POLI 475, Winter 2012

Social Capital in Comparative Perspective

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Tuesday/Thursday: 2.35pm until 3.55pm, Leacock 14

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday: 4.15pm until 5pm

Synopsis of the course content: In recent years an exciting, interdisciplinary, and rapidly growing body of research has suggested that civil society and social relations themselves have powerful practical effects in many disparate political and economic arenas. This research agenda centers on concepts such as "social capital" and "civil society," and has implications for such fields as social welfare, economic progress in developing countries, and the effectiveness of democratic government in modern societies. This course will focus on social capital in the broadest sense. What is social capital and why is it important? How can we measure and observe it? How do civic values and social ties resolve collective action problems? How can we produce and facilitate or destroy our valuable societal resources? How can we distinguish different forms of social capital that exist in a variety of cultures? How has the engagement of citizens in public life changed over the last decades? This course will explore this blossoming research agenda with a focus on the advanced industrialized democracies and there will be some comparisons integrating developing countries as well.

Course Goal: The course is designed to introduce participants to an emerging and multifaceted research arena in political science and other related disciplines such as sociology, economics, anthropology, social work, and others. It will enable students to understand and evaluate the research related to the concept of social capital. Students will also learn how to think about and evaluate social science research more generally, and they will be encouraged to develop their own research ideas. In addition, students will be able to discuss, propose and examine public policy that might facilitate or hinder the development of social capital or civic engagement.

Requirements:

Readings: Everyone is expected to read and reflect on all required readings prior to class. It is clear that completing the lion's share of all assigned reading in a timely fashion is a necessary prerequisite for satisfactory completion of the course. I suggest reading the assigned pieces with four main questions in mind (take notes on them), as we will return to them constantly in class: 1) What is the author's argument or theory, and how does it compare to or improve alternative theories that might be proposed or have been proposed by others? It often helps to note down the definition of the "dependent variable," or what the author wants to explain and the definition of the main "independent variables" (causes, explanatory factors) the author thinks are important. In addition, I suggest thinking through the "story" that knits the independent variables together into a causal

explanation. Such information on every article/book will help you to prepare for a successful class discussion and for a better understanding of the literature. 2) What evidence does the author provide, and how convincing is it? In particular, we will learn in this course to identify the research design of the authors, and we will learn how to examine the design critically. Often we will ask whether alternative theories were tested, and how variables and hypotheses were operationalized and measured. 3) How could the research be improved? A mere critique of the readings is only one side of useful criticism; learning how to improve one's and others' research is really the ultimate goal. And 4) Think about the public policy implications of the presented work. How can theoretical insights be transferred into useful policy? What are the complications in this process? Which type of research is necessary in order to give the best policy recommendations?

Class participation: This is a lecture course, but given the class size we will always engage in class discussions as well. It is thus important that you are prepared and actively participate early on in the course. Volunteered and thoughtful contributions to class discussion can only help, not hurt your grade. Your attendance and participation is worth 5% of the course grade.

Research Paper: The purpose of the research paper is to enable each student to apply the approaches we learned during the class to some theoretical or practical problem of special concern to him or her. The paper must be **19-20 pages, double-spaced** (add references outside this page limit). However, students are permitted--indeed encouraged--to work on their research papers **in pairs** (21-24 pages required), in **groups of three** (25-28 pages), max. **groups of four** (29-32 pages). Students who work with others **must** undertake some element of **original research (which is most fun). This might include the collection of your own data, materials, participant observation, interviews, content coding, or original data analysis of existing data, etc.** Note that for your own data collection (if it involves research on others) you must obtain an ethics certificate from the university, which takes in minimum about two weeks to process and you need to talk to me well in advance. In case of collaboration, each member of the group will receive the same grade. Groups work most smoothly when responsibilities are clearly assigned. Each group member **must** submit a signed statement confirming that s/he participated equally in the project and listing the specific responsibilities for each contributor.

→ **Important:** The topic of the research paper and bibliography must be cleared **in advance** with me **BEFORE MARCH 2.** You should regard your topic as being cleared only when I explicitly tell you so and record your name (and the names of your group members, if you collaborate). Clearance of the topics should happen before you submit your proposal (see below). You can either webCT mail me your topic or meet with me in my office hours after class for topic clearance.

Research Paper Proposal: Every student or paper writing team is required to submit a 2 paged proposal for the research paper in this course, which is due on March 9 by midnight. The proposal should contain your theoretical background (bibliography), your hypotheses, your research design, your dependent and independent variables, your methods (potentially also survey outline, interview guide or codebook depending on what you decide to do). One session is entirely dedicated to discussing your proposals. This will give you a good start and feedback from everyone in the class. The research proposals will be worth 3% of your final paper grade. Late proposals will be penalized 1 mark off the paper grade per 24-hour period late. More instructions will be discussed in class.

