Pols 483. Selected Topics in Political Theory

Instructor: İlkay Sunar

Spring 2017

Modern and Postmodern Forms of Power

In this seminar, we will examine the sources and structures of modern and postmodern power that undermine and replace politics. Politics is the deliberative and participatory activity/power that allows the demos/citizens to promote and protect the common welfare and happiness of society. We will, in short, examine the power sources/structures of anti-politics. This we shall do through Sheldon Wolin’s perspective on politics as democracy.

1. Modern and Postmodern forms of power

S. Wolin, **Politics and Vision**, Princeton University Press, 2004, Preface to expanded edition, Ch. 11, 16

S. Wolin, **Fugitive Democracy**, Princeton University Press, 2016, Ch. 14

1. Sources/Structures of anti-politics
2. The Age of Organization: Sublimation of politics

Wolin**, Politics and Vision**, Ch.10

1. Contemporary Liberalism: Politics of Rationalism

Wolin, **Politics and Vision**, Ch. 14, 15

Wendy Brown, “Neo-liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy”, **Theory & Event** 7/11, 2007

1. Marx: power as economy, revolution and management

Wolin, **Politics and Vision,** Ch. 12

Nicholas Xenos, “Reading Wolin (on Marx) Politically, **Theory and Event**, 10/1, 2007

S. Holmes, “Reading Marx Apolitically**”, Nomos,** 1983

1. Nietzsche: Culture as ultimate/total power

Wolin, **Politics and Vision**, Ch. 13

R. Abbey and F. Appel, “Nietzsche and the Will to Politics”, **The Review of Politics,** 7/11, 1998.

1. Contemporary democracy: Local, Virtual or Fugitive?

Wolin, **Politics and Vision**, Ch. 16, 17

David McIver, “The conscience of a fugitive: Sheldon Wolin and the prospects for radical democracy”, **New Political Science**, 38/3, 2016

W. Brown, “We are all democrats now…”, **Theory and Even**t, 13/2, 2010.

From Sheldon Wolin:

The scientific, economic and political revolutions contributed distinct and vital elements to the structure of modern power. Eventually they became complicitous in it…These revolutions generated elite cultures, ideologies and modes of discourse and action that proved exclusionary of the demos…

The earliest theorists of the scientific revolution…made it clear that scientific knowledge was beyond the capabilities of the “vulgar”. Thus, a hierarchy of the intellect could be created and a new version of aristocracy institutionalized.

The state-sponsored revolution destroyed the ancient infrastructure of local authorities and replaced with a system of centralized/bureaucratized control.

The new domain of the economy…recognized that power relationships flourished in the economy…yet it emerged as a domain that..was never seriously exposed to democratization.

Foremost among the changes from modern to postmodern power is that the directive role of the state is now shared with power-forms hitherto conceived primarily as economic in character. The term “political economy” has suddenly taken on a new meaning.

Text: Sheldon S. Wolin, **Politics and Vision**, Princeton University Press, 2004

Grade:

10% Attendance

30% Contribution to collective discussion

60% 2 Exams, (30% each)

Office Hours: Monday 10:00-12:00

 Thursday 10:00-12:00