

CARLETON UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

SOCI 3006A
FALL 2025
THINKING THE SOCIAL: CRITICAL THEORIES OF THE STATE

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Pre-requisites & Precluded Courses: [SOCI 2005](#) and third-year standing. Precludes additional credit for SOCI 3005 (no longer offered), SOCI 4006 (no longer offered).

Method of Delivery: This course will be delivered in person with no options for online accommodation.

Class Time: Lecture: Wednesdays, 8:35am-10:25am
Tutorial: Wednesdays, 10:35-11:25am

Course Description and Objectives:

In this course, we will explore the field of political sociology to learn about critical theories of the state. Studying the state critically means two things. First, we will learn that the political institutions and processes that govern our lives are not benign phenomena that “have always existed” or that “obviously should exist the way they do now”. Rather, we will consider states as dynamic historical formations that are produced by specific ideological, economic, social and cultural values and interests. Second, we will examine how the values and interests that inform our political institutions both rely on and contribute to existing structures of inequality. We will consider states from an anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-imperial and anti-colonial, queer and feminist perspective to learn how our policies systematically reproduce colonial dispossession as well as economic, racial, global, gender and sexual inequality.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, you will:

- Gain an understanding of how critical theorists think about states and political power.
- Be able to identify specific ways our current political structures exclude, marginalize, or eliminate certain persons and populations.
- Develop a critical perspective on existing political systems.
- Learn to apply critical thinking to a wide range of political questions.
- Develop the theoretical tools to analyze and resist social and political injustice in your everyday life.

Readings:

All readings are accessible online at no cost. Please see course Ares on Brightspace.

Course Requirements & Methods of Evaluation:

Lecture Responses: 20%

Case Example Exercises: 50%

Class Activity Attendance and Participation: 5%

Critical Analysis of the Canadian State: 25%

Self-Guided Virtual Tour of the Parliament of Canada: 10%

Critical Analysis of Your Relationship to the Canadian State: 15%

Bonus points- Participation in Relevant Outside Event or Activity: 5%