

Political Sociology: Power, Citizenship, and the State

Is democracy the best system of government? Are there viable alternatives to it? How is democracy achieved and what threats does it face in a Post-9/11 era? In an increasing globalized world, does it make sense to refer to citizens, states, and power in national terms? What are nation states and why have they become the dominant form of ruling over people? What is power and what forms can it take? Who elects our political representatives: markets or voters? These are some of the questions we will analyze in this course, which reviews major approaches to political sociology through explorations of the following topics: state formation, civil society, citizenship, democracy, elections, contentious politics, terrorism, globalization, markets, media coverage and conflict. A strong emphasis is put on historical analyses and empirical studies. After reviewing the relevant literature students will design and write their own original research projects. These must address a theme of political significance and in connection to one of the course's topics. Students will have the opportunity to engage in each step of the research process from question formulation and data collection to empirical analysis and write-up. Along the way we will have workshops on the process of conducting primary research, and on each student's project. While methodological options are open, the course will focus on qualitative methods and the use of interviews, ethnographic, and archival data as primary research evidence.