

## **SOSC 4500 The Politics of the State**

Wednesday and Friday, 16.30-17.50

Room: 4504

**Instructor: Prof. Wenkai He**

### **Purpose of the Course:**

The state is one fundamental phenomena in human society. What is the state? How was the state formed? Is the state formation unique to the west? What are the sources of state capacity and how do state capacities contribute to governance and economic development? How does the state legitimate its coercive power to society? Is the state simply the tool of the dominant class or an autonomous apparatus aiming to safeguard common interest of society? These important questions lead to classic scholarships in social science, and are still inspiring new research topics.

This course introduces to senior undergraduate and first year graduate students in the Division of Social Science major theme topics in the study of the state in political science and sociology. It covers normative studies of the legitimacy and autonomy of the state, comparative historical analysis on state formation, and empirical studies of state capacity. It incorporates both classical scholarship in the study of the state and recent progress in quantitative and qualitative research of the state. Readings are selected from political philosophy, historical sociology, political science and economic history. This course is designed to help the students to integrate quantitative and qualitative methodology in studying topics that are related to the state of their own interests. The course aims to help the students find thesis topics that are related to various aspects of the state in either contemporary or historical context, either China-focused or examining China in comparative perspective.

### **Grading:**

Course participation (10%): class attendance and participation in class discussion.

Writing assignment in the form of three shorter responses to weekly assigned readings (30%): A response should be 2-3 pages, which critically evaluate the reading in one week. You need to examine how the author justify the argument by empirical evidence. You can choose to write the fourth response if you are not satisfied with the grade in the previous three responses, and the lowest grade will be dropped. If you receive three A in responses, then no need to write the fourth one.

One final research paper (60%): 10-12 pages, either on a topic that you choose in consult with me; or I give you an essay topic.

### **Weekly Assigned Readings:**

#### **Week 1: What is the State?**

Quentin Skinner, "A Genealogy of the Modern State," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, no. 162 (2009)

Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958)

Recommended:

Quentin Skinner, "The state," in Terence Ball, James Farr, and Russell L. Hanson, eds., *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)

Quentin Skinner, "From the State of Princes to the Person of the State," in *Visions of Politics*, Vol. 2, *Renaissance Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

### **Week 2: The conceptual problems of the state**

Alfred Stepan, *The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), chapter 1-3.

Recommended:

Philip Abrams, "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, 1 (March 1988): 58-89.

J. P. Nettl, "The State as a Conceptual Variable," *World Politics* 20, 4 (1968): 559-592.

Anna Grzymala-Busse and P. J. Luong. 2002. "Reconceptualizing the State: Lessons from Post-Communism." *Political Theory* 30(4): 529-54.

### **Week 3: State formation:**

Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State: A Sociological Introduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978);

Charles Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), introduction.

Recommended:

Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso, 1979)

Philip T. Hoffman, *Why Did Europe Conquer the World?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015)

Dincecco, Mark. 2015. "The Rise of Effective States in Europe." *Journal of Economic History* 75(3): 901-18.

### **Week 4: The Social Origin of State Capacity: the concept of infrastructural power**

Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, Vol. 1, *A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986),

Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms, and Results," *Archives of European Sociology* 25, no. 2 (November 1984)

Recommended:

Soifer, H. 2008. "State Infrastructural Power: Approaches to Conceptualization and Measurement." *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 43(3): 231–51.

**Week 5: State capacity and the bureaucracy:**

Max Weber, "Bureaucracy," in *Society and Economy*, eds., Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State 1688–1783* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989).

**Week 6: The Modern Fiscal State and the State Capacity:**

Douglass C. North and Barry R. Weingast, "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England," *Journal of Economic History* 49, no. 4 (December 1989): 803–832.

Wenkai He, *Paths toward the Modern Fiscal State: England, Japan, and China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), introduction and chapter 1.

**Week 7: The development of capacity in the modern state**

Ben W. Ansell and Johannes Lindvall, *Inward Conquest: The Political Origins of Modern Public Services* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021),

Johannes Lindvall, et. al., "Railroads and Reform: How Trains Strengthened the Nation State," *British Journal of Political Science*, 2021: 1-21.

**Week 8: The state autonomy: the instrumental aspect**

Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

Peter Evans, *The Embedded Autonomy: States & Industrial Transformation* (Princeton: Princeton University 1995), 3-73

**Week 9: The state autonomy: the normative aspect**

Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Books*, chapters

Dylan Riley, *The Civic Foundations of Fascism in Europe: Italy, Spain, and Romania, 1870–1945* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), introduction chapter.

Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969),

**Week 10: State Legitimacy: the Weberian and its critiques**

Max Weber, "Domination and Legitimacy," in *Society and Economy*, eds., Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978),

Xavier Marquez, "The Irrelevance of Legitimacy," *Political Studies*, Vol. 64 (5), 2016: 19-34.

Robert Grafstein, "The Failure of Weber's Conception of Legitimacy," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (May 1981): 456-72.

Recommended:

Jan Pakulski, "Legitimacy and Mass Compliance: Reflections on Max Weber and Soviet-Type Societies," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (January 1986): 35-56.

**Week 11: Performance-based legitimacy of the state:**

Kevin J. O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance," *World Politics*, Vol. 49, Issue 1 (October 1996): 31-55.

Wenkai He, *Public Interest and State Legitimation: England, Japan, and China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), chapter 5.

**Week 12: Nationalism and state-building**

Benidict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), chapters

**Week 13: Nation-building and State-building**

Andrea Wimmer, *Nation-building: Why Some Countries Come Together while Others Fall Apart* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), chapters