Poli 680 Syllabus
Social Change in Advanced Industrialized Democracies
Political Culture, Political Attitudes and Political Participation in Comparative Perspective
Winter 2018
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E-Mail: please use MyCourses mail
Course Hours: Normally Tuesdays 11.35am until 2.25pm, Leacock 541
Office Hours: after the course or by appointment

Synopsis of the course content: In recent years an exciting, diverse, and rapidly growing body of research has suggested that the norms and networks of civil society have powerful practical consequences in many disparate political and economic arenas. This research agenda centers on concepts such as social capital, civic engagement, political participation; and their implications for such fields as collective action, social welfare, economic progress, and the effectiveness of democratic government in modern societies are paramount. This seminar will focus on political culture, social capital, political attitudes and political participation in the broadest sense and it will link these phenomena to comparative concepts such as democracy, political inequality, and institutional performance. What is social capital and why is it important? How can we measure and observe it? How is social capital related to the concept of political culture? How do we study political attitudes and behavior? How can we distinguish different forms of political engagement that exist in a variety of cultures and across time? How has the engagement of citizens in public life changed and transformed over the last decades? And why? Which factors best explain political behavior and attitudes we observe in today’s advanced industrialized societies? This course will explore this blossoming research agenda with a focus (although not exclusive) on the advanced industrialized democracies—many readings come from the US, however. Students with an interest in developing countries should come and talk to me and we can assign you some different readings at times.

Seminar Goal: The seminar is designed to introduce participants to an emerging and multifaceted research arena in political science and other related disciplines. It will enable students to evaluate and to contribute original research (theoretical, empirical, and/or applied) in this arena. In addition, students will be able to discuss, propose and examine public policy that might facilitate or hinder the development of social capital, political participation, political attitudes or civic engagement.

Requirements:
Readings: Everyone is expected to read and reflect on all required readings prior to class (additional resources are indicated if a certain section interests you in particular). 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. Our concerns here include also issues of sampling, index construction, data gathering, analytical approaches, and other related questions. 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: is essential. There will be some lecturing in this class in the beginning of each seminar, but mostly we will have a discussion among all the students about the merits of the readings presented. Class participation will constitute a part of the grade, so your volunteered quality contributions to class discussion can only help, not hurt your grade. All students are expected to contribute to the discussion, and therefore you can be called upon at times. I strongly encourage all students to get in the habit of contributing early on. I will at times call on students to introduce selected reading.

Reaction Papers: You are expected to prepare three short reaction papers (750-max.1000 words, not longer please) that critically synthesize and analyze the required readings for a given week. (Suggested themes are given for each week, but other themes are acceptable and encouraged.) In the “reaction paper” students should analyze (not summarize) the readings of a selected week. The papers should include a discussion of at least three or more assigned readings for the particular week. You can also add readings from the Additional Resources section if you like. Since these papers will be short, you should not spend time on generalities or summaries, but should go quickly into the particulars, be specific and concrete. Papers should be well-structured, contain an argument about the readings, and should explore one larger theme rather than a collection of a number of smaller points. Papers will be graded on a simplified scheme.

There are three types of papers (academic, policy audience, general audience). Students are expected to complete two different types of their liking. So, a student can choose to write two academic and one policy paper; or one of each type etc. In academic papers, students should take issue with the author(s) on some particular question, discuss which potential problems arise from the research or arguments of the author(s), and/or propose research-related improvements. Paper themes could be various: e.g. an analysis of particular differences in findings or approaches amongst several authors, or a synthesis of how readings complement each other theoretically; a methodological, research-design or substantive critique of selected readings, even a proposition of new research ideas, etc. Papers for policy audiences should be written with a policy perspective in mind. Imagine yourself as a policy advisor in this moment, writing a report or policy brief for the government based on the literature for the particular week. The policy papers should discuss the public policies which could address the problems detailed in the readings in a country or region of your choice. In short, policy papers should show policy-makers in your chosen context how relevant the studied concepts of a given week are to policies in the realm of social issues, welfare, immigration, education, governance, etc. General audience papers are pieces that could be published in the Globe and Mail or New York Times on the issues relevant in a given week or as online blogs. Imagine them as Op-ed pieces or blogs for general audiences. You should really use a different type of writing for these papers than for academic papers, and get the story across as powerfully as possible.

