

Sociology 333: State and Society

Mon - 8:00 - Room 225 | Thu - 8:00 - Room 225

Instructor: Benjamin Quasinowski

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Consultation Hours: Thu – 9:30-10:30 & by appointment

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Course Description

“We have come to take the state for granted as an object of political practice and political analysis while remaining quite spectacularly unclear as to what the state is. We are variously urged to respect the state, or smash the state or study the state; but for want of clarity about the nature of the state such projects remain beset with difficulties”, writes sociologist Philip Abrams in 1977.

Three decades later, Abram’s observation has not lost much of its currency. The state remains of crucial importance for sociology and neighboring disciplines while, in spite of some quite new and interesting approaches, there is still a lack of clarity regarding the question of how to conceptualize and study the state. This course will explore ways of approaching the state as a topic of sociological inquiry.

After a brief look into two sociological classics (Weber and Marx), we will turn to issues in contemporary theorizing of the state, such as questions regarding states’ social and historical contexts (world system, world society, or globalization), the nature of the state (institution, structure, function, actor, imagination, discourse, or fantasy), and how to (empirically) study the state.

Besides discussing several theoretical approaches, we will make use of case studies and exemplary attempts to study states in different regions of the world (with a focus on Central Asia). Thereby, the course will also provide inspiration and encouragement for students to conceptualize their own (theoretical or empirical) prospective research projects.

Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to provide students with an introduction to debates along the line of the state / society divide. Upon completing the course, students should have an understanding of several main theoretical approaches to the state as well as an insight into current discussions and theorizing of the state.

Topics and Readings

Class readings will consist of several classic texts as well as contributions to more recent debates on state and society. Besides the obligatory readings, there will be additional empirical case studies. Readings will be provided to students electronically.

Week I: August 22nd

Mon.: Course Overview & Expectations

Thu.: Introduction: the State as a Topic in Sociological Analysis (Weber I)

Week II: August 29th

Mon.: The State and Modernity (Weber II)

Thu.: Empirical Study (Matveeva)

Week III: Sept. 5th

Mon.: Historical Origins of World-Systems Analysis (Wallerstein I)

Thu.: The Rise of the States-System (Wallerstein II)

Week IV: Sept. 12th

Mon.: States in the World Society (Luhmann)

Thu.: States in the World Society II (Habermas)

Week V: Sept. 19th

Mon.: Democracy and the Welfare State (Offe)

Thu.: Empirical Study (McMann)

Week VI: Sept. 26th

Mon.: Governmentality (Foucault)

Thu.: Empirical Study (Ferguson / Gupta)

Week VII: Oct. 3rd

Mon.: The Myth of the State (Abrams)

Thu.: Empirical Study (Reeves)

Week VIII: Oct. 10th

Mon.: Modern Bureaucracy (Bourdieu)

Thu.: Empirical Study (Fuglerud)

Fall Break October 17th – October 21st No Classes this Week!

Week X: Oct. 24th

Mon.: Lecture

Thu.: State Planning (Scott)

Week XI: Oct. 31st

Mon.: Problems of the State / Society Boundary (Mitchell)

Thu.: Empirical Study (Marat)

Week XII: Nov. 7th

Mon.: **Holiday – No Class!**

Thu.: Globalization: Dissolution of the Nation-State? (Bayart)

Week XIII: Nov. 14th

Mon.: Transnational Migration and the Nation-State (Wimmer / Glick-Schiller)

Thu.: Empirical Study (Culic)

Week XIV: Nov. 21st

Mon.: Rethinking the State (Sharma / Gupta)

Thu.: **Holiday – No Class!**

Week XV: Nov. 28th

Mon.: The Body and the State (Linke)

Thu.: Presentation of Student Papers I

Week XVI: Dec. 5th

Mon.: Presentation of Student Papers II

Thu.: Wrap-Up Discussion

Assignments

Essay – Students will turn in one short essay (2,000 words) that deals with the reading material. Students will examine one of the main theoretical approaches to the state, compare different approaches, or discuss the application of a theoretical approach related to one of the case-studies. Students will be expected to produce a critical evaluation that demonstrates full understanding of the respective topic.

The essays should be composed according to a standard research format. Your choice of format is free, so long as you use the format clearly and consistently. Papers may be submitted to me either in hardcopy or electronically. I will return them to you with comments added. The essay will be due not later than the 30th of November. **Later papers will not be accepted.**

Presentations - Each student is expected to make one presentation based either a) on his/her essay or b) on one of the supplementary case studies. A presentation should last around 15 minutes, and should include both arguments and questions based on the respective topic of the essay or / and the case study, which should be discussed within the class.

Evaluation

Grades will be determined according to attendance/participation, a presentation, and one essay.

Final grades will be determined as follows:

- Participation/Attendance = 50%
- 1 short essay = 30%
- 1 presentation = 20%

The grade scale for the course is:

100-93: A	76-73: C
92-90: -A	72-70: -C
89-87: +B	69-67: +D
86-83: B	66-63: D
80-82: -B	60-62: -D
79-77: +C	<60: F

Academic Honesty

The AUCA Code of Academic Honesty is written in the university handbook, and you are all at least formally aware of the meaning of *cheating* and *plagiarism*. If you have any questions, concerns, or are unsure about what to do in a particular case, please come to me for advice. I will be happy to help you work through any difficulties or uncertainties, particularly those regarding proper citation of sources.

Attendance

Attending class regularly is very important, as a major aspect of this course is participation in our intensive discussions. All absences will affect your attendance grade, but you are allowed a maximum of four absences over the course of the semester. Beyond this allowance, any absences without serious mitigating circumstances will result in a drop from the course. Students are neither to arrive to class late, nor leave early. Should a drop for any of the abovementioned reasons become necessary in the second half of the course, it will be a case of *withdraw and failure*, meaning that you will receive a grade of F for the course.