

## DRAFT SYLLABUS

920:573:01 Sociology of Culture: Authoritarianisms  
Professor Arlene Stein  
Department of Sociology  
arlenes@sociology.rutgers.edu  
Wednesday 5-7pm, Davison Hall seminar room

In 1959, in the aftermath of Nazism, Hannah Arendt described some features of authoritarianism, including a hierarchical relationship between ruler and ruled, suppression of civil liberties, and arbitrary acts against groups and individuals. The concept of authoritarianism has been mainly used to refer to a type of political authority. But authoritarianism involves beliefs, rhetoric, performances, and subjectivities—meaning construction—and therefore deserves cultural analysis as well. In this course, we bring to bear some of the tools of cultural sociology, with sideways glances to political theory, cultural history, and media and feminist studies, to illuminate the vexing moment we find ourselves in. While our focus will be the contemporary US, we will draw links to 20th and 21st century Europe, and, at times, to other times and places.

We will explore different approaches to understanding power and subjectivity, and consider the cultural contexts of contemporary authoritarianisms: growing inequalities, the growth of rightwing organizations, and a shifting media environment. We will focus our attention upon three recent empirical studies of the rightwing (by Hochschild, Bail, and Nagle), evaluating their arguments, evidence, and methodologies. Students are also encouraged to attend monthly programs at the Institute for Research on Women, whose theme this year (“The Perils of Populism”) dovetails closely with the content of this course. (More information to follow.)

Students will write a final paper on a topic approved by the professor. They will workshop the paper during the course, and present it in class at the end of the course.

All articles are posted on Sakai unless otherwise specified.

### Required books:

Christopher Bail, *Terrified: How Anti-Muslim Fringe Organizations Became Mainstream* (Princeton, 2016).

Hugh Gusterson and Catherine Besteman, eds. *The Insecure American: How We Got Here and What we Should Do About It* (California, 2009)

Arlie Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land* (New Press, 2016).

Angela Nagle, *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars From 4Chan And Tumblr To Trump and the Alt-Right* (OR Books, 2017).

Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (Random House, 2017)

Sept 6. Introduction: Signs of a New Authoritarianism?

Tim Snyder, "Trump is Ushering in a Dark New Conservatism"  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jul/15/trumps-nostalgia-1930s-republicans>

Tomasz Kitlinski, "Far-Right Über Alles"  
<http://www.publicseminar.org/2016/11/far-right-uber-alles/#.WYYEyWOgH-Z>

Corey Robin, "Think Trump is an Authoritarian? Look at His Actions, Not his Words," *The Guardian*  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/may/02/donald-trump-authoritarian-look-actions-not-words>

Jeffrey C. Isaac, "Trump is an Authoritarian,"  
<http://www.publicseminar.org/2017/05/trump-is-an-authoritarian-in-his-actions-and-his-words-and-words-are-actions/#.WWblhmOgGt9>

Judith Butler, "Reflections on Trump,"  
<https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1032-reflections-on-trump>

Sept. 13. Authority, Authoritarianisms, and Culture  
What is authority? How has it been defined in relation to politics and psychology?  
How might we understand its cultural dimensions?

Edward Shils, "Center and Periphery" (1961)

Hannah Arendt, "What is Authority?"(1959)

Karen Stenner, "Three Kinds of Conservatism," *Psychological Inquiry* (2009).

George Lakoff, "Strict Father Morality," from *Moral Politics* (1996).

Umberto Eco, "Ur-Fascism," *New York Review of Books* (1995).  
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1995/06/22/ur-fascism/>

Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* (1996).

Sept. 20. Imagining the Nation

How do political symbols and speech imagine the nation, and construct national identities?

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1991), excerpt.

Mabel Berezin, "Imagining a New Political Community: The Landscape of Ritual Action," 39-69 in *Making the Fascist Self: The Political Culture of Interwar Italy* (1997)

Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion in America" (1967).  
[http://www.robertbellah.com/articles\\_5.htm](http://www.robertbellah.com/articles_5.htm)

Jason L. Mast, "Action in culture: Act I of the presidential primary campaign in the U.S., April to December, 2015," *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*

George Saunders, "Who are All these Trump Supporters?" *The New Yorker* (2016)  
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/07/11/george-saunders-goes-to-trump-rallies>

Trump's Inaugural Address <https://www.whitehouse.gov/inaugural-address>

September 27. Studying Political Beliefs: Emotional Cultures of the Right  
Using sociological tools to understand the "deep story" of rightwing Americans.