Discussion Questions: Students who prepare papers should also submit discussion questions to all students prior to the seminar at the end of the reaction paper.
Due Dates: The paper and discussion questions are due on Monday at 4pm (on MyCourses) before the course session on Tuesday morning. No late papers are accepted. You may choose which weeks to skip the papers, but you should not keep them for the last three seminars. When you write a paper, you may be asked to quickly summarize the readings and to begin the discussion on problems and improvements of selected readings in the seminar. However, timely completion of the reading and full class participation is expected even during the weeks in which you do not submit a reaction paper.

Research Design Report: In addition, there will be one short summary of thoughts on Putnam’s book Making Democracy Work. For this short paper, you can work in groups (up to three people), and you are asked to critically examine the research design in Putnam’s Making Democracy Work, according to the research design language as well as to think about issues of internal and external validity. This short statement/report (2 pages) is due Monday before class on January 22 at 4pm. The report is also graded on a simplified scheme (in this case pass/fail). Further instructions will be given in class and in MyCourses.

Final Paper: You are also required to write a longer research paper on a topic of your choice related to the course content. The purpose of the research paper is to enable each student to apply the approaches we learned during the seminar to some theoretical or practical problem of special concern to him or her. Topics for the longer paper will be discussed in class on February 20 (see below). An initial 1 paged prospectus for this paper is due on Sunday, February 18 at 4pm (no other major readings are assigned, all students read all the proposals submitted and prepare comments). Between the dates of February 6 - 27, every participant should meet with the instructor to discuss his or her research prospectus. A final proposal is due on March 8 (not graded, but needs to be submitted for pass). On April 17, every student will present their research in a mini-conference format (10 minutes or more depending on class size) in a 6-hour session. A first draft of the paper needs to be circulated three days before the presentation, on April 14, because we like to receive feedback from the class participants (peer review principle), and so each presentation will have assigned discussants from class. The final research paper should be submitted on MyCourses no later than 4 pm on April 30. If you work as a TA this semester or have other worthy reasons for extensions, we need to talk at the latest in March. If there are any special circumstances of which I should be aware, you should speak to me as soon as possible.

Research Paper length: If you choose to write a research paper, it must be 15-20 pages, double-spaced (add references outside this page limit). However, students are encouraged to collaborate.

Collaboration on Research Papers: Students are permitted--indeed encouraged--to work on their research papers in pairs (21-25 pages required), or maximum in groups of three (26-30 pages). Students who work with others must undertake some element of original research. This might include the collection of your own data, materials, participant observation, interviews, content coding, or original data analysis of existing data sets, etc. Note that for your own data collection 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 must submit a signed statement confirming that all group members participated equally in the project (signed by everyone). All group members must identify their specific responsibilities. If you collect original data, you MUST talk to me by early March at the latest.

Research Paper Proposal: As discussed above, you are required to write a short (1 paged) and a revised (2 pages plus references) research paper proposal for your research paper in this course. One session is
entirely dedicated to discussing your one paged proposals on February 20. This will give you an early start and good feedback from everyone in the class, as class members will be assigned as discussants.

**Role of Discussants:** Discussants of research paper proposals or research papers will give constructive feedback. You should read the paper/proposal, think about their merits, highlight the strengths and weaknesses, and discuss how to improve the proposal/paper. Make yourself written notes (even ppt is encouraged but not necessary).

**MyCourses:** If you're reading a hard copy of this syllabus, you should be aware that this course has its own website on MyCourses, which is updated several times per week. You are **required** to check our MyCourses course page regularly (several times per week). On the website, more information and materials are made available to you than we have time to cover in detail in class. The site is also used for posting of fellow-student papers and proposals, which will be shared in the class. You are also encouraged to post articles of interest to the course themes. It's also a good way for you to communicate with me and with each other.

