

Political Sociology

Hunter College-City University of New York

695 Park Ave, NY, NY 10065

Semester

Winter 2026

Instructor

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Class Number

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Office Hours

By Email Appointment Only

Course Description

This political sociology seminar will introduce students to sociological analysis of power and politics. It will examine how social structures like the state, the firm, and the media shape economic and political behavior, governance, and public policy. Key topics will include the politics and state, marriage and the family, the firm and labor markets, social movements and unions, inequality and power, social networks, colonialism, and the role of media in politics. Drawing on classical and contemporary sociological theories, the course encourages students to critically analyze political processes across different societies and historical contexts. By the end of the course, students will develop a sociological understanding of how politics both reflects and reinforces social inequalities.

Learning Objectives

In this class, students will:

- Explore core concepts and theories in political sociology, including power, the state, the firm, legitimacy, and governance
- Analyze the relationship between social structures and political processes and outcomes, with particular attention to race, class, gender, and ethnicity.
- Evaluate how institutions shape—and are shaped by—social and political inequalities at local, national, and global levels.
- Critically assess the role of media and discourse in political power and participation.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center is a service that provides free tutoring to students. The Writing Center has a staff of trained tutors who will work with you to help you become a more effective writer, from planning and organizing a paper, to writing and then proofreading it. The Writing Center is a valuable resource, and I encourage you to use it. http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/rwc

Hunter College Policy on Academic Integrity

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g. plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures. By registering for this course, you are promising to abide by all the requirements stated in this policy. Students in breach of this policy are liable to severe penalty, including disciplinary action. See the Hunter College Undergraduate Bulletin for further explanation. http://catalog.hunter.cuny.edu/content.php?catoid=15&navoid=1448

ADA Policy

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (emotional, medical, physical, and/or learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY, located in Room E1214B, to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call:

(212) 772-4857 or (212) 650-3230. http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/advising/resources/accessability

Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct

In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

a. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646) 610-7272 or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212) 772-4444.
b. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry (colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123
c. CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link: http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-12-1-14-with-links.pdf

Hunter Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Scale
A+	97.5-100
A	92.5-97.4
A-	90.0-92.4
B+	87.5-89.9
B	82.5-87.4
B-	80.0-82.4
C+	77.5-79.9
C	70.0-77.4
D	60.0-69.9
F	0.0-59.9

Evaluation Criteria

Activity	% of Final Grade
Questions	30
Documentary reaction	15
Op-Eds	15
Final exam	40
Total	100

Questions:

Each student will post two (2) questions to Brightspace in response each module. To get full credit, the questions MUST cite the readings (i.e., quoting the text with page citations). Some question examples may be: what you found interesting from the reading? What you not understand from the reading? What did the reading make you think about?

Short Paper:

You will write a short (2–3 page, 12-point font, double spaced) reaction paper to one of the following films:

- The 13th (2016)
- Soundtrack to a Coup d'Etat (2024)
- American Factory (2019)
- Human Flow (2017)
- Winter on Fire: Ukraine's Fight for Freedom (2015)
- Knock Down the House (2019)
- No Other Land (2024)
- How to Survive a Plague (2012)

Each one of these films deal with several topics related to the course (i.e., social stratification and inequality, marriage and the family, the firm, social movements, unions, the state, or social media).

You are expected to critically engage with the film. You must identify the central tension of the film, the politics surrounding that topic, as well as both the main stakeholders and secondary stakeholders involved. You must also identify who has the power, what are the resources that engender that power, and what was the outcome of the political contest. To successfully critique the film, you MUST include at least 3 outside sources (newspaper/magazine/academic articles related to the topic). You must reference properly where you are borrowing your ideas/concepts/theories from (write a bibliography, cite empirical sources in footnotes). This is especially important in our time of fake news where the habit of conveying unchecked so-called “facts” is spreading everywhere, so we will pay close attention to your ability to show your source and discuss their limitations! You must develop an overall argument and show your own voice and perspective.

