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PSCI 10
Spring 2024
Classroom: PWH 108
Meeting time: W 10:15-1:15

Making the Modern State

What is the modern state, and how did it come to be? All modern states have sovereignty, territory, and political communities that constitute the nation. Modern states also protect, provide, regulate, and appropriate. In politically developed states, the state's ordering of society and deep reach into the lives of the governed is so pervasive and routine as to become banal.

In this first-year seminar, we explore how the evolution of the state. We will examine the key features of the state, such as territory, as well as the essential functions and activities of the state, such as the collection of information, the evolution of taxation, and the provision of education. Much of our investigation proceeds through everyday "encounters" with the state and the "artifacts" of state development – such as maps depicting the territorial expanse of the state, the world of bureaucratic paperwork, the origin of last names – with the objective of unearthing the deeply political nature of aspects of statehood that we now take for granted.

What this course is and is not about

This course is a seminar open only to current first-year students. There are no prerequisites other than an interest in the material.

The course introduces you to the study of state development through the lens of politics. State development is an enormously complex process, unfolding in different ways for different places over decades, even centuries. This has three implications for us. First, because this is an introductory course, the aim is to offer a survey of different aspects of state development, recognizing that it is impossible to cover all topics in a single semester. Second, our study is organized around topics rather than chronological history. State development is not linear in time nor irreversible, but we will not have the opportunity to cover the erosion of the state (state decay). Third, we will study the experiences of multiple parts of the world with the aim of developing general conclusions about state development.

Our entry points into most topics will be through the familiar: food in the case of national identity, sports in the case of international recognition, urban cleanliness in the case of public health. Not everything is political, but you will discover how politics and the influence of the state lurk in unexpected places.

Required reading

There are no required books to purchase for this class. All readings are available online via the library, on the Canvas website, or directly via the publishers themselves. The readings are an eclectic mix of academic book chapters, magazine and news articles, essays and blog posts, popular non-fiction books, and very rarely, academic journal articles.

Because the readings form the basis for class discussion, reading ahead of our weekly meetings is essential for your success in the course. That said, I have deliberately focused on readings that are accessible (more academic book chapters, few academic journal articles), including a large number of non-academic works. In some cases, the reading list contains instructions to skim.

Reading should be completed prior to the seminar for which it has been assigned. At the end of each seminar, I will give you a quick overview about the following week's readings with tips on what to think about as you complete the readings.

Evaluation

The first thing to know about assessment in this class is that there is no midterm or final examination. Hooray! Instead, your grade will consist of participation in seminar, three short writing assignments, a research paper on a topic of your choice, and an in-class presentation. We are going to do a lot of talking in this class!

1. Regular attendance and participation in seminar (40%)

This class is a seminar. Our learning unfolds through active discussion of ideas rather than passive acquisition of information. While I will sometimes lecture, the purpose of the seminar format is to involve you as an engaged participant in the exploration of the material. As such, regular attendance and participation in seminar are required, and account for the plurality of your final grade in the course.

Your participation will be divided into two grades: one covering the first half of the semester (through March 13) and one covering the second half of the semester (from March 20 onward). The purpose of dividing participation into two grades is to provide feedback in time to make informed decisions in advance of the grade change deadline on March 22 and to allow you to make adjustments in your participation for the second half of the semester.

2. Three short assignments (15% overall, or 5% each)

You will complete three 2-3 double-spaced writing assignments. Each assignment is due before the seminar for which it is assigned.

3. Research paper (35% overall; see breakdown below)

As an introduction to the study of state development, this course necessarily prioritizes breadth over depth. To provide an opportunity for depth, the research paper requirement allows you to dive into a topic related to state development that is of interest to you. The

research paper is 8-10 double-spaced pages in length. To break this assignment down into more manageable chunks, this assignment actually consists of three parts that are graded separately and build toward the final paper. In addition, in lieu of class, you are required to meet with me one-on-one to discuss your research paper idea. This meeting is not graded but is meant to help you with the development of your research paper.

- (a) Research paper proposal (5%)
- (b) Research paper outline (5%)
- (c) Research paper (25%)

4. In-class presentation (10%)

During our final class session of the semester, you will present the findings from your research paper. You may choose to give a traditional presentation (with slides, lecture-style) or you may choose a more interactive or creative approach.

Getting in touch

If you have questions about the course, get in touch! I hold regular in-person office hours during the semester, often but not always on Thursdays. You can sign up here: <https://calendly.com/melissamlee/officehours>. If you have class during my office hours, please send me an email and we can find a different time to meet.

I am also happy to answer questions via email and will do my best to respond within a reasonable time, excluding weekends and spring break. Please understand that I cannot guarantee responses to emails sent within 48 hours of the due date of an assignment.

Academic integrity

You are responsible for understanding Penn's [Code of Academic Integrity](#) and abiding by the Code in letter and in spirit.

