**Sociology of the Middle East: Applied Themes in Political Sociology**

NEST-GA 2785 - 001  - Graduate seminar, Spring 2015, Tuesday, 4:55 – 7.35pm, Kevorkian Library

Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies, NYU

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Office hours by appointment (Room 519, King Juan Carlos Center): Thursday 9.30-11.30am

**Synopsis**

This graduate seminar addresses a series of key themes within sociology of contemporary 'Middle East' (aka Western Asia and North Africa). The course, composed of lectures and class discussions, will survey 'classical' authors in political sociology (such as Weber, Marx, Bourdieu) and analyze how key concepts have been operationalized by recent scholarship dealing with the Middle East. Particular attention will be given to the classical notions of power and domination, state, society, civility, modernity, capitalism and (post)colonialism. The purpose of the class, beyond reading some classics in sociology, is to help students connect empirical evidence from the region with on-going conceptual or theoretical elaborations. Authors read in class include, among others: Karl Marx, Max Weber, Norbert Elias, Timothy Mitchell, Frederick Cooper, Vivek Chibber, Bryan Turner, Adam Hanieh, and Salwa Ismail.

**Texts**

All readings will be made available for you as PDFs on NYU-Classes. Some texts are classics. We will read the following books (almost) in full, so students must purchase their own copy:

CHIBBER Vivek, 2013. *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*, London: Verso.

Among the classic texts which you probably must purchase for other classes anyway, I can recommend B. MESSICK, *The Calligraphic State* (1993); and G. POGGI, *The state: its nature, development, and prospects* (1990).

**Requirements and Evaluation**

*Active participation* is an essential component of the course. Be prepared by printing and reading the texts in advance, come on time and contribute actively to the group discussions. 10% of the grade.

Each student is required to write two *response papers* (RP) on the readings, each about 5-pages long. This is not to be a summary of the readings, but a critical engagement with some of the ideas discussed. Most texts should be covered (ideally all), but it is fine to concentrate on a couple of readings, providing that it connects with previous texts read or concepts discussed in earlier sessions. You might want to concentrate on a core idea, a transversal issue, or a theoretical aspect that struck you (positively or negatively) and which you would like to discuss in class. Answering some of the listed questions on the blog can also be a way to structure your RP. Responsibilities include circulate the RP on the mailing list at least 24 hours before the seminar and do a 5- to 10-minute presentation in class of the main relevant issues. You should not read your RP in class. These response papers must also include a list of key questions or remarks for discussion. 30% of the grade.

*Weekly short comments on the readings*. Post every week a short comment on the readings on the course’s blog page (<http://sociologykevorkiancenter.blogspot.com/>). Length: 250 to 500 words max. These comments must be posted 24 hours prior to the class. The weekly list of questions should help you in articulating comments and criticism that can be included in these short position statements. 20% of the grade.

*Final paper*. Each student is asked to submit for the last day of class a 15-page essay (double-spaced) covering transversal themes of the course, meaning that it can’t just be an extension of the chosen weeks’ response papers. Due attention should be paid to: a) the quality of the general argument; b) a critical discussion of the literature assembled for this final; and c) the crafting (and formatting) of the final text presentation. The topic of the final essay should be discussed with the instructor via email or during office hours at least a month prior to the final submission. Instead of writing a general final paper, students can also write a literature review on a given topic (e.g. state of exception in the Arab world), as a mock theoretical chapter for a final thesis. 40% of the grade.

**Plagiairism / Learning difficulties / Computer in class**

We will apply NYU's standard procedures in case of absences, lateness and plagiarism. Note that plagiarism can be easily spotted, so please avoid any ambiguities in quoting your sources. Better quote more than not enough and remember that it is part of the academic ethics to acknowledge intellectual debts and borrowing of others’ ideas!

Students with learning difficulties should contact the instructor to discuss possible arrangements.

Ideally, the classroom should be a computer-free environment, which means you should bring the printed readings with you.

**Schedule**

**Week 1 (Tuesday 27 Jan., 2015): General introduction**

No readings.

**Week 2 (Tuesday 3 Febr., 2015): Modernity, Colonialism, and Capitalism**

COOPER Frederick, 2005. *Colonialism in Question. Theory, Knowledge, History*, Berkeley: University of California Press, Chapters 1 "Introduction: Colonial Questions, Historical Trajectories" and 5 "Modernity", 3-31 and 113-149.

