

Carleton University
Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Winter 2013

SOCI 5400W
POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY: PUBLICS, POWER, AND POLITICS

Instructor: William Walters

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Course meets: T 11.35 – 14.25 ; Venue: PA 100A

Course Description and Objectives:

The term ‘publicity’ has come to be synonymous with actions and practices concerned with the advertising of events, persons and products. The course will investigate a somewhat more archaic but potentially fruitful meaning of the word: ‘The quality of being public; the condition of being open to public observation or knowledge’ (OED Online, 2009).

Is it fair to say that political sociology, and perhaps the social sciences more broadly, have tended to take the meaning and the very existence of the public for granted? It is certainly the case that ideas like public space, public opinion, public policy and public affairs are central to the study and subject matter of political sociology. We regularly speak of a world of ‘public affairs’ that is distinct from the private world. Political debates and decisions frequently revolve around the current state of ‘public opinion’ on a given issue. Political actors protest what they see as the privatization and individualization of ‘public life’. Yet just what is a public? What place does the public occupy in modern systems of government, and in political strategies of resistance to and intervention in modern government? How has that place changed over time and how should we understand it today? What relationship does the public have to democracy and citizenship? In light of these questions this course starts with the proposition that our understanding of modern politics can be deepened by a critical interrogation of what it means to be public, how it is publics are made, how public spaces are assembled, and what qualifies actions and issues as being public. This interrogation will be undertaken, in the first part of the course, by means of a careful reading of certain key works in political sociology, political and social theory that have investigated the history, character and meaning of public(s). The second part of the course will then engage with a range of contemporary literatures where a renewed interest in questions, problems and concepts pertaining to the public has been taken up. Building on earlier classical works, this recent work is committed to understanding publics in their situational, material, and cultural contexts. The course will combine an interrogation of key concepts with the investigation of particular cases, and will be oriented to framing student’s own research projects and papers.

Readings

In the first half of the term we will read a combination of monographs and essays, most of which are considered classics on various questions of the public sphere – its history, meaning, politics, etc. Where it is possible, devoting our attention to whole books will allow the class to acquire an in-depth understanding of each thinker’s work, including its empirical, epistemological and methodological aspects. These books will be held on reserve at the Macodrum library. However, students are encouraged to purchase their own. The second half of the term will address more contemporary debates and explorations in the political sociology of publics, mindful of their relationship to those earlier forms of thought.

The following books will be available at Octopus Books, 116 Third Avenue
(<http://www.octopusbooks.org/contact>):

Lippmann, W., *The Phantom Public*, Transactions Publications, 1993 (1925)
Dewey, J., *The Public and its Problems*, Swallow Press, 2006 (1927)

Habermas, J., *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge: MIT, 1991
 Warner, M., *Publics and Counterpublics*, New York: Zone Books, 2002.
 Rancière, J. *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

The social science literature on publics, public spheres, public opinion, etc. is truly massive. An excellent resource and starting point for further research is the Public Sphere Guide, hosted by SSRC in the US. See <http://publicsphere.ssrc.org/guide/>

Course Requirements

1. One secondary literature review (10%)

During the second half of each seminar, for weeks 2 – 8, one or more students will present a secondary literature review pertaining to the reading in question. Each review will be based on THREE secondary sources. When more than one student is presenting they should collaborate to ensure their selections do not overlap. These should be based on a one page document which is to be circulated to the class by 9pm the night before class. The student will then present the report in class (10 mins).

2. Preparation for and active participation in the weekly seminar (20%)

3. Book review (25%)

Write a critical review essay based on either (a) a comparison of Lippmann and Dewey on the public; or (b) Habermas's *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Be sure to make use of approximately five secondary sources concerning these works when writing your paper (Words: 1500 in addition to the bibliography; **Due in class: Feb 12**).

