

Graduate Liberal Studies

SOCS 630

Wesleyan University

The Rise of the Modern Nation-State

Summer 2016
T, TH 6-9 pm
PAC 104

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I. Course Description

This course will analyze the principal processes which have led to the rise of the modern nation-state. The theoretical focus will be oriented around the main factors which account for the rise and legitimation of the state, while the historical focus will be on the political evolution across differing systems of governance from pre-historical societies up to the modern period. We begin with an analysis of the foundations of the theory of the state. Here we will compare and evaluate differing theories of the rise, consolidation, and legitimation of political communities. This will be followed by a theoretical and historical assessment of the rise and fall of differing systems of governance across time. This evolution will be considered within an interdisciplinary framework which is oriented around the political adaptation to social and economic modernization. An emphasis will be placed on evaluating the comparative performance of these differing forms of governance.

II. Topics

1. The Rise of the State: The Social Contract and Escape from Anarchy
2. Legitimation Crisis of the State
3. Governance in Pre-Industrial Societies

4. Feudalism and the Political Tradition of the West
5. The Emergence of the Democratic State and Differing Routes to Democracy
6. Democratic Culture and Institutions
7. Communism and the Revolution From Below
8. “Il Fascismo” and the Revolution From Above
- 9,10. Individual Presentations of research

III. Readings

Readings are accompanied by questions and suggestions which will underscore important topics in the readings. All of the weekly readings listed are required and many have been placed on E-reserve. I have recommended for purchase the books which will be most extensively used; hence it would be convenient to own them. These books can be purchased at the Wesleyan bookstore, they are:

Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State*

Sam Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*

Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*

Vladimir Lenin, *What Is To Be Done*

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael*

Mark Breault and Martin King, *Inside the Cult* (is only available at Amazon for about 4 dollars with shipping)

Disability Resources

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860/685-5581 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

IV. Evaluation

Students will be evaluated based on two longer research papers, short weekly assignments, class participation, and responsibility. It is essential that you keep up with the readings so as to enhance participation and better answer weekly questions. The lectures and discussions will be based upon the readings for the day. Discussion questions will be available on the syllabus. The questions will also serve as good study guides. Participation will be evaluated based on the quantity and quality of comments, and familiarity with the readings. There will be a grade for the entire class and also a grade for each individual. Responsibility encompasses all aspects of participation in the course: attendance, timeliness in giving in assignments and coming to class, corresponding in a timely manner, supporting an equitable load in group projects, and all other expectations related to the responsible execution of duties connected to this course.

Grades will be assigned based on the following weights:

Class Participation	10%
Weekly response papers (4)	10%
Individual Participation	20%
Responsibility	20%
Paper 1	20%
Paper 2	20%

V. Course Sections

1. The Rise of the State: The Social Contract and Escape from Anarchy

How did the state come about? Locke, Rousseau, and Hobbes talk about the emergence of the state from anarchy. Each sees a specific set of conditions that lead individuals to create political communities (“social contracts”). These communities require individuals

to give up the right to pursue their desires in an unconstrained manner (i.e., giving up the natural freedom they had under anarchy). Compare and contrast their accounts of anarchy and the process whereby individuals escape anarchy through the creation of the contract.

Readings:

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters 13, 17

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book I

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, Chapters 2, 8, 9

Discussion Topics:

Compare the state of nature (anarchy) in Locke, Rousseau, and Hobbes. Compare also their accounts of how individuals enter into political communities (i.e., escape anarchy through the creation of the state). Toward which argument are you most sympathetic and why?

2. Legitimation Crisis of the State

Once states form and are consolidated, they invariably face (to a greater or lesser extent) a legitimation crisis (i.e., challenges to their political authority). The sources of this crisis can be numerous and varied. What are these sources, and what can states do to preserve their authority? These questions touch upon central issues involved with the study of the theory of the state. De Jasay talks about the endemic legitimation problems caused by the “adversary state.” What is the adversary state and what special problems does it create? Huntington talks about the legitimation problems created by the “political gap”: what is this gap and how does it threaten the state? What special legitimation problems does Nisbet see in the modern western world? What prescriptions for confronting the legitimation crisis can be derived from Machiavelli?

