

Department of Sociology  
Dartmouth College  
Winter 2019

Course: Power, Politics and the State (Sociology 53 & PBPL 82.02)

Time: MWF 11:30-12:35  
Tuesday 12:15-1:05 (X-hour)

Instructor: John Campbell  
306C Blunt Hall  
Office phone: 646-2542

Office Hours: Monday 1:00-3:00 (and by appointment)

E-Mail: I will try to answer e-mail queries as soon as I can. However, given the rather large amount of e-mail that I receive, I can make no guarantees how fast that will be. For the same reason, my responses may be rather short. Please do not take offense.

Course Description: Is America in crisis? The nation is more deeply divided politically, economically, and ideologically than it has been for generations. Washington is in gridlock. Inequality and poverty have been rising. People have become polarized over racial, religious and social issues. Some say the politics of identity and self-interest have been unleashed at the expense of the nation's general welfare. Some disagree. This course explores these issues. It examines how political, economic and ideological power has been mobilized recently in the United States and with what consequences, including the conservative shift in American politics, the 2008 financial crisis, the election of Donald Trump, and possibly the decline of the United States as the world's superpower. The course draws on scholarly work in sociology, political science and economics.

Required Texts: The following required books for the course are on reserve in Baker-Berry Library. Depending on the direction our conversations go, there may also occasionally be additional reading material posted on the course's Canvas website.

1. John Campbell. 2018. *American Discontent: The Rise of Donald Trump and Decline of the Golden Age*. New York: Oxford University Press.
2. Francesco Duina. 2017. *Broke and Patriotic: Why Poor Americans Love Their Country*. Stanford: Stanford California Press.
3. John Gaventa. 1980. *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
4. Tony Judt. 2011. *Ill Fares the Land*. New York: Penguin.
5. Theda Skocpol and Vanesa Williamson. 2016. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*. New York: Norton.
6. Joseph Stiglitz. 2010. *Freefall: America, Free Markets, and the Sinking of the World Economy*. New York: Norton.

Required Documentaries: You are also required to view two 60-minute documentaries on-line. One should be viewed before class on January 23 and the second should be viewed before class on February 4. Both can be streamed to your computer. Website addresses for each of them are listed in the course outline below.

General Course Requirements: All students are expected to attend lectures, do the reading, watch the documentaries, participate in class discussions, take the exams, and write a research paper.

Examinations: There will be two take-home exams including the final exam. Both will involve essay and short answer questions. Both will be open book, but you will *not* be permitted to discuss them with anyone else. The final exam will not be cumulative—it will only cover material after the first exam. The exam dates are listed below in the course outline.

Deadlines for Exams and Papers: Due dates for all exams and the research paper are listed in the course outline below. Take home exams and research papers turned in after the due date will be graded down according to how late they arrive. In very unusual circumstances late exams or papers may be accepted without being graded down, but only if (1) you know in advance that you will be unable for extraordinary reasons to turn the exam or paper in on time and you make arrangements with the instructor at least one week before the scheduled due date, or (2) you are suddenly hospitalized or become seriously ill, have documentation to that effect from a doctor or dean, and consult with the instructor as soon as possible.

Class Discussions: At the end of every section or subsection of the course we will have a class discussion based largely but not necessarily entirely on the reading and lecture material in that part of the course. These discussions will be organized in a variety of ways. Some will involve debates; some will involve addressing a hypothetical or real case study; some will involve answering specific questions posed at the beginning of the class that day.

Research Paper: Each student will be required to write a research paper (roughly 10 to 15 double-spaced pages). This will involve gathering data on a member of Congress from your home state and using that data to test various theories of political power covered in the course. It will require a considerable amount of time. For more details on the paper see the “Research Paper Guidelines” posted on the Canvas website. ***Papers are due in class Monday, February 25.***

Grading: Grades will be based on the total number of points earned on the exams, research paper, and class participation. Note that recent student evaluations often remark that I am a hard grader. It would not be unusual for students to need 92% of the total points possible in the course to receive grades in the A range; 82-91% of points possible to receive grades in the B range; 72-81% of points possible to receive grades in the C range; and 62-71% of points possible to receive a D. If you fail to turn in an exam or the research paper you will automatically fail the course.

