

2021 SOS2700 Instructions for members of the exam committee

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The students

The committee members should be aware of the fact that the students taking SOS2700 have a very varied background. Some students do not have a background in sociology or any other social science discipline.

This is a take home exam. We should therefore expect extensive use of the syllabus. The students can use additional material, but this should not outweigh the use of the syllabus.

Choose one of the two questions:

- 1) Describe political process theory and discuss how useful this theory is to understand the role of the state in the cases of Myanmar, Nigeria and in the Occupied Palestinian territories.

During the lectures (and listed in the powerpoints), we spent some time outlining political process theory as a theory that developed from resource mobilization theory, but emphasizes the context more than RMT does. The focus of PPT is to look at factors that facilitate and hinder mobilization. PPT is also described in more detail in Amaechi's article (2016). In one of the lectures on religious violence, I talked specifically about the role of the state, where I used the three articles in the syllabus that discuss cases, Myanmar (Hayward and Frydenlund 2019), Nigeria (Amaechi 2016), and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (Gazit 2015). The cases of Myanmar and OPT are also covered in Juergensmeyer's (2017) book.

The student should be able to describe and discuss possible strengths and weaknesses of political process theory when looking at the role of the state in these three cases.

In the case of Myanmar, there is a complex and ambivalent relationship between religion and state. Religious freedom is constitutionally protected, but the state offers explicit support to Buddhist institutions and use them in their campaign against the Rohingya. In Nigeria, Boko Haram was initially a relatively peaceful movement, but due to state repression and violence, it retaliated by becoming violent. Here, lack of political opportunities and state repression helped to push Boko Haram in a violent direction. In the POT, Gazit shows how civilian settler violence is used to support governmental interests, and this becomes a case where the state sponsors violence.

- 2) Describe the main explanations for Muslim radicalisation in the West, and discuss their strengths and weaknesses.

The students should be able to describe and discuss the main explanations for Muslim radicalisation in the West. The possible strengths and weaknesses of the different explanations for Muslim radicalisation in the West are extensively covered in the literature and has also been explained in detail during the lecture. Syllabus that cover Muslim radicalisation in the West are Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010), Dawson and Amarasingham (2017), Hafez and Mullins (2015) and Kirby (2007). Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010) reviewing empirical studies of Muslim radicalisation explains and illustrates what we know and what we do not know about Muslim radicalisation. She describes and discusses three main explanations for Muslim radicalisation: sociological background factors such as globalisation and dissolution of traditional communities and identities, dynamics of social networks, and social interaction and individual-level factors. Hafez and Mullins (2015) in their review article, propose a theoretical synthesis based on four factors – personal and collective grievances, networks and personal ties, political and religious ideologies, and enabling environment and support structures – that together produce radicalisation. Kirby (2007) elucidate the case of London bombers. Drawing on interviews with foreign fighters to Iraq and Syria, Dawson and Amarasingham argue for the importance of existential concerns and the role of religiosity in Muslim radicalisation.