

## GOV 355M / SOC 320K: Political Sociology Fall 2011

Instructor: **Professor John Higley**

Teaching Assistant: **Julie Beicken, Ph.D. Candidate in Sociology**

Unique #'s: GOV 38735, SOC 45345

Time & Place: TTH 11.00-12.30, PAR 301

Higley office and office hours: BATTs 4.154, W 2:15-4:45 pm or appointment

Beicken office and office hours: BUR 554: Tuesdays 1:00-2:30 pm or appointment

E-mails: [jhigley@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:jhigley@austin.utexas.edu); [juliebeicken@gmail.com](mailto:juliebeicken@gmail.com)

Description: Political sociology relates major political continuities and changes to three determinants: (1) relatively autonomous and contingent choices and actions of political elites; (2) relatively fixed political orientations and discontents of mass publics; (3) ideologies and doctrines that shape elite and mass views of political possibilities. In the context of a general theory of elites, mass publics, and belief systems, Part I examines the elite foundations of stable democracies and takes stock of their modern historical and contemporary advances and setbacks. Part II focuses on mass publics and revolutions, especially fascist revolutions, during the modern historical period, and asks if neo-fascism will color Western politics in the twenty-first century. Part III concentrates on how political projects of Western, especially American, elites and mass publics have been molded by apocalyptic religious and secular utopian beliefs and what a “death of utopia” portends. With a primary but also skeptical focus on democracy, the course seeks to provide students with a better grasp of modern politics and societies.

Requirements: **Three in-class hour examinations**, each worth **33.3%** of the final grade. **There will be no final examination.** The hour examinations will be essay, short-answer, and multiple-choice in format. The instructor reserves the right to curve examination and final grades to obtain a reasonable grade profile for the course. Attending lectures is not compulsory, but attending will be crucial for examination performance, and *students who anticipate missing more than two or three lectures are advised not to enroll*. To encourage attendance, PowerPoint slides will not be posted on Blackboard. Likewise, reading and absorbing assigned texts will be vital, with roughly half of each examination concentrated on the relevant text’s content. *Students unwilling to read three relatively sophisticated but pretty compact texts are advised not to enroll.*

Texts in the order assigned:

John Higley and Michael Burton, *Elite Foundations of Liberal Democracy*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2006 (paperback).

Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*. Vintage Books 2005 (paperback).

John Gray, *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia*. Farrar Straus Giroux 2008 (paperback).

## Required University Notices and Policies

**All faculty are required to provide students with a course syllabus by the first meeting day of all classes.**

### □ **University of Texas Honor Code**

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

### □ **Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students**

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, you are responsible for reading your email for university and course-related information and announcements. You are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to your e-mail address. You should check your e-mail regularly and frequently—I recommend daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-critical. You can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating your e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

### □ **Documented Disability Statement**

If you require special accommodations, you must obtain a letter that documents your disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to me at the beginning of the semester so we can discuss the accommodations you need. No later than five business days before an exam, you should remind me of any testing accommodations you will need. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/dcce/ssd/>.

### □ **Religious Holidays**

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

### □ **Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)**

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

### □ **Emergency Evacuation Policy**

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

## Schedule of Lectures and Examinations

08/25 Course Organization

### Part I: Political Elite Choices and Actions

08/30 Theories of Elites and Politics

Classical elite theories: Mosca, Pareto, and Michels on the elite bases of politics. Weber and Schumpeter on elites and democracy. What do we mean by “political elite” and “governing elite”? Three broad types of political elites: disunited, ideologically united, consensually united.

*Read:* Higley & Burton, *EFLD*, 1-15.

09/01 Political Elites and Regimes

Types of regimes associated with the three types of political elites. Propositions: (1) Any basic change in regime type depends upon a prior or accompanying transformation of the political elite; (2) Political elite transformations are rare and take only a few forms; (3) Ergo, possibilities for basic political regime change are much more limited than customarily assumed. A flagrant case: Iraq.

*Read:* Higley & Burton, *EFLD*, 15-32.

09/06 The Modal Pattern: Disunited Political Elites and Unstable Regimes

Disunited elites and unstable, usually authoritarian regimes have been ubiquitous in modern world history. Cases in point: Latin America historically, the Middle East today. Is this year’s “Arab Spring” also a case in point?