Readings:

Anthony de Jasay, *The State*, Chapter 2

Robert Nisbet, *The Twilight of Authority*, Chapter 1

Sam Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Chapter 1

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Discussion Topic:

Based on the readings, try to construct a list of what the most important functions of government should be, i.e., what to do to avoid a legitimation crisis and prosper as a system of governance. **Assignment: answer one question with one single-spaced written page and be prepared to discuss your answer in class. This assignment will also be required for classes 4, 5 and 7.**

3. Governance in Pre-Industrial Societies

What were the earliest forms of governance which accompanied humankind's initial attempts at communal life. Anthropologists and political scientists have, in answering this question, found it useful to study non-industrial societies of both the past and present. A look at such societies and the governments they chose suggest various interesting findings. For one, governments were extremely simple and exhibited many democratic elements. Contrary to what many believe today, early government was neither as primitive nor autocratic as generally supposed. What were the most common characteristics of this pre-industrial governance? In what forms did democracy manifest itself? How did the style of governance fit the physical and social environments in which these societies functioned? What common roles did political leaders play? Daniel Quinn's novel *Ishmael* glorifies many properties of these pre-industrial societies. Is this praise warranted?

Readings:

Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael*

Ronald Cohen and John Middleton, *Comparative Political Systems*, "Introduction"

E.M. Weyer, "The Structure of Social Organization Among the Eskimo"

Lorna Marshall, "Kung Bushman Bands"

Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Social and Psychological Aspects of Chieftainship in a Primitive Tribe: The Nambikuara of Northwestern Mato Grosso"

Michael Finkel, "The Hadza"

Discussion Topic:

Pre-industrial societies show an amazing structure of governance. If these societies are good analogies for studying pre-historic society, then we can learn much about our distant ancestral practices of governance. These small bands tended to be fairly similar across geography and culture, and they arguably achieved impressive success in the practice of participatory democracy. How would you account for this? Could we achieve such governance in our modern world?

4. Feudalism and the Political Tradition of the West

Feudalism represented a system of political organization that emerged from the ashes of the Roman Empire. It is difficult to understand the origins of modern democratic state without understanding the specific institutions of governance introduced by feudalism. At the most general level, feudalism was founded on pluralism and constitutionalism. The contract between government and governed, which is at the heart of liberal democracy, is a manifestation of the reciprocal rights and duties between free persons under feudalism. What are the main factors accounting for the rise of feudalism? In terms of political organization, was it an optimal response to the turbulent conditions created by the disintegration of the Roman Empire? What were the major problems which feudalism came to face? How did feudalism create the seeds of its own destruction? How did feudalism contribute to the character of the modern democratic state? Also, how would you account for the modern popular fascination and glorification of feudal institutions (as manifest in the popularity of the Lord of the Rings and Star Wars books and motion pictures)?

Readings:

Dirk Heirbaut, “Not European Feudalism, but Flemish Feudalism”

Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State*, Chapter 2

A.D. Lindsay, *The Modern Democratic State*, Chapter 2

Otto Hintze, *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze*, Chapter 8

Discussion Topic:

Link the rise of feudalism to the political turbulence caused by the downfall of the Roman Empire. In terms of being a system of political organization, what would you say were the major strengths and weaknesses of feudalism? **Assignment.**

5. The Emergence of the Democratic State and Differing Routes to Democracy

The political organization of feudalism was replaced by the nation-state. With the territorial consolidation of the nation-state came wide-ranging attempts at absolutist governance: monarchs claiming authority over large sovereign territories. Absolutism in turn came to face a democratic challenge as elements emerged from society to demand greater political voice. The success of the political challenge to the absolutist state formed the modern democratic state. While this transition occurred across various nations, it differed in terms of style and timing (i.e., differing routes to democracy). How do you account for the transition from feudalism to absolutism? How, in turn, did absolutism give way to democracy? What were the differing routes to democracy taken by France, the U.S., Germany, and England?

