This seminar offers a broad overview of different theoretical and empirical approaches in historical and comparative social science to explaining change and durability in social and political structures and processes. We begin by briefly surveying some of the grand themes of second-wave historical social science of the 1970s and 1980s—collective action, revolutions, state formation, war and policymaking, then investigate contemporary rethinking of these themes and the emergence of new perspectives and topics (including agency, identities, religion, “race” and nations, and gender, culture).

Course format and requirements: Sociology 439 is a seminar in which students are active participants in discussion. Students will take turns leading class discussions and will write two short essays and a longer paper. In the short essays, approximately 4-5 pages in length, you are asked to assess (some aspect of) the readings critically (due before class—hard copy and in the digital dropbox—on April 22 and May 20). In the final paper, approximately 15-20 pages in length and due at noon on Monday, June 2 (again, in hard copy and in the digital dropbox), you are asked either to reflect on some aspect of theoretical developments in comparative and historical sociology and/or political science (e.g., how have power or agency been conceptualized? how do rational choice theories of state formation differ from culturalist accounts? what changes when gender or “race” are brought into accounts of state policy? etc.!!), or to discuss how an empirical project on which you are
working speaks to a significant debate in comparative and historical sociology and/or political science.
Course readings: We will read three books, and a number of articles (available on Blackboard [noted with *]). The following books are available at Beck’s Bookstore on Clark St.:


Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979).


The schedule of readings is open to revision by seminar participants.
Seminar Schedule

April 8: Overview of Historical and Comparative Sociology

Reading:
Remaking Modernity, Introduction, Steinmetz and Magubane essays


April 15: The Second Wave, part 1: Collective Action and Revolution

Reading:

Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions

Recommended reading:
Charles Tilly, From Mobilization to Revolution (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978)

SHORT CRITICAL ESSAY #1 DUE BY NOON, APRIL 22, HARD COPY IN PROFESSOR ORLOFF’S MAILBOX, ALSO POST TO DIGITAL DROPBOX


Reading:


Recommended reading:

Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, editors, Bringing the State Back In (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).


Theda Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

April 29: The Third Wave, part 1: Identities, Group Formation, Collective Action, and Revolution

Reading:
Remaking Modernity, essays by Brubaker, Gould, Sohrabi, Spillman and Faeges


*Denise Riley, excerpt from “Am I That Name?” Feminism and the Category of “Women” in History (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp.96-114 (“Bodies, Identities, Feminisms”).


Reading:
Remaking Modernity, essays by Kestnbaum, Orloff, Gorski, Kiser and Baer, Somers


**Recommended reading:**


**May 13: The Third Wave, part 3: Capitalism, Modernity and the Economic Realm**

Guest seminar leader: Professor Bruce Carruthers

Reading:
*Remaking Modernity*, essays by Emigh, Carruthers, Lo

*Bruce Carruthers, “Frontier Arbitrage,” Newsletter of the Section on Comparative and Historical Sociology (American Sociological Association), vol. 17, no.1, Fall 2005, pp.3-6

**SHORT CRITICAL ESSAY #2 DUE BY NOON, MAY 20; HARD COPY IN PROFESSOR ORLOFF’S MAILBOX, ALSO POST TO DIGITAL DROPBOX**

**May 20: The Third Wave, part 4: Agency**

Reading:
*Remaking Modernity*, essay by Biernacki


May 27: The Future of Historical and Comparative Sociology

Reading:
Remaking Modernity, essay by Clemens


FINAL PAPER DUE AT NOON, MONDAY, JUNE 2; HARD COPY IN PROFESSOR ORLOFF’S MAILBOX, ALSO POST TO DIGITAL DROPBOX.