Details of the Paper Process: The paper, itself, is due **MONDAY, April 16 at midnight**. You must webCT mail your paper by that date and time. Late papers will be penalized 2 marks off per 24-hour period late. If your topic has not been cleared, your paper will **not be accepted**, regardless of whether you hand in a proposal and bibliography, and a **J** will be reported.

Presentation of the paper: The research papers will be presented in the last two class sections in April. Details (e.g. length and style will be discussed in class and depend on class size).

Midterm Exam: There will be a Midterm exam in class on February 16.
Final Exam: Everyone takes the Final exam, which is scheduled by the University in the exam period in April.

Small Assignment: In addition to the above, there are two other small assignment due for everyone in this class. The first one is due on January 25 and involves a short analysis of Putnam's *Making Democracy Work* (worth 5% of your grade on pass or fail basis). This assignment can be produced in groups of up to four. Absolutely no late assignments will be accepted. The second one is due March 1, and will be discussed in class.

Small assignments (Percent awarded for pass) ……5%
Participation/Attendance……5%
Final Research Paper and Presentation ……35%
Midterm……20%
Final Exam……35%

Note I: You must pass the final exam and research paper in order to pass this class. If you receive an F in the midterm, you must receive above 65% or PASS for ALL other assignments and tests in order to pass this class. **Note II**: The content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change. I also consider using in-class quizzes as additional evaluation tools during the semester.

SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT COURSE DATES

January 25: First assignment on Putnam due in class
February 16: Midterm in class
March 1: Latest Date for Paper Clearance
March 9: Paper prospectus due on webCT
February 7, March 6 and 8: Research workshops in class time
March 13: Discussing Proposals in class
April 5: no class
April 10/12: Paper presentations in class
April 16: Final Paper Due on webCT

Short Course Outline

Part 1: What is social capital and how do we study it?
Jan 10 Intro
Jan 12 Pleasantville
Jan 17 Methods
Jan 19 Political Culture
Jan 24 Social Capital, some Putnam
Jan 26 Putnam and Critics
Jan 31 Trust
Feb 2 Networks
Feb 7 Research Workshop: Megan Fitzgibbons
Feb 9 Tom van der Meer
Feb 14 Consequences
Feb 16 Midterm

Part 2: Transformation of Social Capital
Feb 21 Study Break
Feb 23 Study Break
Feb 28 Decline
March 1 Critique of Decline
March 6 Research Workshops
March 8 Research Workshops
March 13 Discuss proposals in class
March 15 Role of Technology

Part 3: The Sources of Social Capital
March 20 Sources of Social Capital: Civic Traditions, Associations, Role of Biology
March 22 Role of Biology
March 27 Role of Institutions
March 29 Role of Diversity
April 3 Role of Diversity Revisited
April 5 Paper writing—no class
April 10 Paper presentations
April 12 Paper presentations

Detailed Course Outline

PART I: What is Social Capital

January 10: Course Introduction
→ no reading

January 12: Setting the Stage: Community—Virtue or Nostalgia?
We watch parts of the Movie Pleasantville

→ Alan Ehrenhalt, *The Lost City* (Basic Books, 1995), pp. 7-33 (ch 1), webCT
→ Robert D. Putnam, Bowling Alone, chap. 1

What is community? Which interpretation of the 1950s do you find more persuasive—Ehrenhalt or "Pleasantville"? Could one "edit" the 1950s to eliminate the "bad parts" and keep the "good parts"? Which are the good parts and which the bad parts? How has our community changed over the last years according to Robert Putnam?

January 17: How to do Research?

→Michael Sodaro. 2004. "Critical Thinking about Politics: Analytical techniques of political science—the logic of hypothesis testing," in *Comparative Politics*, chapter 3, webCT

What are the basic principles of the research process? Which methods can we utilize in the research process? What are the advantages and disadvantages of these methods? Be sure to know about what a dependent and independent variable is and how we test hypotheses. How do we apply these research principles to the study of political culture and social capital?

January 19: Approaches in Political Culture Research

→Michael Sodaro. 2004. "Political Culture," in *Comparative Politics*, chapter 11, webCT
→ Robert Putnam. 1993. *Making Democracy Work*. Chapter 1.

What is political culture? How can we study it? Which schools of political culture research can be distinguished and what do they stand for? Is political culture a dependent or independent variable? How would you study political culture?

