

## COURSE OUTLINE

**Course Code / Title** : HS3011 Power, Politics, and the State

**Pre-requisites** : HS1001 Person and Society  
HS2001 Classical Social Theory  
HS2002 Doing Social Research

**No. of AUs.** : 3

**Contact Hours** : 39

### Course Aims

Power is a fundamental feature of social life, and it is manifested most obviously in the role of political institutions, especially in the modern nation-state. This course examines the nature and exercise of power and political control. What is the nature of power? How does it work? Who has it, and how is it exercised? What are states and what are the consequences of their rule? How do we conceptualize political action? What is civil society and what is its relationship to the state? These are some of the questions we will examine in this course.

The course is organized thematically. We begin by looking at how sociologists have thought about power. In particular, we examine how Marx, Weber and scholars who work in Marxist and Weberian traditions have conceptualized power, politics and the state. We then turn to critical—especially feminist and poststructuralist—responses to these approaches.

The second section focuses on the myriad manifestations of state power, both overt and subtle. We begin by first examining the various typologies of state power—totalitarianism, democracy, authoritarianism. In the rest of this section, we study how state power is exercised in multiple realms of social life—work; welfare; education; and on the body.

In the final section, we reflect on how state power might be challenged. This section focuses on the forging of overtly political relationships between states and societies. We think about what constitutes civil society and the role of social movements.

This is an intensive course suitable for undergraduates at an intermediate or advanced level. It provides students an opportunity to think more deeply about what they have learnt in the core sociology subjects and develop understanding of some central issues in political sociology.

### Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Evaluate the different ways sociologists have approached the study of power, politics, and the state.
2. Articulate examples about how power is exercised at different levels—micro, meso, and macro.

3. Describe key problematics when it comes to understanding contemporary state-society relations.
4. Apply critical lenses to contemporary manifestations of state power.

### **Course Content**

Week 1	Introduction to the course
Week 2	Conceptualizing “power”: what is it, and how is it social?
Week 3	Marx and Marxists: What is the nature of power?
Week 4	Weber and Weberians: how does power work?
Week 5	Critical responses to Marx and Weber: how else might we think of power, politics and the state?
Week 6	Typologies of political systems: democracy, totalitarianism, authoritarianism
Week 7	Institutionalized state power: welfare and work
Week 8	Institutionalized state power: education
Week 9	State power and the body: managing populations
Week 10	States and civil society
Week 11	Theory and application
Week 12	Collective action/social movements
Week 13	Review: What have we learnt?

### **Course Assessment**

CA1 Group presentation	: 30%
CA2 Individual Op-ed	: 15%
CA3 Individual memo	: 15%
CA4 Class participation	: 10%
Final Examination	: 30%
<b>Total</b>	-----
	<b>100%</b>