Special Major in Political Sociology

Political Sociology, one of the discipline’s most important subfields, is primarily concerned with inequality and power—power over the access to and the distribution of resources, over status, and over the ability to define and legitimate categories and meanings. Much political sociology is concerned with the relationship between the state and society: how the modern state came to exist, how it came to be viewed as legitimate, what factors shape processes of democratization, how cleavages based on class, race, and gender affect democratic representation, how liberal democracies structure their welfare state policies, how states create and manage markets, and how social movements strive to effect political change by making claims on state actors. Further, political sociology expands the field of view to the politics that happen in other social settings in the family, at work, in civic associations as well as the ways in which social attributes such as sexuality, class, religion, age, race, immigration status, and gender shape patterns of political participation and the distribution of power. We consider questions such as: how is power concentrated and exerted? How is it gained and lost? How are power centers challenged? Under what conditions are challenges effective?

The special major in Political Sociology offers students an opportunity to ground their inquiries into all things political—political economy, forms of political order and organization, regime formation and revolution, political action, parties and elections, policy, status, power—in a sociological approach that seeks to interrogate and understand social structures and insists that politics must be treated as fully implicated in every facet of the social order, from institutional arrangements to social relations. Political Sociology encompasses a wide variety of theoretical and methodological approaches with which sociologists attempt to describe and explain political phenomena. We cover a wide range of areas within the field, including race, class, migration, colonization, imperialism, public policy, urban politics, social movements, state-formation, revolutions, and cross-national social policy and policy outcomes.

Requirements, at least 10 credits:

1. **SOCI 001.** Foundations: Self, Culture, and Society,

2. one methods course

3. Thesis or Capstone (to be discussed with advisor and developed beginning with declaration of special major)

- Additional recommended SOAN courses to consider:

  - **SOCI 006C.** FYS: Working Class and the Politics of Whiteness
  - **SOCI 025B/PEAC 025B.** Transforming Intractable Conflict
  - **SOCI 025C.** Globalization and Global Inequality
  - **SOCI 026B.** Class Matters: Privilege, Poverty & Power
  - **SOCI 035B.** Anti-Capitalism, Revolution and Resistance in the “Third World”
  - **SOCI 035D.** Transnational Migration
  - **SOCI 035E.** Race, Migration and the Law
  - **SOCI 045C.** Sociology of Capitalism
  - **SOCI 048G.** Between the Is and the Ought: Black Social and Political Thought
  - **SOCI 048K.** The Mafia and the State
  - **SOCI 048L.** Urban Crime and Punishment
  - **SOCI 048M.** Manufacturing Scarcity: Urban Public Policy and the Housing Crisis
  - **SOCI 056C.** Sociology of [this year’s] election
• Up to four credits from outside of the department may be included as part of the special major, with permission from the department. Students are encouraged to tailor their courses outside the department to their particular areas of interest.

Recommended courses at Swarthmore include:

ECON 013. Economic Efficiency, Markets, and Distributive Justice
ECON 041. Public Economics
ECON 042. Law and Public Policy
ECON 073. Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Economics
ECON 082. Political Economy of Africa
PEAC 014. Systems Thinking for Social Change
PEAC 055. Climate Disruption, Conflict, and Peacemaking
PEAC 135/SOCI 135. Social Movements and Non-Violent Power
POLS 020B. Special Topic: Political Inequality in the U.S. (AP)
POLS 028. The Urban Underclass and Public Policy (AP)
POLS 031. Borders and Migration (CP)
POLS 054. Identity Politics
POLS 081. Global Environmental Governance (IR)

• Additionally, students are strongly encouraged to explore course offerings through Tri-co and the University of Pennsylvania. Please consult with your advisor for guidance on course selection beyond Swarthmore.

• In putting together the special major, it is advisable that the student only designate ten courses as part of the major. That way there will be no problems with the 20-course rule.