January 24: Social Capital—A new approach in Political Culture Research?

→Lin, Nan. 2001. *Social Capital : Capital Captured through Social Relations*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2: p. 19-28. http://www.myilibrary.com?id=41690
→ Robert Putnam. 1993. *Making Democracy Work*. Chapters 3 and 4

What does Putnam mean by civic community? What is the analytical power of the concepts of civic community and social capital? How are these concepts measured? How does social capital research fit

into the school of political culture? How is it different from previous approaches to political culture? Are there different approaches within social capital research, and how can we distinguish them? Is SC an approach that could be politicized, if so, how?

January 26: Putnam's Social Capital Approach and its Critics
Note: first assignment due the day before at 4pm.

→ Robert Putnam. 1993. *Making Democracy Work*. Chapters 5 and 6.

What is Putnam's main argument? How does he design his research in Italy? What are the strengths and weaknesses of his research design? What is the contribution of Putnam's work? What is the most important aspect of social capital in his view? What is specific about his social capital approach? Can we develop social capital and create policies to support it? How can policies integrate the findings of social capital theorists?

January 31: Measurements of Social Capital: The Role of Trust

→Uslaner, Eric. 2002. "Strategic Trust and Moralistic Trust," chapter 2 in *The Moral Foundations of Trust*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 14-50. webCT
→ Delhey, Newton and Welzel. 2011. "How General Is Trust in "Most People"? Solving the Radius of Trust Problem," *American Sociological Review* 2011 76: 786
http://asr.sagepub.com/content/76/5/786.abstract

Which types of trust can we distinguish? Which types of assurance are used in various types of trust? Why is trust so important, can society cope without trust? What are the consequences of various types of trust? More specifically, which type of trust is most useful in dealing with strangers, for solving collective action problems, and to maintain a healthy democracy—and why? How can we best measure trust and what are some of the issues here?

February 2: Measurements of Social Capital: Types of Networks

→ Revisit Robert Putnam. 2000. *Bowling Alone*. Simon and Schuster: chapter 1, p. 15-28.
→Granovetter, M. S. 1973. The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology* 78, 1360-1380.
http://www.jstor.org/stable/2776392
→McKenzie, Brian D. 2008. "Reconsidering the Effects of Bonding Social Capital: A Closer Look at Black Civil Society." *Political Behavior* 30, 1: 25-45.
http://www.springerlink.com/content/g62kukn22536p0nw/

What are the different types of social networks we can distinguish? Note that bridging (Putnam) and weak (Granovetter) ties are not necessarily the same (despite the use of "bridging" in Granovetter). Do networks create trust and civic values? Why are they so important? How do they matter for democracy? What are the common methods to measure social networks? Is there a policy that might be able to foster the right social networks? If so, which ones. How would you design a study on the

consequences of social networks for political outcomes? What are some of the common methodological pitfalls when examining the effects of social networks?

February 7: Guest Lecture with Prof. Tom van der Meer, Topic to be announced
Readings TBD

February 9: Research Workshop in class with Megan Fitzgibbons
No readings

February 14: Consequences of social capital

→ Putnam, R. with Kristin Goss. 2000. *Bowling Alone*. Section IV: So What? Chapters 16-22 (read 16 and 22 and two others from this section—I suggest 19 and 20).
→ Jens Rydgren. 2011. "A legacy of 'uncivicness'? Social capital and radical right-wing populist voting in Eastern Europe," *Acta Politica* 46, 132-157.

What are the political, economic and social consequences of SC? Is Putnam's account convincing? Why or why not? How does social capital exert these effects? Do we maybe expect too much of SC? Can you imagine also negative effects of SC, if so how and why? Is there anything governments can do about social capital when they want to support economic development? Devise a policy.

February 16: Midterm

February 21/23: Study Break

PART II: Transformation of Social Capital

February 28: Is there a Decline?

→ Putnam, R. D. 2000. *Bowling Alone*. Section II (especially chapters 2-4, 6, 8-9).

Is there a decline in social capital? Are some aspects of SC in decline and others not?
What do you think are the common critiques against the *Bowling Alone* thesis? How has Putnam's approach to social capital changed in *Bowling Alon*e compared to his earlier work?
Which factors are made responsible for the decline? Do they work? Decline or Transformation-- Where do you stand and why?