**Grading:**
Reaction papers and discussion questions (3 @ 10% for each paper and question set)..........................30%
Putnam Research Design (Percent awarded for pass) ......................................................................................3%
Proposals and Final Research Paper and Presentation at mini-conference................................................50%
Regular class participation, role of discussant, chair ................................................................................17%

**Contact:** Unless otherwise announced, I will hold office hours on Tuesdays after class or by appointment in my office 24-3 at 3610 McTavish.

**Readings:** Readings are online on MyCourses. Please try to buy Putnam 1993 as we read several chapters.


McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).

A the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.

**NOTE:** I reserve the right to modify the course timeline or specific readings as needed.
Short Course Outline

Jan 9  Introduction & Brief Discussion on Research Methods

Part I: Political Culture, Social Capital & Democracy

Jan 16  Research Methods & The Study of Political Culture
Jan 23  Social Capital & Democracy
Jan 30  Trust, Solidarity and Social Networks

Part II: Political Attitudes and Behaviors in Today’s World

Feb 6  Political Participation and its Transformation in an Era of Political Polarization
Feb 13  The Rise of Populism and Radical Right Parties
Feb 20  In-class Discussion of research paper proposal

Part III: Sources of Political Attitudes and Behavior

Feb 27  Biology and Politics
March 6  No class (reading week)
March 13  The Role of Family and Life Events
March 20  The Role of Social and Political Institutions
March 27  Diversity and Immigration: The Solution or the Problem?

April 3  No Cass (work on paper)
April 10  No Class (work on paper)

Part III: Presentations and Conclusion

April 17  Presentation of Papers and Discussion (6 hour session—mini conference)

SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT SEMINAR DATES

Jan 15: First reaction paper due on Monday at 4pm. From now on every week.
Sunday Feb 18: Submission of one paged Research paper proposal at 4pm (see module).
Feb 20: Discussion of all research paper proposals, reading of proposals of every student
and discussion in class.
March 6: No class (reading week)
March 8: Revised Research Paper proposal due at 4pm (not graded but needed for pass)
April 14: Circulation of first draft of research paper on MyCourses
April 17: Research Paper Draft Presentations in class & Discussions (6 hour session)
April 30th: Final Research Paper Due on MyCourses at 8pm.
Detailed Course Outline

Jan 9: Introduction: Organizational Meeting and Brief Method Discussion (No readings)

Jan 16: Research Methods and the Study of Political Culture
Note: we will briefly revisit issues of social science research design and empirical analysis in the first half of this session. If you are unfamiliar with the topic, you can refresh your knowledge with the literature listed below under Notes.


http://www.jstor.org/stable/3792292


Additional Resources:


Methods: If you are unfamiliar with Political Science Research Design, I suggest to read the following as background material:


Potential Paper or Discussion Topics:

1. Can social science research use the logic of experiments? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. How can we apply the logic of quasi-experiments to Kent Jennings’ study on protest movements? Discuss threats to internal/external validity in the Jenning’s article. Try to draw his research design.
3. Which different strands of political culture research can we distinguish and how do they build on each other (or not)?
4. Which questions in political culture research seem to change and which seem to be persistent? (What does the concept of civic community used in Putnam 1993 entail? And how does civic community in Italy’s North differ from that in the South?)
Jan 23: Social Capital and Democracy

Assignment due: Examine Research Design in Robert Putnam’s Book and use the notation by the quasi-experimental design literature.


Additional resources


Potential Paper or Discussion Topics:
1) In what ways does the concept of social capital illuminate or obscure?
2) How could we apply the theory of social capital to your region/country of interest?
3) What is social capital conceptually according to Putnam, and how does he measure it? Do the two match?
4) What is the value and contribution of Robert Putnam’s Making Democracy Work?
5) What are the weaknesses of his study? Discuss the internal and external validity of his study and sketch his research design—is it indeed an experiment? Does he test counter-hypotheses?
6) Why do some authors take such a critical view of the social capital concept?
7) How important is social capital for institutional performance? Do we have a definite answer? How important is it for other political phenomena such as democracy and for solving collective action dilemma? What shall we keep in mind when studying the consequences of social capital?
8) How does the analysis of our current democratic strength compare to the analysis of social capital?
9) How can we evaluate democratic performance? What are some good indicators and measures?
10) Is democracy in decline in the Western world?