While you are encouraged to discuss course material with other students, all written work must be your own. You must acknowledge others' ideas with proper citation. The use of generative AI in any form is not permitted in this course and therefore the use of such tools will be considered a violation of academic integrity. In any case, the assignments are structured such that generative AI will not be helpful.

If you are uncertain what constitutes plagiarism, it is always, *always* better to ask me and/or consult this [guide](#) on plagiarism from the Penn Libraries.

If you find yourself struggling for any reason, talk to me so that we can make a plan for how you can successfully get through the course. No student should ever feel the need to violate the Code in order to finish the term.

Technology policies

tl;dr: be cool, don't be uncool.

You are permitted to use your laptop or tablet in class only for purposes directly related to class (e.g., note taking or activities that explicitly call for the use of devices). A growing body of research shows that laptop multitasking [interferes with your own learning](#), as well as the [learning of those around you](#). By contrast, research also suggests that taking notes by hand is superior for [processing information](#) from class. Our class is small enough that we are all going to notice, so please be respectful of me and your fellow classmates by refraining from non-class-related activities during class. As long as everyone behaves responsibly, devices are permitted, but I reserve the right to revoke this privilege at any time.

Dates to know

February 14: Assignment #1 due before class.

February 27: Drop period ends.

February 28: Assignment #2 due before class.

March 20: Assignment #3 due before class.

March 22: Grade type change deadline.

April 2: Last day to withdraw.

April 3: Research paper proposal due before class.

April 17: Research paper outline due before class.

May 1: Research paper due before class. In-class presentations on research projects.

Schedule and readings

January 24: What is a state?

It turns out that the answer isn't straightforward.

January 31: Territory, space, and exclusivity

The principle of exclusive authority over territory and the role of maps in the imagination of sovereignty and the state.

READING

Jeffrey Herbst. 2014. *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*, 2nd edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 35–57 (Chapter 2).

Jordan Branch. 2014. *The Cartographic State: Maps, Territory, and the Origins of Sovereignty*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 68–99 (Chapter 4).

February 7: State formation

Predation, property rights, and the origin of the state.

READING

We are going to play Catan in class. If you are unfamiliar with this game, please spend this week learning how to play by reading the [rules](#) and/or watching video tutorials online. I suggest this [helpful video \(23 minutes\)](#) or this [robotically-narrated video \(8 minutes\)](#). I also recommend trying the game out for free [online](#) against the computer.

February 14: Statistics and standardization

The surprising origins of last names, weights and measures, and numerical age, and the tools through which the state makes its people legible.

ASSIGNMENT #1 due before the start of class.

READING

Andrew Whitby. 2020. *The Sum of the People: How the Census has Shaped Nations, from the Ancient World to the Modern Age*. New York: Basic Books. 55–94, 217–253 (Chapters 2 and 5).

Andro Linklater. 2002. *Measuring America: How an Untamed Wilderness Shaped the United States and Fulfilled the Promise of Democracy*. New York: Walker & Company. 103–132 (Chapters 8 and 9).

February 21: Infrastructure as power

The tyranny of terrain, the power of distance-demolishing technologies, and the broadcasting of state authority.

James C. Scott. 2009. *The Art of Not Being Governed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. 40–63 (Chapter 2).

Jilly Traganou. 2004. *The Tōkaidō Road: Traveling and Representation in Edo and Meiji Japan*. New York: RoutledgeCurzon. 11-24 (excerpt from Chapter 2).

Cameron Blevins. 2021. *Paper Trails: The US Post and the Making of the American West*. New York: Oxford University Press. 16–35 (Chapter 2).

February 28: Surveillance and snitching

You may not be interested in the surveillance state, but the surveillance state is interested in you. The essential role of information in the repression of violence and the enforcement of behavior.

ASSIGNMENT #2 due before the start of class.

READING

Lawrence Cappello. 2019. *None of Your Damn Business: Privacy in the United States from the Gilded Age to the Digital Age*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 71–123 (Chapter 3).

Sarah Brayne. 2017. “Big Data Surveillance: The Case of Policing.” *American Sociological Review* 82(5), 977–1008.

Thomas McMullan. 2015 “What Does the Panopticon Mean in the Age of Digital Surveillance?” *The Guardian* (23 July 2015).

Eva Thiébaud. 2023. “UAE’s High-Tech Toolkit for Mass Surveillance and Repression.” *Le Monde Diplomatique* January 2023.

March 13: Taxation

“What at first was plunder assumed the softer name of revenue.” - Thomas Paine.

READING

Michael Keen and Joel Slemrod. 2022. *Rebellion, Rascals, and Revenue: Tax Follies and Wisdom Through the Ages*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 24–34, 108–130, 281–338 (Except from Chapter 2, Chapters 5, 12, 13).

March 20: National identity

What food, fights, and food fights reveal about national identity. Naturally, lunch will be provided today. Vegetarian options will be available, but please notify me of any food allergies. Note that we will be meeting in a special location!