MITCHELL Timothy (ed.) 2000. *Questions of Modernity*, Minneapolis: Minnesota UP. Introduction and Chapter 1 "The Stage of Modernity", xi-xxvi, and 1-27.

BLUMI Isa, 2012. *Foundations of Modernity. Human Agency and the Imperial State*, London: Routledge, Introduction, 1-14.

DEEB Lara, 2006. *An Enchanted Modern*. *Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, Introduction "Pious and/as/is Modern", 4-41.

**Week 3 (Tuesday 10 Febr., 2015): Weber, Weberism, and Historical Sociology**

WEBER Max, 1992[1920] *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, tr. Talcott Parsons [1930], intro and notes by Anthony Giddens, London: Routledge, Selection: Section 5 “Asceticism and the Sprit of Capitalism”, 102-125.

WEBER Max, 1978. *Economy and Society. An outline of interpretive sociology*, ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press. Selections:

* Vol. I, Ch. VI ‘Religious Groups’, § xv ‘Great religions’, sub-section 3. ‘The this-worldliness of Islam and its economic ethics’, pp. 623-627.
* Vol. 2 Ch. XIII ‘Feudalism, *Ständestaat* and Patrimonialism’, § 9 ‘The impact of trade on the development of patrimonialism’, pp. 1092-97.

POGGI Gianfranco, 2006. *Weber. A Short Introduction*, Cambridge UK: Polity, Ch.3 “Weber’s conception of Socio-Historical Process”, 4 "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" and 5. "Other essays in the sociology of religion", 36-88. [also in PDF, but not compulsory: Ch. 1 "The Man and his Works", 1-16]

TURNER Bryan, S. 1974. *Weber and Islam. A Critical Study*, London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul. Ch. 7 and 8, ‘Islam and the City’, and ‘Weber, law and Islam’, pp. 93-121.

TURNER Bryan S., 1992. *Max Weber. From History to Modernity*, London: Routledge. Ch. 3 ‘Islam, Capitalism and the Weber Theses’, pp. 41-55.

TURNER Bryan S., 1981. *For Weber. Essays on the sociology of fate*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ch. 9 ‘Weber’s Orientalism’, pp. 257-286.

SALVATORE Armando, 1996. ‘Beyond Orientalism? Max Weber and the Displacements of "Essentialism" in the Study of Islam’, *Arabica* XLIII(3), pp. 457-485.

**Week 4 (Tuesday 17 Febr., 2015): Marxism and Political Sociology**

MARX Karl, selection taken from in Robert C. TUCKER, ed., 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Norton: New York:

* *Manifesto* *of the Communist Party* [1848], 473-491 and 499-500 [skip section “III Soc. and Communist Lit.”, 491-98].
* *Capital , Volume I* [1867], Vol 1. Selection made of:
  + Preface to the 1st German edition, 294-298,
  + Ch. I. “Commodities”, 302-308,
  + Section 4. “The Fetishism of Commodities and The Secret Thereof”, 319-329,
  + Ch. VI. “ The Buying and Selling of Labour-Power”, 336-343, and
  + Ch. XXVI. “The Secret of Primitive Accumulation”, 431-435.
* “The British Rule in India”, [1853], 653-658 (also available at [www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/06/25.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/06/25.htm)).

TURNER Bryan S., 1978. *Marx and the End of Orientalism*, London: Allen & Unwin. Sel.: 1-38.

AMIN Samir, 2009. *Eurocentrism: modernity, religion, and democracy: a critique of Eurocentrism and culturalism,* New York: Monthly Review Press, Ch. II ‘Modernity and Religious Interpretations’, pp. 25-55 (plus Preface of the first 1989 edition, vii-xiii).

ELYACHAR Julia, 2005. *Markets of Dispossession. NGOs, Economic Development, and the State in Cairo*, Durham: Duke UP, Ch. 1 "Introduction: The Power of Invisible Hands", and " Conclusion: The Free Market and the Invisible Spectator", 1-36, and 213-219.

**Week 5 (Tuesday 24 Febr., 2015): The Emergence of the State – Origins, Characteristics**

POGGI Gianfranco. 1990. *The state : its nature, development, and prospects*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, Chapters 1-4, 1-68.

POGGI Gianfranco, 2006. *Weber. A Short Introduction*, Cambridge UK: Polity, Ch. 7 “The State and Bureaucracy”, 105-126.

ELIAS Norbert, 2000 [1939]. *The Civilizing Process. Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, London: Blackwell. “State Formation and Civilization”, 187-194, and 257-267.