*Read:* Higley & Burton, *EFLD*, 33-54.

09/08 Origins of Stable Representative Regimes: Political Elite Settlements

Dynamics of political elite settlements, with special attention to watershed settlements in England 1688-89, Sweden 1808-09, Switzerland 1848, Mexico 1928-29, Spain 1976-78. A few other settlements occurred in Latin America, post-Soviet East Central Europe, post-apartheid South Africa, and perhaps a couple of Asian countries, So. Korea and Taiwan. Is it the case that elite settlements, once created, persist indefinitely?

*Read:* Higley & Burton, *EFLD*, 55-83, peruse 83-106.

09/13 Origins of Stable Representative Regimes: Political Elites Under and Against Colonial Rule

The American, Dutch, Australian, Canadian, and New Zealand cases elites during colonialism's first era. Reasons for the scarcity of similar cases during colonialism's second era. Two second-era contrasts: India and Pakistan.

*Read:* Higley & Burton, *EFLD*, 107-138, peruse 118-123 and 127-34.

09/15 Origins of Stable Representative Regimes: Political Elite Convergences

The paradigmatic cases: France and Italy 1960-1980; two important but non-paradigmatic cases: West Germany 1948-1965, Japan 1964-1985.

*Read:* Higley & Burton, *EFLD*, 139-158, peruse 158-179.

09/20 A Further Wrinkle: Pareto's Theory of Elite Cycles

Pareto theorized that over time a distinct psychosocial propensity becomes predominant in a governing elite. This renders the elite, especially its inner leaders, prone to bias, closure, rigidity, and cumulating blunders. A gradual process of decline or degeneration takes hold and leads eventually to a profound crisis during which groups and persons disposed toward the opposite propensity ascend, only to have a lengthy process of decline or degeneration begin anew. How plausible is Pareto's theory and can we find decent evidence for it?

*No reading assigned*, but a forthcoming publication by Higley and J. Pakulski that reconsiders and applies the theory to American and British elites since 1945 is posted on Blackboard and can be considered there.

09/22 Elites and Politics in the Twenty-First Century

Will disunited elites and unstable regimes remain ubiquitous? Possible example: Russia. Will ideologically united elites and strongly authoritarian regimes break down? Possible example: China. Will consensually united elites fragment irreparably? Possible example: the U.S.

*Read:* Higley & Burton, *EFLD*, 181-218

09/27 Review of Part I\*

**\*An additional review session for those who wish to attend will be held on Wednesday 09/28 at 5:15-6:15 pm in or adjacent to the Parlin classroom**

09/29 FIRST HOUR EXAMINATION

## Part II: Mass Orientations and Discontents

### 10/04 Social Leveling

Dynamics and legacies of leveling revolutions in pre-industrial societies: peasants and small groups of exploited industrial workers with nothing to lose: England 1640s, France 1789-94, Russia 1917-21.

*No reading assigned.*

### 10/06 Fear of Social Leveling

The industrial workforce cauldron was brought to a boil by World War I and the Russian Revolution. The threat of downward mobility, crystallized by the Russian Revolution, proved to be a fearsome force, with intellectuals augmenting it.

*Read: Paxton, Anatomy, 3-54*

### 10/11 Interwar Upheavals and Fascism's Rise

Virtual civil war in northern Italy and deep elite disunity in Weimar Germany. Mussolini's consolidation of power 1922-25. Who voted for Hitler and why?

*Read: Paxton, Anatomy, 55-118*

### 10/13: Fascism's Brutal Face: The Mussolini and Hitler Regimes

Ideologically united elites and stable unrepresentative regimes? Totalitarianism? Cults of personality? Collapse in Italy and *Der untergang* in Hitler's Germany.

*Read: Paxton, Anatomy, 119-171*

### 10/18: Is Fascism Still Possible?

The nebulous character of much work and diminishing need for labor in Western societies; work insecurities among "insiders"; the "outsider" apparition. What might the political effects of prolonged economic stagnation or decline in Western countries be? In this context, is it irresponsible scare-mongering to highlight riots and vigilantism in England's city streets, anti-Muslim backlash parties across Europe, Anders Behring Breivik's "manifesto" and atrocity in Norway?