Midterm Exam	30%	(60 points)
Final Exam	30%	(60 points)
Research Paper	30%	(60 points)
Class Participation	10%	(20 points)

At the end of the term everyone’s point totals will be calculated, the distribution of these individual point totals will be calculated and initial cutting points for letter grades will be assigned. The overall class grade point average (GPA) will then be calculated. If the class GPA is too low (less than about 3.0), then cutting points will be adjusted as necessary to bring the class GPA up to an acceptable level. If the initial class GPA is higher than about 3.0, the cutting points will not be adjusted. Once the final cutting points have been determined, then each person will be assigned a final letter grade. The class GPA will very likely end up being about 3.0. The last time the course was offered roughly 20% of students were in the A/A- range; 60% were in the B+/B/B- range; and 20% were in the C+/C/C- range.

Honor Principle: Examinations and the research paper will be conducted in accord with the principles of academic honor detailed in Dartmouth’s *Organization, Regulations and Courses* and in the *Student*

*Handbook* and on the Dartmouth website <https://students.dartmouth.edu/judicial-affairs/policy/academic-honor-principle>.

Students with Disabilities: I encourage students with disabilities, including “invisible” disabilities like chronic diseases, learning disabilities, and psychiatric disabilities to discuss with me after class or during my office hours by the end of the second week of the term appropriate academic adjustments or accommodations that might be helpful to you. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Academic Skills Center may be consulted to verify the documentation of the disability.

Students from Low-Income Backgrounds: If you encounter financial challenges related to this class, please let me know. There are resources on campus that might be useful for you.

Staying Healthy at Dartmouth: The academic environment at Dartmouth is challenging, our terms are intensive and fast-paced, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life. There are several resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including the following:

1. Your undergraduate dean (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~upperde/>)
2. Counseling and Human Development (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~chd/>)
3. The Student Wellness Center (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/>).

I encourage you to use these resources. Feel free to speak with me throughout the term about these issues if you like.

Reading Assignments: The reading assignments for the course are listed below in the course outline. It is expected that you will finish reading the material listed for each section of the course by the time we have class discussion at the end of that section of the course.

## Course Outline:

Jan 4 Introduction to the course: What is power?

### **Part I. THEORIES OF POLITICAL POWER**

What is power? How is it defined? How is it measured? What are the methodological problems in studying power?

Jan 7 Community power studies  
John Gaventa. 1980. *Power and Powerlessness* (begin reading)

Jan 9 Elite, pluralist and class theories of power  
John Gaventa. 1980. *Power and Powerlessness* (continue reading)

Jan 11 Institutional and ideational theories of power  
John Gaventa. 1980. *Power and Powerlessness* (finish reading)

Jan 14 Discussion

### **Part IIa. EVIDENCE: EVALUATING THE THEORIES**

How does power operate in politics? To what extent is state policy determined by pluralist, elite and class forces? Does pluralist theory describe American politics accurately or perpetuate myths about it? Does American politics need experts and technocratic elites? Do class forces have greater effect on American politics than pluralist or elite forces? Are class forces evenly balanced in American politics?

Jan 16 Pluralist theory: What shapes public opinion? Do fake news and alternative facts matter?  
Theda Skocpol and Vanesa Williamson. 2016. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (begin reading)

Jan 18 Pluralist theory: Voting and political parties  
Theda Skocpol and Vanesa Williamson. 2016. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (continue reading)

Jan 21 **NO CLASS:** Martin Luther King Jr. holiday

Jan 22 **X-HOUR:** Elite theory: Who are the experts? Should we believe them?  
Theda Skocpol and Vanesa Williamson. 2016. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (continue reading)

Jan 23 Class theory: Business-government relations  
Theda Skocpol and Vanesa Williamson. 2016. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (continue reading)  
**View on-line before class:** *Big Sky, Big Money* (PBS Frontline 2012)  
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/big-sky-big-money/>

Jan 25 Class theory: Labor-government relations  
Theda Skocpol and Vanesa Williamson. 2016. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (finish reading)

Jan 28 Discussion

### **Part IIb. EVIDENCE: EVALUATING THE THEORIES**

Do institutions make a difference in American politics? Do institutions affect how policymaking is done in America? Is it different in other countries? Do ideas matter in American politics? If so, how do they matter and what effect do they have? Are political elites and other political actors motivated by self-interest or by ideology and loftier ideals?