AYUBI Nazih M., 1995. *Over-stating the Arab state: Politics and society in the Middle East.* London & New York: I.B. Tauris, Ch. 1 “The Middle East and the State Debate” and Ch. 3, “State formation in the Modern Era: The Colonial/Indigenous Mix”, 1-35 and 86-136.

**Week 6 (Tue. 3 March, 2015): Lessons about the State in Western Asia and North Africa**

MESSICK Brinkley, 1993. *The Calligraphic State. Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society,* Berkeley: University of California Press, Ch. 10 “Court Order”, and Ch. 12 “Spiral Texts”, 187-200 and 231-250.

HEYDEMANN Steven (ed.) 2000. *War, institutions, and social change in the Middle East*, Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, Introduction, 1-30.

MITCHELL Timothy, 1991. “TheLimits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics”, *American Political Science Review* 85(1), 77-96.

WEDEEN Lisa, 2008. *Peripheral Vision. Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen,* Chicago: Chicago UP, Ch. 2 “Seeing like a citizen, acting like a state”, 67-102.

BLUMI Isa, 2011. *Chaos in Yemen. Societal Collapse and the New Authoritarianism*, London: Routledge, Ch. 4 “The frontier as a measure of modern state power”, 91-115.

**Week 7: The (Un)Making of Society, 21st Century-Style**

WAGNER Peter, 2012. *Modernity. Understanding the Present*, Cambridge: Polity, Ch. 1 “Retrieving modernity’s past, understanding modernity’s present”, 3-27, and Ch. 8 “Towards a World Sociology of Modernity”, 151-170.

JOSEPH Suad, 2000. *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East*, Syracuse; Syracuse UP, Ch. 1 “Gendering Citizenship in the Middle East”, 3-30.

MASSAD Joseph, 2001. *Colonial Effects. The Making of National Identity in Jordan*, New York: Columbia University Press. Intro, Ch. 1 “Codifying the Nation”, and “Concluding Remarks”, 1- 49, 276-278.

KASSEM Ramzi, 2014. "Passport Revocation as Proxy Denaturalization. Examining the Yemen Cases", *Fordham Law Review* 82(5), 2099-2113.

LI Darryl, 2015. "Offshoring the Army: Migrant Workers and the U.S. Military", UCLA Law Review 62(1), 124-174.

Current read: Memo on equal citizenship rights for Libyan women in the Constitution, [*Jadaliyya*](http://photography.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/20394/memorandum-on-equal-citizenship-rights-for-libyan-) (Aug. 2014)

**Week 8:**  **SPRING BREAK 2015**

**Week 9 (Tuesday 24 March 201): Bourdieu, Reflexive and Relational Sociology**

BOURDIEU Pierre, 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge: CUP, Section on "Habitus", 72-87.

BOURDIEU Pierre, and WACQUANT Loic, 1992 *An Invitation To Self-Reflexive Sociology* Chicago: Chicago UP, Section on "The Logic of Fields", 94-115.

BOURIDEU Pierre, 2012. *Picturing Algeria*, ed. By F. Schultheis & C. Frisinghelli, New York: Columbia University Press, “War and Social Transformation in Algeria”, 41-65 [12p. – 26 with pictures].

EMIRBAYER Mustafa, 1997. “Manifesto for a Relational Sociology”, *American Journal of Sociology* 103(2), 281–317.

LOCKMAN Zachary, 1996.  *Comrades and Enemies. Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948,* Berkeley: University of California Press, Introduction, 1-20.

HALEH DAVIS Muriam and SERRES Thomas, 2013. "Political Contestation in Algeria: Between Postcolonial Legacies and the Arab Spring", *Middle East Critique,* forthcoming.

ELYACHAR Julia, 2005. *Markets of Dispossession*, Ch. 5 "Value, the Evil Eye, and Economic Subjectivities", 137-166.

**Week 10 (Tuesday 31 March 2015): Civil Society and Its Critics**

CHATTERJEE Partha, 1998. “Beyond the Nation? Or Within?”, *Social Text* 56 (Autumn), 57-69.

BISHARA Azmi, 2011. “[Reflections on the Introduction of the Sixth Edition of *Civil Society*](http://english.dohainstitute.org/release/8f16adce-a793-40b3-9fa2-cba4880c4188)” Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, at (5p.)

CHALLAND Benoit, 2009. *Palestinian Civil Society. Foreign Donors and the Power to Promote and Exclude*, London: Routledge, Ch. 2 “Debating Civil Society. A new definition”, 25-58.