*Read: Paxton, Anatomy, 172-205*

10/20: Review of Part II: What Was and Is Fascism?\*

Its debatable causes and characteristics. Paxton's definition and delineation of Fascism's "mobilizing passions". Are the latter present in more than highly aberrant and mostly unthreatening degrees and forms today?

Read Paxton, *Anatomy*, 206-220.

**\*For those who wish to attend, an additional review session will be held 5:15-6:15 pm on Monday 10/24 in the Parlin classroom or its vicinity.**

10/25: SECOND HOUR EXAMINATION

### **Part III: Elite and Mass Beliefs**

10/27: Eschatology and Ideology

How to distinguish the two? Eschatological pursuits before 1700; ideological pursuits of secular utopias after 1700; evolutions of conservatism, liberalism, socialism, and their offshoots during the "age of ideology".

*Read: Gray, Black Mass, 1-35*

11/01: Neo-Liberalism: A Last Secular Utopia?

Thatcher, Reagan, and their progeny. Does the financial-economic crisis that began in 2008 signal neo-liberalism's demise as a secular utopia? Are neo-liberals who persist in their beliefs "in denial" or is it that no one can think of a plausible alternative? How is neo-liberalism faring in the UK? Is it alive and well in the U.S.? What is its condition in the Eurozone?

*Read: Gray, Black Mass, 74-106\**

\*Note: Gray's second chapter, 36-73, is omitted because much of its material was covered in Part II, albeit with a somewhat differing interpretation. Gray's Chap. 2 is well worth reading, but it is not assigned.

11/03: The Neo-Conservative Mission

If the post-9/11 era is now ending, will neo-conservatism end with it? Or might unsavory and threatening consequences of the Arab Spring breathe new life into neo-conservatism? If mountainous government debts dictate austerity in defense and non-defense sectors alike, can neo-conservatism remain credible?

*Read: Gray, Black Mass, 107-145*

11/08: Whither the “War on Terror”?

By promising a conclusive victory over evil, has the “war on terror” been a manifestation of apocalyptic religion framed in political terms? If the “war” has been confounded in the mountains and deserts of Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan and other terrorist redoubts, how will terrorism, which certainly has not been confounded, be regarded and dealt with henceforth?

Read: Gray, *Black Mass*, 146-183

11/10: An Intractable Twenty-First Century World?

Who was Machiavelli and what did he teach? What implications does his “realism” have for Western elites in tomorrow’s world?

Read: Gray, *Black Mass*, 184-210

11/15: Gray’s 2007 Book: A Discussion

Is there decent evidence that elites and mass publics are shifting from secular utopian to apocalyptic religious beliefs in America? Does the surging conservative Christian movement constitute such evidence, or does it amount to another of the cycles of religious fervor familiar to students of American history? In particular, is there serious evidence that millenarian movements are proliferating? In short, is Gray’s argument grossly overblown or does he have his finger on the future’s pulse? Let us discuss.

11/17: Elites, Masses, and Beliefs: A Class Discussion

Does the theory outlined in this course, developed over several decades, hold up? What are its less convincing components and where does the theory show its age? Is building a broad theory like this pointless – an exercise in futility? Or do we all have “theories” in our heads that are simply less explicit? For example, loose beliefs in “democracy” as a way of organizing the political world intellectually? Let us discuss.

11/22: No class scheduled, although the Instructor will be turn up and talk with anyone who wishes to.

11/25: **Thanksgiving holiday**

11/29: Course Evaluation and Review of Part III

**\*As before, an additional review session for those who wish to attend will be held on Wednesday, Nov. 30<sup>th</sup>, 5:15-6:15 in the Parlin classroom or vicinity.**

## 12/01: THIRD HOUR EXAMINATION

### **Annotated Supplementary Readings and Reference Sources**

T. Janoski, R. Alford, A. Hicks, & M. Schwartz, eds., *The Handbook of Political Sociology*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005 (paperback). This is the most comprehensive survey of recent work in Political Sociology.

K. Leicht and C. Jenkins, eds., *Handbook of Politics: State and Society in Global Perspective*. New York: Springer 2010. This is a still more recent survey of work in Political Sociology, and the Higley chapter on “Elite Theory and Elites” covers a fair amount of this course’s ground.

H. Best and J. Higley, eds., *Democratic Elitism: New Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives*. Boston: Brill 2010. Higley’s two chapters contain musings about elites and democracy that are a leitmotif in this course.

