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Office hours: Fri 10-12 & by appointment

POL S 398: Fall 2018
Mon/Wed. 2:30-4:20
Guggenheim 204

POL S 398: Institutional Failure

The purpose of this course is to think critically about how and why political institutions fail to achieve their goals or operate in a manner that they were originally intended to and the consequences of these failures. We will examine the rise of a permanent US national security establishment; a centuries-long American drug war; the politics of policing in American cities; the rise of incarceration; and inner-city schools on the basis of 1) policymakers' expressed aims; 2) the goals the institutions in question were meant to serve; and 3) the human costs of failure, particularly for the most disadvantaged members of society.

The course is divided into two main parts. First, we will examine leading theories of political power and policymaking in the United States during the constitutional founding and in a contemporary context. This will provide a framework to assess what President Eisenhower famously called the U.S. Military-Industrial Complex and the growth of executive power over a permanent national security establishment. Second, we will examine the role of various governing institutions in combating poverty, waging a War on Drugs and launching inner-city school reform, with a particular focus on politically marginalized populations.

As backdrop for this seminar, we will be watching a season of the HBO television series *The Wire*, which follows police officers, drug dealers, public school educators, politicians and citizens of Baltimore. The series is meant to complement the scholarly texts that we will be reading in the latter half of the course.

Requirements & Evaluation

Participation & short presentations (30%): Participation will be evaluated on the basis of three criteria. First, students are expected to read the assigned material before seminar and contribute to discussion regularly. Second, each student will give a 10-minute presentation based on the readings for that day and help facilitate class discussion. Presentations should discuss connections between the assigned readings for the day, provide thoughtful critiques of the arguments, raise questions and draw connections to other readings from the course. Third, students will give a 10-minute presentation of your research papers at the end of the quarter.

Essay Exam (30%): Students will construct 2-3 essays based on class readings and discussion. The exam is scheduled to take place on November 19.

Research paper (30%): Students will write a 10-12 page research paper on a subject related to class material, which will be due during finals week. 1-2 page descriptions of paper topics will be due on October 29, and we will set aside class time periodically to discuss your research in progress. The first three pages of your papers will be due on November 28 so that I can provide preliminary feedback.

Response papers (10%): 1-2 page response papers will be due each week. The prompts will ask you to address a question or argument raised in the assigned reading for that day and are meant to serve as

foundation for class discussion. The responses will be graded as superb (4.0), satisfactory (3.0) or unsatisfactory (no credit).

Please note that deadline extensions are only permitted in extreme circumstances, such as a death in the family or a serious illness with a doctor's note. All students should also make sure they are familiar with the Student Conduct Code: <http://www.washington.edu/students/handbook/conduct.html>

Course Material

The following reading materials and DVDs are required for this course:

- *Course reading packet (available at for purchase at Professional Print & Copy on University Way)
- **The Power Elite*. 1956. C. Wright Mills. Oxford University Press
- **Unequal Under Law: Race in the War on Drugs*. 2007. Doris Marie Provine. University of Chicago Press.
- **When Work Disappears: World of the New Urban Poor*. 1996. William Julius Wilson. Vintage.
- **The Wire*. HBO television series created, produced & written by David Simon. Season 3 required.

The courses texts are available at the university bookstore, at online retail outlets and on 4-hour reserve at Odegaard Library. In addition to the written texts, the course requires students to watch Season 3 of *The Wire*. The series is available for rental or purchase on Netflix, iTunes and Amazon, and I have one personal copy on video reserve. We will be integrating the series into our class discussions in the second part of the course. There are 12 episodes in Season 3 and 10 weeks of seminar discussions, so plan your time accordingly. If you are not familiar with earlier seasons, character descriptions and episode summaries are available at the HBO website: <http://www.hbo.com/the-wire/index.html#/the-wire/index.html>

Additional study material and reading questions for response papers are available on the course website: <https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1222788>

Course Schedule

Part I: Democracy, Policymaking & the U.S. National Security Establishment

Sept 26 – Course Introduction

Week 1 – Oct 1 - Foundations I: Democracy & Policymaking

- James Madison, Federalist 10 (1787)
- Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery" (1948)
- Morris Fiorina, "The Rise of the Washington Establishment" (1989)

Oct 3 - Foundations II: War Powers & the Constitution

- Brutus, Anti-Federalist Essay X (1788)
- Alexander Hamilton & James Madison, Federalist 23 & 51 (1787-88)
- James Madison, "Universal Peace" (1792)