Jan 30: Trust, Solidarity and Social Networks
➔ Robert Putnam. 2000. Bowling Alone. Simon and Schuster: chapter 1, p. 15-28. (Focus on understanding the distinction between bonding and bridging ties and compare this distinction to strong and weak ties by Granovetter)
➔ Newspaper article related to our concepts: http://www.edelman.com/p/6-a-m/brexit-and-trust/

Additional resources:

**Potential Paper or Discussion Topics:**
1) Which types of trust can we distinguish, and why does this matter?
2) Why is trust so important, can society cope without trust? In short, 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?
3) How can we best measure generalized trust and what are some of the issues here?
4) 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).
5) Do networks create trust and civic values? Why are networks and associations so important? How do they matter for democracy and other political outcomes?
6) What are the common methods to measure social networks? How could we improve them?
7) Policy: How should we measure social capital for policy purposes—how should we consider the concept for policy purposes?
8) How would you design a study on the consequences of social networks for political outcomes? (some thoughts about research design here). What are some of the common methodological pitfalls when examining the effects of social networks?

**Feb 6: Transforming Political Participation & Political Representation**


Additional resources:
- “Clicktivism is ruining leftist activism” by Micah White http://www.clicktivism.org/

Potential Paper or Discussion Topics:
1) What are the important themes in political participation research? Which ones should be most dominant in the 21st century Western democracies?
2) What can you say about the different types of political action repertoires? Are all repertoires practiced in a similar way, are they equally affective, and are they taken up by the same groups of people?
3) Which biases in political participation and representation do we see? How are they related? Which action repertoires are particularly prone to biases?
4) Policy/General: Is there a need to address the equality of political participation, if so, why and how? Which studies might help us most to understand how to mobilize the disadvantaged?
5) Some people argue that political participation is in decline, others argue that we see a transformation. What do you think? How should we study decline? How can Inglehart’s view be reconciled with the argument about the decline of political participation?
6) What are the so-called newer forms of political participation and how relevant are they? Can they achieve political goals? If so, how? If not, why not?
7) How should we define political participation? In a more narrow or broader way? What are the advantages of either approach? See van Deth for some inspiration here.
February 13: The Rise of Populism, Trumpism and Radical Right Parties
(priority of this week’s readings will be indicated in MyCourses)


https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/3006DCDD2C4BBEA9E4E25176DE71E24/S0037677917001528a.pdf/global_populisms_and_their_impact.pdf

Additional Resources Highly Recommended
→ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/20170424-042417.pptx
→ Cas Mudde. 2106. Europe’s Populist Surge. *Foreign Affairs.*
→ Election Review: https://www.dropbox.com/s/ijkb0759dumf5ah/nov16-election-slides.pdf?dl=0
http://andrewgelman.com/2016/12/08/19-things-learned-2016-election/
→ https://populism.byu.edu/Pages/Home.aspx
→ Hochschild, Arlie Russell, (December 12, 2016), “The Left are Now Strangers in Their Own Land,” *New Republic*
https://newrepublic.com/article/138910/left-now-strangers-land
Potential Paper or Discussion Topics:

1) What are the sources of populism at the individual and societal levels?
2) Why do we see the rise of populism, Trumpism and anti-establishment rhetoric and support now?
3) What are the similarities and differences between Trumpism, Brexit, and Radical Right Support?
4) Deprivation, Racism or something else?
5) Which kind of scientific evidence do we still need to successfully explore the phenomenon of Trumpism and Trump’s victory?
6) Given the factors on the rise of populism, Trumpism and Brexit, what can we expect for the next few decades in Western democracies?
7) Opinion piece: Could democrats have won the 2016 election if they had read more research?

Feb 20: In class Discussion of research paper proposal

Discussion of Paper proposals. Read all paper proposals submitted to MyCourses by Monday 6pm. Discussant roles will be assigned. Timing of presentations and discussions depends on class size (TBD). See on MyCourses.