4. Research Paper (45%)

Drawing on certain themes, concepts and problems addressed in the readings and the class, but also your own reading of public sphere debates, investigate a particular controversy where the identity and character of the public is at stake. For example, one could take the recent controversy about the sole-source purchasing of F-35 fighter jets, and ask how 'the public' was constructed, mobilized and perhaps even demobilized in the context of this politically charged event. (Words: 5000 plus bibliography; **Due in the Sociology Department, noon, April 10**).

5. Research Paper Proposal (0%)

This one page document will outline your research question, case, theories and methods. This will form the basis for the one-on-one meetings with the instructor (to be scheduled in the second half of the term). Send by email to me by **Mar 12**

Grading

In accordance with the Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar (p 45), the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 56-59
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66	D = 53-56
A - = 80-84	B - = 70-72	C - = 60-62	D - = 50-52

F = Below 50 WDN = Withdrawn from the course

ABS = Student absent from final exam

DEF = Deferred (See above)

FND = (Failed, no Deferred) = Student could not pass the course even with 100% on final exam

Academic Regulations, Accommodations, Plagiarism, Etc.

University rules regarding registration, withdrawal, appealing marks, and most anything else you might need to know can be found on the university's website, here:

<http://www.carleton.ca/calendars/ugrad/current/regulations/acadregsuniv.html>

Requests for Academic Accommodations

For Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations are required to contact a coordinator at the Paul Menton Centre to complete the necessary *letters of accommodation*. The student must then make an appointment to discuss their needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first class or ITV test. This is to ensure sufficient time is available to make the necessary accommodation arrangements.

- The deadlines for contacting the Paul Menton Centre regarding accommodation for final exams for the April 2013 exam period is March 8, 2013.

For Religious Obligations:

Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious obligation should make a formal, written request to their instructors for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist, but no later than two weeks before the compulsory event.

Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student and the instructor(s) involved. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student.

Students or instructors who have questions or want to confirm accommodation eligibility of a religious event or practice may refer to the Equity Services website for a list of holy days and Carleton's Academic Accommodation policies, or may contact an Equity Services Advisor in the Equity Services Department for assistance.

For Pregnancy:

Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a letter of accommodation. The student must then make an appointment to discuss her needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the passing off of someone else's work as your own and is a serious academic offence. For the details of what constitutes plagiarism, the potential penalties and the procedures refer to the section on Instructional Offences in the Undergraduate Calendar.

What are the Penalties for Plagiarism?

A student found to have plagiarized an assignment may be subject to one of several penalties including: expulsion; suspension from all studies at Carleton; suspension from full-time studies; and/or a reprimand; a refusal of permission to continue or to register in a specific degree program; academic probation; award of an FNS, Fail, or an ABS.

What are the Procedures?

All allegations of plagiarism are reported to the faculty of Dean of FASS and Management.

Documentation is prepared by instructors and/or departmental chairs.

The Dean writes to the student and the University Ombudsperson about the alleged plagiarism.

The Dean reviews the allegation. If it is not resolved at this level then it is referred to a tribunal appointed by the Senate.

Assistance for Students:

Student Academic Success Centre (SASC): www.carleton.ca/sasc

Writing Tutorial Services: www.carleton.ca/wts

Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS): www.carleton.ca/sasc/peer-assisted-study-sessions

Important Information:

- Students must always retain a hard copy of all work that is submitted.
- All final grades are subject to the Dean's approval.
- Please note that you will be able to link your CONNECT (MyCarleton) account to other non-CONNECT accounts and receive emails from us. However, for us to respond to your emails, we need to see your full name, CU ID, and the email must be written from your valid CONNECT address. Therefore, it would be

easier to respond to your inquiries if you would send all email from your connect account. If you do not have or have yet to activate this account, you may wish to do so by visiting <https://portal.carleton.ca/>

Course calendar

1. Introduction (Jan 8)

I. KEY READINGS IN THE POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY OF PUBLICS

2. Walter Lippmann: A Ghost is Haunting Liberal Democracy (Jan 15)

Lippmann, W. 1925 *The Phantom Public*, New York: Harcourt Brace and Co.