Week 2: Oct 8- The Military Industrial Complex

- Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1961 Farewell Address
- John Ismay, "What Would a Fighter Jet Buy 60 Years After Eisenhower's Speech?" *New York Times*, April 2013
- Robert Higgs, "Airplanes the Pentagon Didn't Want but Congress Did" (2006)
- Harvey Simon, "Buying the Beretta: The Army's Dilemma," Harvard Public Policy handbook (1988)

Oct 10 – The American Military Complex, Continued

--C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*, ch. 1 & 9

--James Fallows, "The Tragedy of the American Military," *The Atlantic*, Jan/Feb 2015

Documentary: Why We Fight

Week 3: Oct 15 – The Executive Branch & National Security Establishment I

--Madison & Hamilton, Federalist 48 & 69 (1787-88)

--C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*, ch. 10-11

--William Blum, *Killing Hope*, Iran 1953, Afghanistan 1979-1992 (1998)

Oct 17 – The Executive Branch & National Security Establishment II

--Steve Coll, "Remote Control: Our Drone Delusion," *The New Yorker*, May 2013

--Bill Moyers, *The Secret Government: The Constitution in Crisis* (PBS Documentary) – [see course website](#)

Part II: Poverty, Police & Prisons

Week 4: Oct 22- Housing Segregation & Political Economy of Cities

--William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears*, ch. 1-2

--Thomas Sugrue, "Deindustrialization of Detroit" (in *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 1996)

--Douglas Massey, "America's Apartheid and the Urban Underclass." *Social Service Review*, Dec. 1994

--*The Atlantic Cities*, "Watch These American Cities Segregate, Even as they Diversify," June 25, 2012– [see course website](#)

Oct 24- Politics of Mass Imprisonment

--William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears*, ch. 3

--Bruce Western & Becky Pettit, "Incarceration & Social Inequality," *Daedalus*, Summer 2010

--Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration," *The Atlantic*, April 2015

--Clif Mark, "All in the Game: HBO's *The Wire*," *The Oxonian Review*, March 2008

Week 5: Oct 29– The War on Drugs in Historical Perspective

--Doris Provine, *Unequal Under Law*, ch. 2-3

***Research Outlines Due - Discussion: Research in Progress**

Oct 31 – The War on Drugs & Incarceration

--Doris Provine, *Unequal Under Law*, ch. 4

--Sarah Stillman, "The Throwaways: Pawns in the War on Drugs" *The New Yorker*, Sept. 2012

Discussion: Research in Progress, Continued

Week 6: Nov 5 – Politics and Policing

--James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, ch. 9

--Graham Rayman, "The NYPD Tapes: Inside Bed-Stuy's 81st Precinct," *Village Voice*, May 2010

--Katherine Beckett, et al., "Race, Drugs & Policing: Understanding Disparities in Drug Delivery Arrests," *Criminology* (2006)

--Sarah Stillman, "Taken: The Use and Abuse of Civil Forfeiture," *The New Yorker*, August 2013

--Kraska, Peter B. "Militarization and Policing—Its Relevance to 21st Century Police," *Policing* (2007)

Nov 7 – Debating Imprisonment & the Drug War

--Christopher Glazek, "Raise the Crime Rate," *N+1*, January 2012

--Dan Baum, "Legalize It All: How To Win the War on Drugs," *Harper's Magazine*, April 2016

--James Q. Wilson, "Against the Legalization of Drugs," *Commentary*, Feb 1990

Week 7: Nov 12 – No Class, University Holiday

May 14 - Wrap-Up: Race, Space & Cumulative Disadvantage

--Eric Schlosser, "The Prison-Industrial Complex," *The Atlantic*, December 1998

Documentary: The House I Live In

Week 8: Nov 19 – **In-Class Exam (bring a blue book)**

Nov 21 – No Class – Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 9: Nov 26 – Reforming Inner-City Schools

--Katherine Mangu-Ward, "Education Showdown." *Reason Foundation*, April 2011

--Diane Ravitch, "The Myth of Charter Schools." *The New York Review of Books*, Nov 2010

--Dale Russakoff, "Schooled," *The New Yorker*, May 19, 2014

Nov 28– Discussion of research in-progress

***Submit 3 pages of research paper for feedback**

Discussion Panel: The Wire: A Compelling Portrayal of an American City

Week 10: Dec 3 – Reserved for Presentations

Dec 5- Reserved for Presentations

FINAL PAPER DUE MON, DECEMBER 10