Jan 30 Institutional theory: Tax policy

Francesco Duina. 2017. *Broke and Patriotic: Why Poor Americans Love Their Country* (begin reading)

Feb 1 Institutional theory: National origins of policy ideas

Francesco Duina. 2017. *Broke and Patriotic: Why Poor Americans Love Their Country* (continue reading)

Feb 4 Ideational theory: Frames, race and religion

Francesco Duina. 2017. *Broke and Patriotic: Why Poor Americans Love Their Country* (finish reading)

**View on-line before class:** *God in America: Of God and Caesar*

<https://www.pbs.org/video/frontline-god-in-america-six-of-god-and-caesar/>

Feb 6 Discussion

**TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAM DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS**

### **Part III. WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE (I)? THE RISE OF NEOLIBERALISM**

Why have politics shifted in a more conservative direction in America? What is neoliberalism? Why has it become a widely accepted policy paradigm? What sorts of ideas have been used to get people to believe in neoliberalism? Are there any alternatives to neoliberalism? Are young people more inclined to embrace neoliberalism than older people?

Feb 8 The power of paradigms, decline of Keynesianism and rise of neoliberalism

Tony Judt. 2011. *Ill Fares the Land* (begin reading)

Feb 11 International diffusion of neoliberalism

Tony Judt. 2011. *Ill Fares the Land* (continue reading)

**TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAM DUE IN CLASS**

Feb 13 Myths, metaphors and neoliberalism

Tony Judt. 2011. *Ill Fares the Land* (finish reading)

Feb 15 Discussion

### **Part IV. WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE (II)? THE FINANCIAL CRISIS**

How did neoliberalism affect the 2008 financial crisis? Did the crisis repudiate neoliberalism? Is another financial crisis likely in the years ahead? What effects did the financial crisis have on Americans? How did the financial crisis affect young people in America?

Feb 18 Neoliberalism and the financial crisis  
Joseph Stiglitz. 2010. *Freefall* (begin reading pp. 1-210. You don't need to read the rest of the book unless you want to.)  
Movie in class: *The Warning* (PBS Frontline 2013)  
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/warning/>

Feb 20 Roots of the financial crisis  
Joseph Stiglitz. 2010. *Freefall* (continue reading pp. 1-210)

Feb 22 Response to the financial crisis  
Joseph Stiglitz. 2010. *Freefall* (finish reading pp. 1-210)  
Movie in class: *Money, Power and Wall Street: Part 3* (PBS Frontline 2012)  
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/money-power-wall-street/#video-3>

Feb 25 Discussion  
**RESEARCH PAPER DUE IN CLASS**

### **Part V. WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE (III)? IS AMERICA BREAKING APART?**

What are the forces that have polarized American politics? Is polarization inevitable? How did polarization contribute to Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential election? What are the implications of Trump's presidency for American democracy? Are the forces of polarization and unity we see in America today like those we see in Europe? Is democracy in jeopardy?

Feb 27 Forces for polarization and unity  
John Campbell. 2018. *American Discontent* (begin reading)

Mar 1 The rise of Donald Trump  
John Campbell. 2018. *American Discontent* (continue reading)

Mar 4 The death of democracy?  
John Campbell. 2018. *American Discontent* (finish reading)  
Movie in class: *Trump's Takeover* (PBS Frontline 2018)  
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/trumps-takeover/>

Mar 6 Discussion  
**TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS**

Mar 12 **TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM DUE IN MY OFFICE, 306C BLUNT HALL,  
ABSOLUTELY NO LATER THAN 12:00 NOON.**