Readings:

Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State*, Chapter 4

Sam Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Chapter 2

Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Chapters 1, 2

Otto Hintze, *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze*, Chapters 1, 4

Discussion Topic:

Account for the transition from feudalism to absolutism, and then from absolutism to democracy. **Assignment.**

6. Democratic Culture and Institutions

Scholars who have studied political transition in the early-modern period argue that with the advent of democracy came a democratic mind-set: unique ways of thinking that characterize democratic societies. Individualism and a belief in equality, for example, are two of the principal elements in this mind-set. This mind-set was a necessary precursor to the institutional changes that led from feudalism to democracy.

Barbu locates the roots of the mind-set in the dissolution of feudalism and the transition to a less rigid social, political, and economic structure. Lindsay sees its roots in the emerging intellectual traditions of the early modern period, as well in the economic and scientific transformation of that period. De Tocqueville identifies a unique American mind-set and traces it to the particular forces shaping institutional and demographic patterns in colonial America. What are the components of this democratic mind-set? Are these components as unique to democratic nations as many believe? What are the origins of this mind-set?

Readings:

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*,
Volume I, Part I Chapters 2-4, 7,8
Part II Chapters 1,2, 4-8
Volume II, Part I, Chapters 1-10
Part II, Chapters 1-12
Book III, Chapters 1-4, 13, 19-22

A.D. Lindsay, *The Modern Democratic State*, Chapter 3

Zevedei Barbu, *Problems of Historical Psychology*, pps. 140-144, Chapters 5, 6

Discussion Topic:

What are the principal components of the democratic mind-set? What are their origins? How does Tocqueville's view of American democracy in the 1830s compare with American democracy today?

7. Communism and the Revolution From Below

Huntington defines a revolution as not only a transformation of political institutions, but of political ideologies as well. Such pervasive political changes within nations are rare. While political change through insurrections, revolts and coups has been common in history, many fewer instances of political revolution have occurred. Communist revolutions have effected pervasive changes within various nations in the 20th century. For Huntington, these leftist transformations would not have been possible without Lenin's theory of revolution. Lenin took the a-political ideology of Marxism and infused it with a practical political orientation (i.e., revolutionary organization through the Party). How would you describe Lenin's theory of revolution, and what special role does the Party play? What are the major strengths and weaknesses of this theory? In

terms of weaknesses, what elements of the theory encouraged totalitarian regimes? Why, according to Huntington, do revolutions occur? Huntington talks about two styles of revolution: East and West. What are they, and how do they differ? According to Huntington, what are the pre-conditions for a successful revolution?

Readings:

Vladimir Lenin, *What Is To Be Done*

Joseph Stalin, "The Foundations of Leninism"

Sam Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Chapter 5

Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Chapters 4, 9, and Epilogue

Discussion Topic:

Discuss Lenin's theory of revolution. What special role does the Party play in this theory? What are the major strengths and weaknesses of his theory when used as a guideline for ruling a state? **Assignment.**

8. "Il Fascismo" and the Revolution From Above

Fascism (il fascismo) was originally an Italian political movement. The term comes from the verb "fasciare" which means "to bind together." In its general manifestations this movement (which has been referred to as an elite revolution--"revolution from above") represented the old power elite aligning with peasants to maintain traditional social structures through a powerful state bureaucracy. This was a reaction to capitalistic modernization which was shaking the old political order by bringing new groups into the political nexus and adversely affecting old groups. What specific factors led to the rise of Fascism in Italy, Germany, and Japan? What is the Fascist ideology? What is the role of the state in the Fascist doctrine? What parallels can you draw between the appeal of Fascism and the appeal of religious cults analyzed in the Anthony and Robbins reading, and personally chronicled in the Breault and King book about life in the Branch Davidian cult?

Readings:

Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, Chapters 1, 8

Benito Mussolini, "The Doctrine of Fascism"

Alfredo Rocco, "The Political Doctrine of Fascism"

Adolph Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, passages

Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Chapter 8

Mark Breault and Martin King, *Inside the Cult*

Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins, "Conversion and "brainwashing" in new religious movements "

Discussion Topic:

Describe the Fascist system of governance. What are its major strengths and weaknesses? How closely does a Fascist state resemble a cult, and how?

9,10. Individual Research Presentations