G.L. Field and J. Higley. *Elitism*. New York: Routledge 1980. Chapter 2 offers a succinct treatment of the general theory that is backdrop for this course. Chapters 3-6 ruminate on problems of elite action and self-consciousness.

S.M. Lipset, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Democracy*. Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1995 (4 vols.). A standard reference source.

J. A. Goldstone, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Political Revolutions*. Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1998. Another standard source.

I. Buruma. *Taming the Gods: Religion and Democracy on Three Continents*. Princeton University Press, 2010. A provocative treatment of current ructions with largely immigrant Muslim populations in The Netherlands and elsewhere.

L. Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World*. Times Books, 2008 (paperback). A comprehensive stocktaking of attempts to promote democracy around the world, albeit with too little attention to elites.

E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991*. New York: Pantheon, 1994 (paperback). A magisterial treatment of the “short” twentieth century by one of its most learned historians.

S.P. Huntington, *The Third Wave*. Norman OK: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1991 (paperback). A seminal but overly optimistic assessment, 20 years ago, of prospects for democracy worldwide. Huntington was one of the most respected, but also controversial, political scientists.

S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996. Huntington's most controversial book, the thesis of which is endlessly discussed, perhaps never more so than today. The Council on Foreign Relations (*Foreign Affairs*) has just published a compendium of responses to his book.

T. Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*. New York: Penguin, 2004 (paperback). The definitive treatment of Europe's struggles during the 20<sup>th</sup> century's second half. Judt died in early August 2010, of Lou Gehrig's disease, and the essays he wrote for the New York Review of Books, as he lay paralyzed in New York, are truly heroic.

D.S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*. New York: Norton, 1998. This is one of the most authoritative treatments of how and why the West developed and just about no other part of the world did.

J. Linz, Robert Michels, *Political Sociology, and the Future of Democracy*. New Brunswick NJ: Transaction Books, 2006. An authoritative treatment of Michels' life and work by one of the most eminent political sociologists of our time. Fascinating insights into the political and academic worlds of Germany and Italy in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000 (paperback). A standard work, with the delineated characteristics of authoritarian regimes now widely accepted.

J. Linz & A. Stepan. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995 (paperback). The best work on this topic by two leading scholars, one a sociologist (Linz) and the other a political scientist (Stepan).

M. Thompson. *The White War: Life and Death on the Italian Front 1915-1919*. London: Faber & Faber 2008 (paperback). A magnificent study of the gross ineptitude of Italian political and military elites at the time of World War II and its cost of 700,000 Italian lives. Sheds much light on why the Fascists were able to advance three years later.

N. Machiavelli, *The Prince and Other Writings*. New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003 (paperback). Timeless.

R. Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. New York: Collier Books, 1915/1962. A key text proffering the "iron law of oligarchy".

G. Mosca, *The Ruling Class*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1923/1939. A famous and seminal work on elites and politics by an Italian scholar often considered the father of modern political science.

J. Mueller, *The Remnants of War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004 (paperback). An intriguing thesis that wars fought by mass armies have passed into history.

D. C. North, J. J. Wallis, and B.R. Weingast. *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009. This recent work essentially offers an elite-centered interpretation of world political history and movements toward “equal access orders” (aka representative democracies).

V. Pareto. *The Mind and Society: Treatise on General Sociology*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1916/1935 (4 vols.). The classic work by Vilfredo Pareto, written between 1907-1911, but only the most dedicated sociologists have ever read its one million words.

J. Femia. *Pareto and Political Theory*. London: Routledge, 2006. A penetrating and accessible analysis of Pareto’s theory, together with discussions of Mosca and Michels. Probably the best entry in the secondary literature about Pareto and elite theory.

G. Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*. Chatham NJ: Chatham House, 1987 (paperback). By general agreement, the most sophisticated treatment of modern democratic theory, distinguishing its “horizontal” (mass) and “vertical” (elite) axes and arguing that enthusiasts of democracy have placed way too much emphasis on horizontal inputs and paid much too little attention to vertical guidance, leaving most of modern democratic theory impoverished and irrelevant to what is actually happening.

F. Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom*. New York: Pantheon Books 2003 (paperback). An astute popular commentary on democracy that, like Sartori’s more precise and scholarly analysis, emphasizes the centrality of elites.