



# SOCI 309:20 | PSCI 318:20

## Power and the State



### **Instructor:**

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### **Location:**

CO 110  
U7/U8

### **Office Hours:**

By appointment

The state is a central concept in the social sciences and one of the most significant sources of power in the modern world—the state, it seems, is everywhere. Despite this, states today appear increasingly in crisis, with their very legitimacy as political institutions questioned.

In this course, we will go back in time to explore the history and development of the modern state in order to better understand our present. Topics covered will include: the power of disinformation; state surveillance; Brexit, Trump, and global populism; the rise of new social movements, like Black Lives Matter; the ongoing policing and surveillance of Black and Indigenous lives by the Canadian state; and state responses to COVID. The course will conclude with a reflection on democracy, and whether such a thing is possible.

# Course Objectives & Readings

By the end of this course, you should have:

- A general knowledge of the history of the state and state power
- A broad grasp of the politics, history, and meaning of key concepts such as democracy, nationalism, and neoliberalism
- A critical view of the transition away from welfare policies
- An understanding of the contemporary transformation of the nation-state



One sci-fi novel of your choice (list on moodle)

All other readings are on moodle

I truly believe that this course is relevant to your lives. If, at any time during this course, you feel that what we're learning isn't useful, I urge you to ask me: "Why should I give a damn?"

I'll gladly take time to explain why I believe what we're learning is important for you to know. And if I can't explain why, I'll amend that section of the course.



# Requirements

**Participation** is absolutely vital to this course, and will likely be a necessary part of getting a good grade. In return for attending, I promise to make the course interesting, and worthwhile. If you are unable to attend regularly, please contact me to discuss alternative options.

**Quiz 1** and **Quiz 2** will assess your understanding of course materials throughout the course. They will be held in-class on Moodle. You will thus need a laptop to complete the quizzes. If this is an issue, let me know. **February 16 and March 20**

The **Final Paper** will assess your understanding of the course material from the entire term. In a short paper, you will be asked to describe and explain how the distribution of power works in your chosen sci-fi novel. **April 3**

## Grading

✓ Participation:	10%
✓ Quiz 1:	30%
✓ Quiz 2:	30%
✓ Final Paper:	30%

All citations in  
APA or ASA  
Style

Double-spaced,  
12 point, Times  
New Roman font

Late items lose 5  
marks per day



# Class Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings
Jan 5	Introduction	Syllabus
Jan 9	What is the Modern State?	Pierson, "Introduction," and "Modern states"
Jan 12	The Earliest States	Scott, "A narrative in tatters," and "Agro-ecology of the early state"
Jan 16	The History of the State	Pierson, "Placing the state in modernity"
Jan 19	Marxist State Theory	Berberoglu, "Marxist theory of the state"  Extra: Miliband-Poulantzas debate
Jan 23	Film	<i>#ThisIsACoup</i>
Jan 26	Weberian State Theory	Dusza, "Max Weber's conception of the state"  Extra: Weber, "The politician's work"
Jan 30	Foucauldian State Theory	Lemke, "An indigestible meal?"  Extra: Foucault, "31 January 1979"
Feb 2	The Neoliberal State	Harvey, "The neoliberal state"
Feb 6	Film	<i>The Trap</i> (Episode 2)
Feb 9	Feminist State Theory	Brown, "Finding the man in the state"
Feb 13	Surveillance	Fabris, "Dreams of escape"  McLaughlin, "Ingesting surveillance"

