Political Sociology

This course is intended as an introduction to a major sub-field of sociology, the sociology of politics. We will begin with an examination of basic concepts, traditional authority relations and the birth of citizenship in the contemporary Western world. We will then explore such problems as the social conditions of democracy, class conflict and lower-class social movements, bureaucratization and the elitist critique of democracy, the weakness of American socialism and the nature of class/elite power in the United States, and the political-cultural foundations of democratic politics. In the concluding part of the course we will concentrate on the rise of Nazism in Germany in an attempt to isolate some of the factors which can lead to democratic breakdown.

Course Requirements and Grading

There will be a mid-term quiz, two papers (5-7 pages each) and a final exam. The mid-term quiz will consist of 6 short definitions of concepts and will be in class (30 minutes). The final exam will consist of 6 definitions on the mid-term pattern plus two broader questions. The two essay topics will be determined by the instructor and will require students to synthesize course material (no additional reading required).

Mid-term quiz: 15%
2 Essays (5-7 pages): 25%x2 = 50%
Final Exam 25%
Class Attendance and Participation 10%

Week One. Introduction to the Field of Political Sociology

Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man, 1-24.


Week Two. Traditional Authority Relations and the Birth of the Nation-State in the West

Week Three. The Historical Development and Social Conditions of Liberal Democracy


Lipset, *Political Man*, pp.25-86.


Week Four. Social Class and Politics, and Elections


Week Five. Classes, Status Groups, and the Democratic Class Struggle


Week Six. Bureaucracy and Democracy

Max Weber, "Bureaucracy" in Gerth and Mills, pp.196-244.

Robert Michels, *Political Parties*, pp.40-114

Week Seven. Bureaucracy, Elites, and Oligarchy: Leaders, Followers and Critics

Mid-term quiz (Tuesday, October 14; half-hour in class)


Fall Break

Week Eight. Liberal Democracy and the Pacification of Class Struggle: American Exceptionalism?

Werner Sombart, *Why is There no Socialism in the United States?*


**First Essay due (Tuesday November 4)**

Week Ten. Charisma and the Social Base of Extremist Politics


Week Eleven. The Contradictions of Imperial Germany and the Rise of Nazism.

Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany,* pp.1-125; 172-203.

**Second Essay Due (Thursday, December 4)**

Week Twelve: Democratic Breakdown in Weimar Germany

Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany,* 328-396.


Week Thirteen. Nazism as a Social Movement

Abel, *Why Hitler Came into Power,* pp.113-289.

*Final Exam, December 21, 7 pm.*