HANIEH Adam, 2013. *Lineages of Revolt*, London: Haymarket,Ch. 1 "Theorizing the Middle East", and Ch 6 "The Regional Scale: Bringing the Gulf Arab States Back In", 1-16 and 119-140.

VOLPI Frédéric (ed.), 2011. *Political Civility in the Middle East,* Special issue of *Third World Quarterly* 32(5)*.*

* “Invoking Political Civility in the Middle East”, by Frédéric Volpi (801-806).
* “Civility: Between Disciplined Interaction and Local/Translocal Connectedness”, by Armando Salvatore (807-825).
* “Framing Civility in the Middle East: alternative perspectives on the state and civil society”, by Frédéric Volpi (827-843).
* “Authoritarian Government, Neoliberalism and Everyday Civilities in Egypt”, by Salwa Ismail (845-862).

**Week 11 (Tuesday 7 April 2015): Marxist and Postcolonial debates.**

CHIBBER Vivek, 2013. *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*, London: Verso. Selection made of: Preface, Chapters 1-5, pp. 1-127, Ch 7, "Culture Interests and Agency", pp. 152-177 and Chapters 10-11, pp. 249-296

**Week 12 Tuesday 14 April 2015: Foucault, Body, and State of Exception**

FOUCAULT Michel, 2000 (1978). “Governmentality’”, in P. RABINOW (ed.) *The Essential Works of Foucault*, New York: New Press, 201-22.

FOUCAULT Michel, 1982. “Subject and Power” *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1982), 777-795.

RYZOVA Lucie, 2005. "I Am a Whore But I Will Be a Good Mother": On the Production and Consumption of the Female Body in Egypt”, *Arab Studies Journal* XII(2)/XIII(1), 80-115.

ISMAIL Salwa, 2006. *Political Life in Cairo’s* *Quarters. Encountering the Everyday State*, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, Ch. 4 “Youth, Gender, and the State in Cairo: Marginalized Masculinities and Contested Spaces”, 96-128.

LEMKE Thomas, 2011. *Bio-Politics. An Advanced Introduction*, New York: New York University, ch. 4 "Sovereign Power and Bare Life: Giorgio Agamben”, 53-64.

KHALILI Laleh, and SCHWEDLER Jillian, 2010. *Policing and Prisons in the Middle East. Formations of Coercion*, New York: Columbia UP. Intro (Khalil & Schwedler) 1-28, “Post-colonial policing and the ‘Woman’ Question. A history of the women’s police directorate in Bahrain” (Staci Strobl) 119-133. “Spectacle of death. Dignity, dissent and sacrifice in Turkey’s Prisons” (Banu Bargu), 241-261.

**Week 13 (Tuesday 21 April 2015): Historical Materialism in Town**

CHIBBER Vivek, 2013. *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*, London: Verso. Conclusions.

Discussion with Vivek Chibber (NYU, Sociology).

**Week 14 (Tuesday 28 April 2015): Cities, Urban Spaces, and Protests**

DEBORD Guy, 1967. [*Society of The Spectacle*](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/debord/society.htm), Selection from Ch. 1, 2, and 7: Read Propositions 1-15, 65 and 165-179. PAY ATTENTION TO PROPOSITIONS 65 and 172.

AMIN Ash, 2012. *Land of Strangers*, Cambridge: Polity, Ch. 3 “Strangers in the City”, 59-82.

ISMAIL Salwa, 2006. *Political Life in Cairo’s* *Quarters. Encountering the Everyday State*, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, Introduction, xvii-xlvi, Ch. 1 “Reconfiguring Cairo’s New Popular Quarters between the Local and the Global”, 1-32, and Postscript, 161-168.

BAYAT Asef, 2010. ‘Teheran Paradox City’, *New Left Review* 66(Nov.-Dec.), 99-122.

PARKER, Christopher, 2009. ‘Tunnel-bypasses and minarets of capitalism: Amman as neoliberal assemblage’, *Political Geography* 28(2), pp. 110-120.

MENORET Pascal, 2014. *Joyriding in Riyadh. Oil. Urbanism and Road Revolt*, New York: Cambridge UP, Chapters 1 and 3 ('A night with 'Ajib' and 'City of the future'), 1-20 and 61-99.

**Week 15 (Tuesday 5 May 2015): Conclusion and Wrap-up**

**Final paper due**: Bring a printed copy of your final paper in class.  
No incompletes. Late submission will mean a loss of grade, e.g. from A to A-.