March 1: Paper clearance, last chance

March 1: Critique of the Decline Thesis
Informal assignment: think about informal and virtual forms of social capital that are rarely studied. Bring your written ideas to class.
→ Sarracino, F. (2010) "Social capital and subjective well-being trends: Comparing 11 western European countries" *Journal of Socio-Economics* 39, no. 4, pp. 482-517.
http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1053535709001383

→Sander, Thomas H. Putnam, Robert D. 2010. "Still Bowling Alone? The Post-9/11 Split" Journal of Democracy, Volume 21, Number 1, pp. 9-16.
http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v021/21.1.sander.pdf

What are the common critiques against the *Bowling Alone* thesis and how much evidence is there to sustain them?

March 6 and March 8: Research workshops, more details in class

March 9: Research proposals due

March 13: Discuss Research Proposals in class: read all proposals submitted on webCT

March 15: Role of Technology

→(very short) Fischer, Claude S. "Technology and Community: Historical Complexities." Sociological Inquiry
vol. 67 no.1 Winter 1997: 113-118. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-682X.1997.tb00433.x
→Olken, Benjamin A. 2009. "Do Television and Radio Destroy Social Capital? Evidence from Indonesian Villages." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 1(4): 1–33.
http://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/app.1.4.1
→ Robinson, J. P. and S. Martin (2010) "IT Use and Declining Social Capital?" *Social Science Computer Review* 28, no. 1, pp. 45-63. http://ssc.sagepub.com/content/28/1/45.short
→Putnam, R. D. 2000. *Bowling Alone*. Section III (chapter 13)

Is "virtual community" really community? Will the Internet make the problem of social capital better or worse? How could we better study the effect of the Internet on social capital?

PART III Roots and Causes of Social Capital

March 20 The Sources of Social Capital: Biological, Society and Institution Centered Approaches

→Stolle, D. 2001. "Getting to Trust," in Dekker, P and Uslaner, E. M. 2001. *Social Capital and Participation in Everyday Life*. N.Y.: Routledge. pp.118-133
http://www.myilibrary.com?id=5583

What are the sources of social capital more generally? How can we distinguish the various factors? Which ones do you think are most prominent?

March 22 The Role of Biology

→ John R. Hibbing and Kevin B. Smith, "The Biology of Political Behavior: An Introduction," T*he ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 2007; 614; 6 http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0002716207305471
→Sturgis, P., Read S., Hatemi, P., Zhu, G., Trull, T., Wright, M., Martin, N. 2010. "A genetic basis for social trust?," *Political Behavior*, Volume 32, Number 2, 205-230, http://genepi.qimr.edu.au/contents/p/staff/Sturgisetal_Pol%20Beh_June10.pdf

Are there genetic and biological sources of some aspects of social capital?
Why are political scientists so careful to touch the topic of biological and genetic sources?
How does the role of biology change our insights into the roots of social capital, participation and civic engagement? What is the logic of twin studies? What are their advantages and disadvantages? Are there certain personality traits that foster social capital or civic behavior?
How can we integrate the study of biology into the framework of social capital research?
If biological sources matter, what are the implications for social science models and social science research?

March 27: Social Capital from above: The role of Political Institutions.

→ Bo Rothstein and Dietlind Stolle. "Political institutions and generalized trust," in D. Castiglione, J.W. Van Deth & G. Wolleb (eds.) *The Handbook of Social Capital*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 273-302 (webCT)
→Howard, Marc. "The Weakness of Post-Communist Civil Society," *Journal of Democracy* (Vol. 13, #1, 2002), pp.157-169 http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v013/13.1howard.html

Can social capital be generated from above? Do we have powerful historical examples of that? How are political institutions and social capital related? If institutions matter, how do they need to be structured to be successful? Which institutions produce the highest levels pf social capital and trust?

March 29: The Puzzle of Diversity

→ Robert D. Putnam, "*E Pluribus Unum*: Diversity and Community in the 21st Century: The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture" *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 30 (June 2007): 137-174. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9477.2007.00176.x
→ Savelkoul, M., Gesthuizen, M. and Scheepers, P. (2011) "Explaining relationships between ethnic diversity and informal social capital across European countries and regions: Tests of constrict, conflict and contact theory" *Social Science Research* 40, no. 4, pp. 1091-1107. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0049089X11000378

How do immigration and ethnic diversity affect social capital? How are bridging and bonding social capital related? Is the future of multiculturalism and diversity bleak? Why or why not?

April 3: The Puzzle Revisited?

→Miles Hewstone. 2009. "Living Apart, Living Together? The Role of Intergroup Contact in Social Integration. *Proceedings of the British Academy,* 2009, 162, 243-300, webCT.

Are there solutions to the negative relationship between diversity and social capital? How do they look like? Does the relationship hold in other countries?

April 5 no class: work on your papers

April 10 and 12 Presentations of papers in class