From the revolutions in the Middle East to the rise of the Tea Party to the sure-to-be-hotly contested 2012 elections, the concepts of political sociology—power, participation, protest and social movements, social policy, the market and inequality—are more relevant than ever. In this course, we will study power, organizations, voter preferences, and the role of charisma and “performance” in political campaigns. We will investigate the rise of current social movements and ask questions, including: Who participates in collective action and why? Why are some social policies protected while others attacked? How do policy scripts, pathways and feedback loops affect welfare policy outcomes? Can the people truly govern? Case studies will include American politics, rural Appalachia, health care policy, the Tea Party, and youth commissions.

Our readings will come from a range of disciplines, such as sociology, political science, journalism and popular culture; we’ll supplement them with movies and podcasts. Course assignments include participation in a class debate, a blog posting paper and a final essay paper. At the end of this course, you’ll be able to think like a political sociologist in situations beyond the classroom and will be equipped to navigate our ever-changing political world.

**Course Requirements**

Participation is important to the success of this course and attendance will factor into your grade. Students are expected to stay current with all readings and come prepared for class discussion with thoughts and questions. Students will need to complete all assignments in order to pass the course. Late papers will be docked half a grade each day and all papers must be submitted in person (emailed papers will not be accepted).
Assignments:
A detailed, written prompt will be handed out at least a week in advance of each assignment.

Mini-paper: non-graded 3-4 page assignment due 9/27. This will receive a check, check plus or check minus and count towards your participation grade. It will offer you a chance to get early feedback on your work as well as learn about my grading style.

Class Debate (30%): As part of a team with other classmates you will be either a Democrat or Republican and argue your case for health care reform. Half of your grade for this project will be as a team and the other half of your grade will come from individual papers (4-5 pg) where you discuss and react to the debate.

Blog Post paper (20%): There are currently many interesting sociology and humanities blogs (ex. Scatterplot and Crooked Timber). You will be given a choice of blog posts and in a 3-4 page paper you will write how you would respond to the post and explain its contribution to the conversation.

Final Project (35%): A 10-12 page essay. Essay questions will be distributed later in the semester.

Class Participation (15%): This includes attendance, participation in class discussion and interaction outside the class (ex. emailing relevant articles).

Required Reading (available for purchase at the bookstore)

Jacob S Hacker and Paul Pierson, Winner Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class (Simone and Schuster, 2010).


Jill Quadagno, One Nation Uninsured: Why the US Has No National Health Insurance (Oxford University Press, 2005).

The remaining readings will be available through LATTE.

*Students will be held to the highest standards of academic integrity and plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you have any questions about plagiarism please look at the plagiarism section in the University Handbook, the LTS informational website: http://lts.brandeis.edu/teachlearn/support/academic-integrity/index.html or speak directly with me.
*If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

Please note: this syllabus is subject to change

First Class (Sept 1): Introduction and Syllabus

Week 1 (Sept 6, 8): Conceptualizing Power


Movie- Harlan County, USA

Week 2 (Sept. 13, 15): Conceptualizing Democracy


Week 3 (Sept. 20, 22) and Week 4 (Sept 27, no class on 29): Politics and Economy

- Read: Jacob S Hacker and Paul Pierson, Winner Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class (Simone and Schuster, 2010).

***Mini-paper due 9/27***
Week 5 (Oct. 3, 6) and Week 6 (Oct. 11, no class 13): Voter Preferences, Elections and Campaigns


Week 7 (Oct. 17,18 -class on Monday and Tuesday, no class Thursday): Welfare and Social Policy


Week 8: Oct 25 and 27: Policy cont. and class debate

- Finish Quadagno Chapters 4-8.

***Class Debates Oct. 27***

Week 9 (Nov. 1, 3) and Week 10 (Nov. 8, 10): Social Movements, Protest and Collective Action

- Read sections from Douglas McAdam Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, Chapters 1 and 3.


Week 11 (Nov 15,17): Innovations in Democracy

Week 12 (Nov 22) : Innovations cont.

- Read sections from Bruce A. Ackerman and James S. Fishkin, 2004. Deliberation Day New Haven: Yale University Press.

****Blog Assignment due 11/22****

Week 13 and 14 (Nov 29, Dec 1) Politics of Race and Gender


Week 14 (Dec. 6, 8) Politics of Community and the Body


Last Class: Dec 12  Wrap up and Review

***Final Paper due after last class. Date TBA***