Date	Topic	Readings
Feb 16	<b>Quiz 1</b>	
Feb 20	Winter Break	
Feb 23	Winter Break	
Feb 27	Nation and nationalism	Parasram, "Pathological white fragility and the Canadian nation"  Extra: Bannerji, "On the dark side of the nation"
Mar 2	Policing Indigenous Movements	Crosby & Monaghan, "Idle No More and the 'Fusion Centre for Native Problems,'" and "Conclusion: Policing the imaginary 'anti-petroleum movement'"
Mar 6	Policing Black Lives	Maynard, "Arrested (in)justice"  Film: <i>Black Power Mixtape</i>
Mar 9	Film	<i>Black Power Mixtape</i>  Robinson, "Surplus labour, racism, scapegoats, and the new concentration camps"
Mar 13	Fascism I	Agamben, "A brief history of the state of exception"  Arendt, "The so-called totalitarian state"  <b>Drop date March 10</b>
Mar 16	Fascism II	Stewart, "The rise of far-right civilizationism"  Brown, "Neoliberalism's Frankenstein"
Mar 20	<b>Quiz 2</b>	



Date	Topic	Readings
Mar 23	Film	<i>TraumaZone</i> (Episode 4)
Mar 27	COVID	Agamben, "The invention of an epidemic" Robinson, "And then the pandemic..."
Mar 30	The Transnational State	Robinson, "The transnational state"
Apr 3	Review	<b>Final paper due</b>



# Additional Information

## Drop Date

Students may drop this course, online in Banner, on or before **March 10, 2023**.

## COVID-19

The 2022-2023 academic year is taking place during an exceptional period of human history. As the COVID-19 pandemic is still ongoing, we may have to adjust the course assessment plan and/or delivery method with little or no notice. You may also have to stay home from class for various reasons related to COVID-19 (such as simply feeling ill). If this happens to you, please contact me so that we can discuss an alternative to your attendance grade for that class. Lastly, it is important that you take care of yourself by getting adequate amounts of sleep, and by taking appropriate mental health breaks. The university website on COVID-19 provides more information and links (<https://www.stfx.ca/coronavirus>).

## Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

As this course involves the production of written work, you should familiarize yourself with the standards for proper referencing of all cited materials, such as books, journal articles, newspaper articles, websites, and so on. For help with citation styles, I recommend visiting the Student Success Centre (<https://www.mystfx.ca/student-success/style-guides>).

Students that attempt to pass off someone else's work as their own (i.e., plagiarism) will be dealt with through the university policy on academic honesty. This includes automated bots like ChatGPT. Please ensure that you fully understand this policy (see section 3.8 of the academic calendar, found at: <https://www2.mystfx.ca/registrars-office/academic-calendars>). Resources for avoiding plagiarism can be found on the library website (<https://www2.mystfx.ca/library/plagiarism>).

## Writing Assistance

Despite the fact that this is a writing-intensive course, we will not be able to spend much time on the craft of writing. If you need assistance with your writing, I recommend booking an appointment with me or visiting the Student Success Centre (<http://www2.mystfx.ca/student-success/>).

## Accommodations

If you have an injury, develop an illness, or encounter a personal crisis that will impact your progress in this course, please email me as soon as you are able. This will ensure that we find a way for you to complete the course. The Health and Counselling Centre is another resource available to you (<http://www2.mystfx.ca/health-and-counselling/>).

If you have any disabilities that require an accommodation in teaching style or evaluation, please speak to me as soon as possible so we can implement those accommodations. You may also want to contact the Tramble Centre for Accessible Learning (<https://www2.mystfx.ca/accessible-learning/tramble-centre-accessible-learning>).

## **Equity and Discrimination**

Everyone learns more effectively in a respectful, safe, and equitable learning environment free from discrimination or harassment. I invite you to work with me to create a classroom space that fosters and promotes values of human dignity, equity, non-discrimination and respect for diversity. These values and practices are in accord with the StFX Discrimination and Harassment Policy which can be found at (<https://www2.mystfx.ca/equity/policies>). Please feel free to discuss with me any questions or concerns you have about equity in our classroom or in the StFX community. If I cannot answer your questions or help you address your concerns, I encourage you to talk to the Chair of our Department, or the Human Rights and Equity Advisor (Megan Fogarty, [mfogarty@stfx.ca](mailto:mfogarty@stfx.ca)).

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## **Grade Scale**

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 57-59
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66	D = 53-56
A - = 80-84	B - = 70-72	C - = 60-62	D - = 50-52
F = Below 50			