February 27: The Importance of Personality Traits and Biology


Kanai, Ryota, Tom Feilden, Colin Firth, and Geraint Rees. 2011. “Political Orientations Are Correlated with Brain Structure in Young Adults.” Current Biology: CB 21, no. 8: 677-680


Additional Sources
http://blog.press.princeton.edu/2017/01/06/dalton-conley-jason-fletcher-on-how-genomics-is-transforming-the-social-sciences/
Kaiser, Anelis and Dussauge, Isabelle. 2015. “Feminist and Queer Repoliticizations of the Brain,” EspacesTemps.net, ISSN 1777-5477
EVAN CHARNEY. 2013. Political Science and Behavior Genetics, American Political Science Review

Potential Paper or Discussion Topics:
1) Are there genetic and biological sources of some political behavior and attitudes?
2) Why are political scientists so careful to touch the topic of biological and genetic sources?
3) How does the role of biology change our insights into the roots of social capital, political participation and political attitudes?
4) What is the logic of twin studies? What are their advantages and disadvantages?
5) Are there certain personality traits that foster social capital or civic behavior or certain political choices?
6) How can we integrate the study of biology into the framework of social science research?
7) If biological sources matter, what are the implications for social science models and social science research?

March 6: No class, reading week
March 13: The Role of Family, Life Events and Using Natural Experiments


Additional Resources on Natural Experiments

Additional Resources on Family and Life Events

Potential Paper or Discussion Topics:
1) How does socialization work and when/under which conditions is it most successful?
2) How can we integrate the insights of the research on socialization with our knowledge of the biological sources of political attitudes and behavior?
3) How do life events affect political outcomes and why? What are important causal mechanisms?
4) How should we best study the effect of life events? Develop some new research designs not discussed here?
5) What are natural experiments and how can we distinguish them from other types of experiments? What are their advantages and pitfalls?
6) Can you think about some other types of natural experiments in your area or your favorite theme of study? What is key here?
March 20: The Role of Political and Social Institutions


→ Peter Nannestad, Gert Tinggaard Svendsen, Peter Thisted Dinesen & Kim Mannemar Sønderskov. 2013. “Do Institutions or Culture Determine the Level of Social Trust? The Natural Experiment of Migration from Non-western to Western Countries, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 40, 4, 544-565


Additional Resources
→ Kim Mannemar Sønderskov and Peter Thisted Dinesen. 2014. Danish Exceptionalism: Explaining the Unique Increase in Social Trust Over the Past 30 Years, European Sociological Review.

Potential Paper or Discussion Topics:
1) Contrast the society-centered and the top-down approach to social capital and political participation. Can the two be reconciled? If not, for which argument is there more convincing evidence? Why?
2) Can political institutions only have a beneficial or also detrimental effect on social capital and participation?
3) Which institutional characteristics seem most beneficial to social capital and political engagement?
4) Which research design should be employed to disentangle the endogeneity in these models?
5) Can we use experiments to study the role of political institutions? How? (see additional resources here by Grose)
6) Policy: Can or should governments intentionally produce social capital? Can governments intentionally foster political engagement? Should they try? If so, how?
7) What is the role of the welfare state for social capital and political participation?
8) March 27: Diversity and Immigration: The Solution or the Problem? (might be updated)

Additional Resources
→ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2017/01/06/if-someone-doesnt-like-immigrants-ask-them-this-question/?tid=sm_fb&utm_term=.a0c61aff347d
→ Christ et al, 2014. Contextual effect of positive intergroup contact on outgroup prejudice, PNAS 111(11), 3996–400
→ http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=7787136
→ Alejandro Portes. 2014. “Downsides of social capital,” PNAS, vol. 111 no. 52, Commentary,

**Potential Paper or Discussion topics:**

1) How do immigration and ethnic diversity affect social capital, collective action and patterns of engagement? What is the causal mechanism?
2) Are there any conditions that might modify or moderate this relationship?
3) When does the effect of diversity seem most negative and why? And does it seem most positive?
4) Which policies seem likely to solve the alleged negative consequences of diversity, and which policies might not contribute here?
5) What does the research imply for the future of social cohesion in multi-cultural societies?
6) How can we best study the phenomenon of diversity and the consequences of increasing immigration and asylum rates? What has the literature avoided so far, or where should research invest more?

3/10: No class

April 17: Mini conference 6 hours. Paper presentations and feedback.