

## Politics as Organized Crime

PLSC 485 - Fall 2020

26 Aug – 7 Dec

Monday: 6 pm – 9 pm

**Instructor:** Abdul Basit Adeel  
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**Office Hours:** Monday (3 pm – 4 pm)  
**Course Credits:** 4

**Course Description:** This course ventures beyond Tilly's famous "*War Making and State Making as Organized Crime*" analogy to introduce students to an alternative view of politics through reading issues including but not limited to authoritarianism and democracy, campaigns and elections, genocide and political violence, intrastate trade and war, intellectual property and corporate social responsibility, public goods and inequality, policing and surveillance, punishment and control, from a critical perspective. Students will read material from various disciplines, engage in several in-class activities, and eventually write a research paper on an issue area of their choice - *ideally* based on preliminary fieldwork i.e. interviews, participant observation, etc. Crime used in the title is a metaphor. Our objective is not *proving* the crime, but critically engaging with *pathologies* of politics throughout this course.

### Course Objectives:

Students will read critical theories of state and regime formation in the first part of this course. The second part will deal with various case studies of what I call *political pathologies* like political corruption, economic inequality, racial segregation, mass incarceration, state terrorism, and uneven representation, among others. Students will *ideally* be more cognizant of how these pathologies operate through politics as usual and more sensitive to the issues related but not to economic fairness, transnational social justice, political and human rights, and democratic participation by the end of this class.

**Course Materials:** There is no *required* textbook. Students will receive a list of readings through Blackboard each week. These readings will include excerpts from books and edited volumes, scholarly articles. Students are required to arrange for movies though.

**Student Responsibilities:** Students are expected to read the assigned material (40-70 pages) and engage in in-class discussions. They are required to submit a *final project* on the issues of their choice by the end of the class. This project could be a research paper, an investigative report, a series of interviews, a short documentary, whatever. *We can discuss*. I want to provide ultimate freedom of choice as long as it demonstrates effort and quality. There will be a take-home **mid-**

**term:** I'll give five questions about the readings and students will attempt three of them to their best ability. Besides that, students are required to submit 2x three-page long *summary responses* – that is two-page summary of the readings and at least one-page response to the issue(s) raised in the readings. Students will also be required to lead discussion on two separate weeks, which means they will have to prepare discussion questions.

Students will be graded based on their performance in seven out of eight modules. First module is mandatory, do not skip that. Here is the grading scheme:

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Attendance                | 10% |
| Participation             | 10% |
| Summary Responses x 2     | 20% |
| Discussion Leadership x 2 | 10% |
| Midterm                   | 25% |
| Final                     | 25% |

**All summary responses must be submitted through *Turnitin* by 11:59 am on Sundays.** You will find a Turnitin link for each response paper on MyCourses. **Late submissions will carry a 50% penalty, which means you can only submit one day late.**

**Academic dishonesty and plagiarism:** All work submitted in this course must be original. Sources must be properly cited. You may use any citation style of your choice, as long as it is used consistently throughout the paper. Any and all instances of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the Harpur College Academic Honesty Committee for possible further disciplinary measures. You can find out more about the Honesty Code in the bulletin: <http://bulletin.binghamton.edu> (Click on Academic Policies and Procedures - All Students).

**Grading Scheme:** Letter grade for the course will be computed on a 100-point scale as follows:

|        |    |       |    |       |    |      |   |
|--------|----|-------|----|-------|----|------|---|
| 95-100 | A  | 84-87 | B  | 74-77 | C  | 0-64 | F |
| 91-94  | A- | 81-83 | B- | 71-73 | C- |      |   |
| 88-90  | B+ | 78-80 | C+ | 65-70 | D  |      |   |

**Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD):** Students requiring particular accommodations for participation in this course must contact the Binghamton University office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), located in the University Union, Room 119. (Phone: 607-777-2686, email: [ssd@binghamton.edu](mailto:ssd@binghamton.edu)). Please feel free to inform me if you require any other accommodation.

## Schedule of Topics and Readings

The syllabus may be updated according to our progress in the class. I reserve the right to change dates and readings as necessary; any changes will be announced through Blackboard/MyCourses. Both required and (most) recommend readings will be available through blackboard (if not accessible through the online library system).

