

POLS 373
POLITICS AND CULTURE
SUMMER 2026

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Course Description:

In this course we will explore what culture means for politics. We will discuss how ideas, narratives, meanings and tastes affect or intersect with politics. Drawing on important foundational theoretical frameworks we will examine how symbolic systems operate within diverse spheres of meaning and power such as class, nationalism, marginality and everyday practices.

By adopting culturalist analysis as the methodological and interpretive approach, we will engage with ethnographic and theoretical readings that reveal how culture operates as a constitutive dimension of the social world.

We will also study theories of cultural production and then bring them into conversation with real-world examples such as movies and paintings to analyze culture-politics relations.

Academic Honesty:

Academic honesty is essential. Do not **PLAGIARIZE** -that is, do not use the work or ideas of others without proper citation. Unauthorized collaboration or resorting to the internet or

any related materiel during exam -A.K.A **CHEATING** is strictly prohibited. Violations of academic integrity result in serious consequences.

Meanwhile, for guidance on proper academic writing and citation practices, please refer to the following link: <https://pols.bogazici.edu.tr/writing-papers>

Course Format and Evaluation:

This course is designed as an interactive lecture, which means that completing the assigned readings **before** each class is essential.

Active participation is a significant component of your overall performance and will account for **25%** of your final grade. While I will not take formal attendance, I will conduct **pop-up quizzes** throughout the semester and assess your contributions to class discussions.

Please note that there is a clear distinction between casual chatter and meaningful intellectual engagement. The latter requires a critical reading of the course materials **prior to class**.

We will have two in-class exams: The **midterm exam** will account for **30%** of your final grade.

The **final exam** will constitute **45%** of your overall grade.

Schedule and Readings:

1 – Introduction: What Is Culture in Politics?

Lisa Wedeen (2002). “Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science.” *American Political Science Review*, 96(4), 713–728.

Clifford Geertz (1973). “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight.” In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 412–453.

2 – Theoretical Foundations

Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels (1845). *The German Ideology*, Part I, Section B: "Ruling Class and Ruling Ideas". [Online link](#)

Antonio Gramsci (1971). “The Intellectuals.” In *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, https://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/prison_notebooks/problems/intellectuals.htm#n8

Max Weber (1905). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Chapter 2. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/weber/protestant-ethic/ch02.htm>

Pierre Bourdieu (1990). “Structures, Habitus, Practices.” In *The Logic of Practice*, pp. 52–79.

3 – Class and Culture

Pierre Bourdieu (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*,

Introduction and Chapter 1.

William H. Sewell Jr. (1993). "How Classes Are Made: Critical Reflections on E.P. Thompson's Theory of Working-Class Formation." In *Social Class in European History*, eds. David Blackbourn & Geoff Eley, pp. 50–77.

Paul Willis (1977). *Learning to Labor: How Working-Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*,

Chapters 1–2.

Joan Scott (1988). Women in The Making of the English Working Class in *Gender and the Politics of History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1988, pp. 68–90.

4 – Political Culture

Gabriel A. Almond & Sidney Verba (1963). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Chapter 1.

Ronald Inglehart & Christian Welzel (2010). “Changing Mass Priorities: The Link Between Modernization and Democracy.” *Perspectives on Politics*, 8(2), 551–567.

Robert Putnam (1993). *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Chapters 5–6.

5 – Symbols and Identity

Benedict Anderson (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Introduction and Chapter 2.

Yael Navaro-Yashin (2002). *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*, Introduction and Chapter 3 “The Market for Identities”.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988). “Can the Subaltern Speak?” In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Nelson & Grossberg, pp. 271–313.

6 – The Culture Industry

Theodor W. Adorno (1975). “Culture Industry Reconsidered.” *New German Critique*, No. 6, pp. 12–19.

Walter Benjamin (1936). “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”

Mark Fisher (2009). *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, Chapters 1,3.

David Gartman (2004). “Three Ages of the Automobile: The Cultural Logics of the Car.” *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21(4–5), 169–195.

7 – Resistance and Culture

James C. Scott (2016). Everyday forms of resistance. In *Everyday forms of peasant resistance* (pp. 3–33). Routledge.

James C. Scott (1985). *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, Chapter 7.

Frantz Fanon (1961). *The Wretched of the Earth*. Chapters 1,5.

8 – Marginality

Wacquant, L. (2008). *Urban outcasts: A comparative sociology of advanced marginality*. Polity. pp. 13–40, 163–185, 229–246.

Bourgois, P. I. (2003). *In search of respect: Selling crack in El Barrio* (No. 10). Cambridge university press. pp. 1–18, 114–173,

Özbay, C. (2017). *Queering sexualities in Turkey: Gay men, male prostitutes and the city*. Bloomsbury Publishing. Chapter 4

Movie Screening: *TBA*