Martin Lipset, "Canada and The United States: The Great Divide," *Borderland Project*, 2004: 1-6

Socialism in America: Monday Sept 28

Gary Dorrien, "Michael Harrington and the Left Wing of the Possible," *CrossCurrents*, Vol 60: No 2: 257-282.

"Toward a Socialist Theory of Racism" by Cornel West
January 3, 2017 (on-line)

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Socialist-Feminism*, (on-line). 1976.

Critiques and Alternative Views: Monday October 5

Edward Grabb, James Curtis and Douglas Baer, "Defining Moments and Recurring Myths: Comparing Canadians and Americans after the American Revolution," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 2000: 37: 4: 373-418.

Jeff Denis, "Contact Theory in a Small-Town Settler-Colonial Context," *American Sociological Review*, 80: 2015: 218-242.

Doug Baer, Edward Grabb, and William Johnston, "The Values of Canadians and Americans" *Social Forces*, 68:3: 693-713.

Piven's political sociology: does protest and/or voting work: Oct 19

Christiopher Uggen and Jeff Manza, "Democratic Contraction? Political Consequences of Felon Disenfranchisement in the United States," *American Sociological Review*: 67: 6: 2002: 777-803.

Frances Fox Piven, "Can Power from Below Change the World," *American Sociological Review*, 73:2008: 1-14.

Soros and conspiracies: Oct 26

McLaughlin, N. and Trilupaityte, S., 2013. The international circulation of attacks and the reputational consequences of local context: George Soros's difficult reputation in Russia, Post-Soviet Lithuania and the United States. *Cultural Sociology*, 7(4), pp.431-446.

Iga Mergler and Neil McLaughlin "Scapegoating George Soros," *The Conversation*, Spring 2019.

<https://theconversation.com/scapegoating-george-soros-how-media-savvy-far-right-activists-spread-lies-114550>

Neil McLaughlin and Iga Mergler "How Donald will try to scapegoat George Soros to win re-election," *The Conversation*, Summer 2020 (Link on Avenue).

Peter Plenta, "Conspiracy Theories as a political Instrument: Utilization of anti-Soros narratives in Central Europe," *Contemporary Politics*, June 2020: 1-20

Fascism? Monday Nov 2

Bart Bonikowski, "Ethno-Nationalist Populism and the Mobilization of Collective Resentment," *The British Journal of Sociology* Volume 68: 181-213.

Michael Mann, "Were the Perpetrators of Genocide "Ordinary Men" or "Real Nazis"? Results from Fifteen Hundred Biographies," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 14: 3: 2000: 331-366.

Communism? Monday Nov 9

Aldon Morris, "WEB Du Bois at the Center: From Science, Civil Rights Movement Black Lives Matter," *British Journal of Sociology*, 68: 1: 2017: 1-14.

Alvin Gouldner, "Stalinism: A Study of Internal Colonialism," *Telos*: 1978: 5-47.

The Psychosocial of political authoritarianism: Monday Nov 16

Neil McLaughlin, "Escape from Freedom Revisited," *Sociological Theory*, 1996.

Janet Afary and Roger Friedland, "Critical Theory, Authoritarianism and the politics of lipstick from the Weimar Republic to the Contemporary Middle East," *Critical Research on Religion*, 6:3: 2018: 243-268.

Political Correctness/Political Correctness on Campus: Monday, Nov 23

Neil Gross and Ethan Fosse, (2012). "Why are Professors Liberal," *Theory and Society* 41: 2: 127-168.

N.R. Nakaie and Barry Adam, "Political Affiliation of Canadian University Professors," *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 33:4: 2008.

Haidt and Hetrodox perspectives: Monday Nov 30

Jesse Graham, Jonathan Haidt and Brian Nosek, "Liberals and Conservatives Rely on Different Sets of Moral Foundations." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96:5: 2009: 1029-1046.

Haidt video on Avenue

Professor's perspective on socialism, free speech, the far right,` higher education funding and the Peterson controversy: Monday Dec 7

France Woolley "The Political Economy of University Education in Canada," *Canadian Review of Economics*, 1-34.

I have also posted recommended viewing and reading for each of the class. These may be of use and interest to you and you can them in your essays, but the essays will be graded on the use of the required readings and lectures, as well as newspaper and opinion magazines as clearly set out in instructions.

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

Assignments should be submitted in Word or PDF on Avenue to Learn, in the clearly marked assignment slots on Avenue to Learn. The dates are marked on the course description

Late Assignments

Assignments will lose 2% a day for late submissions.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

The McMaster Student Absence Form (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>) is a self reporting

tool for Undergraduate Students to report absences that last up to 3 days and provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work. Please note, this tool cannot be used during any final examination period.

You may submit a maximum of 1 Academic Work Missed request per term. It is YOUR responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation.

If you are absent more than 3 days, exceed 1 request per term, or are absent for a reason other than medical, you MUST visit your Associate Dean's Office (Faculty Office). You may be required to provide supporting documentation.

This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user-names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Other Course Notes

1. All written work (exams, etc.) is expected to meet the standards of university work. Grades will be based on mechanics, style, clarity and diction, in addition to ideas. This is a sociology class, so the major focus will be on learning sociological ideas. But clear thinking is related to clear writing, and the grading will reflect this. In addition, sociology is part of a general liberal arts education and well-developed writing skills are one important selling point for liberal arts graduates on the contemporary job market. So writing matters, and will be graded accordingly! I am, however, happy to help you improve and have set up time in class to do so.
2. Students are expected to listen to all lectures and are responsible for all material in lectures and in course readings. I will be happy to discuss the class material with students during office hours or other arranged times.
3. Students should check the Sociology Department website for notices pertaining to Sociology classes or departmental business.
4. Listening to lectures and doing the reading is a basic requirement. But I would also HIGHLY recommend a serious study program, where you go over your notes before and after classes – the essays will require serious engagement with the material.
5. There is a significant amount of material to be covered for the course, and it all

should be discussed on the assignments. Serious engagement with both the lectures and the readings is essential.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a [RISO](#) accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar’s Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any

changes. Make sure you check the announcements in the Avenue to Learn, for the class. I use this function frequently.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-89	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F