3. John Dewey: Issues and their Publics (Jan 22)

Dewey, J. 1946 *The Public and its Problems*, Chicago: Gateway Books

4. Hannah Arendt: Public, Private, and the Political (Jan 29)

*Arendt, H. 1998 (1958) 'The Public and the Private Realm' in her *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2nd edition), 22 – 78.

*Honig, B. 1995 'Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity', in Honig (ed.) *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 135-66.

5. Habermas and the Historical Sociology of the Public Sphere (Feb 5)

Habermas, J. 1989 *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge: Polity, 1-88, 129-140, 141 – 250

*Fraser, N., 1992 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy' in Calhoun, C. (ed) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 109-42

6. Jacques Rancière and the Politics of In/Visibility (Feb 12)

Rancière, J. *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, Chs: TBC.

May, T., 'Rancière in South Carolina' in G. Rockhill and P. Watts (eds) *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics*, Durham: Duke University Press, pp.105 – 119.

7. No Class – Reading Week (Feb 19)

II. PUBLICS: CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS AND DEBATES

8. Publics and Counterpublics (Feb 26)

Warner, M. 2002 *Publics and Counterpublics*, New York: Zone Books, Chs: TBC.

Barnett, C. 2010. 'Convening publics: the parasitical spaces of public action' in K. Cox et al (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Political Geography*, 403-417. Available at http://oro.open.ac.uk/20193/1/Convening_publics.pdf

9. Technologies of Publicity (Mar 5)

Rose, N. and Osborne, T. 1999 'Do the Social Sciences create Phenomena? The Example of Public Opinion Research', *British Journal of Sociology* 50(3): 367-96.

Barry, A. 1999 'Demonstrations: Sites and Sights of Direct Action', *Economy and Society* 28(1): 75-94.

*Asdal, K. 2008 'On politics and the little tools of democracy: A down to earth approach', *Distinktion*, 16: 11-26.

10. Making Things Public (Mar 12)

*Latour, B. 2005 'From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik, or How to Make Things Public' in B. Latour and P. Weibel (eds) *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 14-43.

DiSalvo, C. 2009 'Design and the Construction of Publics', *Design Issues*, 25: 48-63.

Hawkins, G. 2011 'Packaging water: plastic bottles as market and public devices', *Economy and Society*, 40: 534-552.

Maares, N. 2011 'The costs of public involvement: everyday devices of carbon accounting and the materialization of participation', *Economy and Society* 40: 510-33.

11. Making Things Secret (Mar 19)

Taussig, M. (1999) *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative*, Stanford University Press, 1-8, 49-77

Galison, P. (2004) 'Removing Knowledge', *Critical Inquiry*, 31(1): 229-243.

Gregory, D. (2007) 'Vanishing Points: Law, Violence and Exception in the Global War Prison' in D. Gregory and A. Pred (ed.) *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror and Political Violence*, London: Routledge, pp.205-236.

12. Neoliberalism, Privatization, Postdemocracy, Communism: Whither the Public? (Mar 26)

Hardt, M. (2010) 'The Common in Communism', *Rethinking Marxism* 22(3): 346-356.
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/08935696.2010.490365>

Swyngedouw, E. (2010) 'Apocalypse Forever? Post-political Populism and the Spectre of Climate Change', *Theory, Culture and Society* 27(2-3): 213-232.

Barnett, C. (2010) 'Publics and Markets: What's Wrong with Neoliberalism?', in S. Smith et al (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Social Geography*, 269-296. Available at
http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/emergentpublics/publications/barnett_publicsandmarkets.pdf

13. No Class (Apr 2)

14. Security and its Publics (Apr 9)

Masco, J. 2005 'The Billboard Campaign: The Los Alamos Study Group and the Nuclear Public Sphere', *Public Culture*. 17(3): 487-97

Amoore, L. and Hall, A., 2010. 'Border theatre: On the arts of security and resistance', *Cultural Geographies*, 17: 299-319.

Balzacq, T. 2005 'The three faces of securitization: political agency, audience and context', *European Journal of International Relations*, 11: 171-201.