Op-Eds:

Over the course of the semester, each student will write an op-eds regarding a topic related to contemporary power and politics. The op-eds are between 700-900 words, and should follow the following guidelines:

(1) The first sentence and paragraph is your hook or lead. Why is this important?
(2) The second paragraph (or, nut graph) previews your argument. What is the news value of the story? What argument are you trying to make?
(3) Third and fourth paragraphs supply your evidence for your argument.
(4) Your fifth paragraph is your "to be sure" paragraph. This is your caveat, providing the best evidence against your argument.
(5) Your sixth paragraph is your twist paragraph. Here are you are adding an additional point of related interest to your argument.
(6) Your final paragraph is your conclusion. The conclusion should end with a short memorable sentence (think about the sentence that might be copied and pasted into a twitter thread). Avoid cliches.

Final Exam:

The final will be a 20 question short answer format exam. It will be uploaded to Brightspace at 8am on Thursday January 23, 2026. Each student must complete the exam by 8pm on Thursday January 23, 2026.

Schedule of Classes

Module	Topic	Readings
1	Stratification and Inequality	• https://www.vox.com/2016/5/18/11691818/barone-mocetti-florence • Onyeador, I. N.,Hudson, S. T. J, & Lewis, Jr., N. A (2021). Moving beyond implicit bias training: Policy insights for increasing organizational diversity. Policy Insights for the Behavioral and Brain Sciences
2	Politics of the state 1	• https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2022/02/28/human-toll-war • https://www.teenvogue.com/story/colonialism-explained
3	Politics of the state 2	• https://payourinterns.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Color-Of-Congress-Report.pdf • https://jointcenter.org/racial-ethnic-representation-among-top-staff-in-the-u-s-house-of-representatives/ • https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/02/07/the-changing-face-of-congress/
4	Politics of the people (social movements)	• http://theconversation.com/why-social-movements-like-metoo-seem-to-come-out-of-nowhere-113985 • https://www.vox.com/2014/10/1/6858173/marijuana-legalization-majority-movement • https://www.vox.com/2015/6/26/18093652/same-sex-marriage • https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2021/arab-spring-10-year-anniversary-lost-decade/
5	Politics of the firm 1	• Kalleberg — Good Jobs, Bad Jobs (Chapter 1, 2, 3)
6	Politics of the firm 2	• Granovetter — Getting a job: A study of contacts and careers (Introduction) • Smith, Sandra — Don't put my name on it
7	Politics of the firm 3	• Rivera — NYTimes and ASR
8	Politics of the firm 4	• https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4615373 • https://www.spglobal.com/marketintelligence/en/documents/elusiveparity_final.pdf • https://corpgov.law.harvard.edu/2023/02/22/gender-diversity-in-the-c-suite/ • https://www.forbes.com/sites/shaunharper/2023/09/08/one-black-woman-fortune-500-ceo-remains-after-roz-brewer-vacates-walgreens-leadership-role/

9	Politics of the worker (unions)	• https://www.reuters.com/business/starbucks-closed-23-us-stores-deter-unionizing-agency-claims-2023-12-14/ • https://abc7ny.com/post/nyc-mayor-elect-zohran-mamdani-bernie-sanders-join-starbucks-picket-line-brooklyn/18236841/ • https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2023/10/writers-strike-winners-and-losers?srsltid=AfmBOoobO7yPtWSldvSLfKZ3Uw9WwozTI4U8oH2wvFKR68FuUmDJ6_fm
10	Politics of the family	• Petriglieri, Jennifer. 2020. “Why Working Couples Need to Talk More About Power.” Harvard Business Review Digital Articles, February, 1–5. • https://www.fastcompany.com/90250775/what-its-like-to-date-and-marry-out-of-your-social-class • Timmermans, S. and Prickett, P.J., 2022. Who Counts as Family? How Standards Stratify Lives. American Sociological Review.
11	Politics and the media	• https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018/03/largest-study-ever-fake-news-mit-twitter/555104/ • https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/01/all-possible-realities-are-playing-out-across-infinite-universes/514130/ • https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/local-news-coverage-is-declining-and-that-could-be-bad-for-american-politics/ • https://theconversation.com/the-old-news-business-model-is-broken-making-google-and-facebook-pay-wont-save-journalism-150357 • https://news.stanford.edu/2020/02/27/journalism-and-democracy/ • https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/12/22/22195488/fake-news-social-media-2020 • Jackson, S. J. (2020). On# BlackLivesMatter and journalism. Sociologica, 14(2), 101–108.