

## **CSS Sophomore Tutorial in Government: 2021-2022 State and Society in the Modern Age**

Sarah Elise Wiliarty

Email: [swiliarty@wesleyan.edu](mailto:swiliarty@wesleyan.edu)

Office: 318 High Street, Room 304

Office hours: TBD

Classroom location: Downey 208 (294 High Street)

### **Course Description**

The sophomore tutorial in government analyzes the emergence and functioning of the modern nation state, primarily in the West. We are interested in how the nation state came into being and what forms of government have evolved over the past 200 years or so. We will also examine a variety of challenges to the nation state, including modernization and the deepening of democracy. Throughout the class, our focus will be on the question of what is required for the emergence and maintenance of a democratic political system.

When political scientists approach these issues, we are looking for generalities and systemic explanations. We seek to draw out common theoretical principles from a variety of diverse empirical cases. Political scientists may ask questions such as: What forces in a society tend to produce democratic outcomes? Under what conditions is a revolution more or less likely? Where does sovereignty rest? There isn't a general agreement among political scientists about how to attempt to answer these questions. In this course, we read both classic texts and newer works on these topics and consider which approaches are most enlightening.

### **Topics**

1. What is the State?
2. What is Democracy?
3. Democratic Political Institutions and Political Culture
4. Paths to Modernity
5. The Challenge of Modernization
6. The Welfare State
7. Women and Democracy
8. Democracy and Extremism in Europe

### **Requirements**

Assignments will consist of weekly essays of five double-spaced pages. Each week you will receive a handout about the readings for the following week. Handouts will contain questions and suggestions which will underscore important topics in the readings. These topics will serve as a focus for both discussion and the essays. All of the weekly readings are required and will be available through the class Moodle. The books that will be used most extensively will be

available for purchase at RJ Julia Bookstore [they are not there yet – book list will be forthcoming]. Do not feel that you must buy all of these! They are available at the bookstore if you want them, but you can also get them at the Olin Reserve Room. There is also a long CSS tradition of students sharing books so ask around if you are interested in that possibility.

### **Week I: What Is The State?**

#### **Readings:**

Tilly, Charles. 1993. *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1990*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell. Chapters 1-3.

Scott, James. 1998. *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Chapters 1-2.

#### **Assignment:**

The readings for this week consider the question of where states come from. What led to the transition from feudalism to the modern state? Can we find democratic roots in this process or is it more about absolutist rule? How did concepts such as justice, sovereignty, bureaucracy and taxation evolve during this period? What do states do? What problems did the invention of the nation state solve? To whose advantage was it to form a state? To whose disadvantage? Do Tilly and Scott agree in their accounts of the process of state formation or do you see them as more in conflict with each other?