### Week 1: Organizing Crime (Sep 1)

*No readings. We will discuss the logistics of the course.*

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### Week 2: State Making As Organized Crime (Sep 7)

- Tilly (1982). “*Warmaking and Statemaking as Organized Crime.*”
  - Centeno (1997). “*Blood and debt: War and taxation in nineteenth-century Latin America.*” *American Journal of sociology*. 102.6: 1565-1605.
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### Week 3: The Ruling Bandits (Sep 14)

- Olson (1993). “*Dictatorship, democracy, and development.*” *American political science review*, 567-576.
  - Gambetta (1996). “*The Sicilian Mafia: the business of private protection.*” Harvard University Press. [Part 1: *The Industry of Protection*]
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### Week 4: Pirates, Privateers, Plunderers, and Colonialists (Sep 21)

- Thomson, J. E. (1996). *Mercenaries, pirates, and sovereigns: state-building and extraterritorial violence in early modern Europe*. Princeton University Press. [Chapter 2]
- Phillips, A., & Sharman, J. C. (2020). *Outsourcing empire: How company-states made the modern world*. Princeton University Press. [Chapter 2]

- Horvath, R. J. (1972). A definition of colonialism. *Current anthropology*, 13(1), 45-57.
  - Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2012). *Why nations fail: The origins of power, prosperity, and poverty*. Currency. [Chapter 9]
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### **Week 5: Settlers, Soldiers, and Killers (Sep 28)**

- Wolfe (2006). Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native. *Journal of genocide research*, 8(4), 387-409.
  - Jones (2010). *Genocide: A comprehensive introduction*. Routledge. [Chapter 2,3]
  - Boggs (2010). *The Crimes of Empire*. Pluto Press. [Chapter 2]
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### **Week 6: Oligarchs, Dictators, And (*Borderline*) Democrats (Oct 5)**

- Winters (2011). *Oligarchy*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapter 1]
  - Clark et al. (2017). *Principles of comparative politics*. CQ Press. [p. 382-399]
  - Winters & Page (2009). "Oligarchy in the United States?". *Perspectives on Politics*, 731-751.
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### **Week 7: Democracy But Is It Representative? (Oct 12)**

- Dworkin, R. (1987). What is equality-Part 4: Political equality. *USFL Rev.*, 22, 1.
  - Bartels (2018). *Unequal democracy: The political economy of the new gilded age*. Princeton University Press. [Chapter 9]
  - Mansbridge, J. (1999). Should blacks represent blacks and women represent women? A contingent "yes". *The Journal of politics*, 61(3), 628-657.
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## Mid-term (3<sup>rd</sup> Week October)

### Week 8: The Politics of Economic Inequality (Oct 19)

- Kelly, N. J. (2009). *The politics of income inequality in the United States*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapter 1, 6]
  - Hacke & Pierson (2010). Winner-take-all politics: Public policy, political organization, and the precipitous rise of top incomes in the United States. *Politics & Society*, 38(2), 152-204.
  - Bonica et al. (2013). Why hasn't democracy slowed rising inequality?. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27(3), 103-24.
  - Mankiw (2013). Defending the one percent. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27(3), 21-34.
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### Week 9: Necropolitics (Oct 26)

- Dean (1999). *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*. Duke University Press. [Chapter 1]
  - Mbembe (2019). *Necropolitics*. Duke University Press. [Chapter 1,3]
  - Mbembe (2005). Sovereignty as a Form of Expenditure. *Sovereign Bodies: Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World*, 148-166.
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### Week 10: Mass Incarceration and Procedural Justice (Nov 2)

- Justice and Fairness:  
<https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/justice-and-fairness/>
- Western (2006). *Punishment and inequality in America*. Russell Sage Foundation. [Chapter 1]

- Alexander (2020). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. The New Press. [Chapter 1, 3]
  - Western & Pettit (2010). Incarceration & social inequality. *Daedalus*, 139(3), 8-19.
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### **Week 11: Apartheid and Segregation by Design** (Nov 9)

- Trounstine (2018). *Segregation by design: Local politics and inequality in American cities*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapter 2]
- Massey & Denton (1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass*. Harvard university press. [Chapter 2, 3, 4]

### **Recommended:**

- Rothstein, R. (2017). *The color of law: A forgotten history of how our government segregated America*. Liveright Publishing.
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### **Week 12: Human Rights and Human Wrongs** (Nov 16)

- Perugini & Gordon (2015). *The human right to dominate*. Oxford University Press.
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**No class (Nov 23)**

### **Week 13: Citizenship and Health** (Nov 30)

- Jones (2008). The Tuskegee syphilis experiment. *The Oxford textbook of clinical research ethics*, 86-96.

- Daniels (2007). *Just health: meeting health needs fairly*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapters 1]
  - National Association of Community Health Centers. (2007). *Access denied: a look at America's medically disenfranchised*.
  - Farmer (1999). Pathologies of power: rethinking health and human rights. *American journal of public health*, 89(10), 1486-1496.
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#### **Week 14: Business as Politics and Politics as Business (Dec 7)**

- Goldberg (2018). Corruption and lobbying: conceptual differentiation and gray areas. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 70(2), 197-215.
  - Green & Ward (2004). *State crime: Governments, violence and corruption*. Pluto Press. [Chapter 2]
  - Richter, Samphantharak, Timmons (2009). Lobbying and taxes. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(4), 893-909.
  - Block (1977). The Ruling Class Does Not Rule. *Socialist Revolution*.
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