ASSIGNMENT #3 due before the start of class. Refer to Canvas for detailed instructions.

READING

Zaria Gorvett. 2022. “[The Intangible Concept that Gives Countries Power.](#)” *BBC* (2022 March 16).

Eve Wongworakul. 2020. “[History of Pad Thai as a Symbol of Nationalism in Thailand: How the Internationally Renowned Rice Noodle Dish has Helped Held the Nation Together Since 1940.](#)” (21 December 2020).

Anya Von Bremzen. 2023. *National Dish: Around the World in Search of Food, History, and the Meaning of Home*. New York: Penguin Press. 77–131.

Andrew Evans. 2019. “[Who Really Owns Borsch?](#)” *BBC* (15 October 2019).

March 27: Language, literacy, and education

The politics of language in state- and nation-building.

READING

Nan Zhang and Melissa M. Lee. 2020. “[Literacy and State-Society Relations in 19th Century France.](#)” *American Journal of Political Science* 64(4): 1001–1016.

David Moser. 2016. *A Billion Voices: China’s Search for a Common Language*. Australia: Penguin Books. Note: The entire book is about 120 pages. Skim as needed.

The Economist. 2019. “[More Children Around the World are Being Taught in English, Often Badly.](#)” *The Economist* (23 February 2019).

The Economist. 2022. “[Switzerland is a Model of a Multilingual State.](#)” *The Economist* (6 October 2022).

April 3: Public health and sanitation

Water, waste, public-private “partnerships,” and a different kind of public restroom politics.

RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL due before the start of class. Refer to Canvas for detailed instructions.

READING

Abram de Swaan. 1988. *In Care of the State*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1–12, 118–142 (Chapters 1 and 4).

Patricia Strach and Kathleen S. Sullivan. 2023. *The Politics of Trash: How Governments Used Corruption to Clean Cities, 1890-1929*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 1–22 (Introduction).

Theodora Siegel. 2023. “If New York Is So Great, Why Isn’t There Anywhere to Pee?” *The New York Times* (15 January 2023).

Adina Solomon. 2022. “The Struggle to Find a Public Toilet.” *Smart Cities Dive* (27 July 2022).

Lauren Hoffarth. 2023. *Updates on the Philadelphia Public Restroom Pilot*. City of Philadelphia (11 July 2023).

Allan Richarz. 2019. “Carefully, Japan Reconsiders the Trash Can.” *Bloomberg* (23 May 2019).

April 10: Mandatory one-on-one meetings about research papers in lieu of class

We will discuss your ideas for your research papers in one-on-one meetings. Meeting times will be offered during our normal class period in addition to my regular office hours. While meeting with me is required, you should think of this time as an opportunity to ensure that you are on the right track with the development of your research paper. Please come prepared to discuss your ideas in detail.

April 17: Recognition

Who gets to be a member of the international club of states, and the surprising ways it matters for sports.

RESEARCH PAPER OUTLINE due before class. Refer to Canvas for detailed instructions.

READING

Joshua Keating. 2018. *Invisible Countries: Journeys to the Edge of Nationhood*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. 107–149 (Chapter 3).

Rayhan Demytrie. 2016. “A World Cup for Unrecognized States.” *BBC* (2 June 2016).

Tariq Panja. 2018. “[A Full Member of FIFA, Kosovo Finds Its Flag Barred from World Cup Stadium.](#)” *The New York Times* (14 July 2018).

Shannon Tiezzi. 2021. “[Taiwan - Sorry, ‘Chinese Taipei’ - Is Having a Fantastic Olympics.](#)” *The Diplomat* (5 August 2021).

April 24: Accountable government and the taming of the leviathan

Any state strong enough to protect and provide is also strong enough to oppress and exploit. How can we safeguard against the abuse of state power? What if we can't?

READING

David Stasavage. 2021. “[Lessons from all Democracies.](#)” *Aeon* (9 March 2021).

Erik Wibbels. 2019. “[The Social Underpinnings of Decentralized Governance: Networks, Technology, and the Future of Social Accountability.](#)” In *The Social Underpinnings of Decentralized Government: Academic Research and the Future of Donor Programming*, ed. Jonathan A. Rodden and Erik Wibbels. New York: Cambridge University Press. 14–31 (excerpt).

Andrew McGill and Christopher I. Haugh. 2016. “[Can the Freedom of Information Act Be Fixed?](#)” *The Atlantic* (30 June 2016).

Andrew McGill. 2016. “[Why FOIA Is Broken, From A Government Worker's Perspective.](#)” *The Atlantic* (6 July 2016).

Samuel Moyn. 2017. “[Barbarian Virtues.](#)” *The Nation* (23 October 2017).

May 1: Presentations

RESEARCH PAPER due. Refer to Canvas for detailed instructions.