Arlie Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land*

Oct. 4. Insecurity and Resentment

What factors give rise to insecurity in the contemporary US? How have these insecurities fueled resentment?

Hugh Gusterson and Catherine Besteman, eds. *The Insecure American*.  
Introduction, ch. 3, 4, 5, 13, 15

Branko Milanovic, "The erosion of the middle class share in market income"  
<https://www.gc.cuny.edu/Page-Elements/Academics-Research-Centers-Initiatives/Centers-and-Institutes/Stone-Center-on-Socio-Economic-Inequality/Core-Faculty,-Team,-and-Affiliated-LIS-Scholars/Branko-Milanovic/Datasets>

"Behind Trump's Victory: Divisions by Race, Gender, Education"  
<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/behind-trumps-victory-divisions-by-race-gender-education>

“Sharp Partisan Divisions in Views of National Institutions”

<http://www.people-press.org/2017/07/10/sharp-partisan-divisions-in-views-of-national-institutions/>

Thomas Edsall, “How Fear of Falling Explains the Love of Trump”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/20/opinion/how-fear-of-falling-explains-the-love-of-trump.html>

*\*\*A preliminary statement of your research project is due October 1. Email a short project description to me. Be as specific as possible and include citations to a few key reference works. If you are undecided about your focus, send ideas for two possible projects.*

\*\*10/5. Nancy Fraser, “A Feminism for the 99%”

IRW Distinguished Lecture Series, RDJC Conference Room, 4:30pm

Oct. 11. Power, Ideology, and Subjectivities

How do everyday inequalities of race, class, and gender shape political subjectivities? What is ideology, and how have social critics understood it?

Pierre Bourdieu, “Cultural Power,” in Lyn Spillman, ed. *Cultural Sociology* (2002).

Michel Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men* (2000), excerpt.

Darnell Hunt, “Raced Ways of Seeing,” in Lyn Spillman, ed. *Cultural Sociology*, (2002).

Nina Eliasoph, “Close to Home: The Work of Avoiding Politics,” in Lyn Spillman, ed. *Cultural Sociology* (2002).

Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), excerpt

Oct. 18. Emotional Cultures of the Right--continued

Religious beliefs and feelings, and possible linkages to conservative ideologies.

Arlie Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land*—cont’d.

Linda Kintz, *Between Jesus and the Market* (1997), excerpt.

Matt Wray, “White Trash Religion,” in *White Trash: Race and Class in America*, 1997.

Susan Harding, “Get Religion,” in *The Insecure American*

CJ Pascoe, “Who is a Real Man? The Gender of Trumpism,” *Masculinities and Social Change* (2017).

“White Evangelicals Voted Overwhelmingly for Donald Trump, Exit Polls Show”  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/11/09/exit-polls-show-white-evangelicals-voted-overwhelmingly-for-donald-trump/?utm\\_term=.c8118fc683cf](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/11/09/exit-polls-show-white-evangelicals-voted-overwhelmingly-for-donald-trump/?utm_term=.c8118fc683cf)

Oct. 25. The Politics of Us and Them

How groups create solidarities by constructing internal and external enemies.

Kai Erikson, “The Shapes of the Devil,” 137-59 in *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (1966).

George Mosse, “Eighteenth Century Foundations,” in *Racism*, ed. M. Bulmer and J. Solomos (1999).

Richard Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style of American Politics,” *Harper’s* (1964).  
<https://harpers.org/archive/1964/11/the-paranoid-style-in-american-politics/3/>

Niza Yanay, “Hatred and its Vicissitudes,” in *The Ideology of Hatred: The Psychic Power of Discourse* (2013).

Abby Ferber, “Constructing Whiteness,” in *Racism*, ed. M. Bulmer and J. Solomos (1999).

Arlene Stein, “Revenge of the Shamed: The Christian Right’s Emotional Culture War,” in *Passionate Politics*, ed. J. Jasper and F. Polletta (2001).

Chantal Mouffe, “The ‘End of Politics’ and the Challenge of Rightwing Populism,” in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy* (2005).

Nov. 1. Organizations and Public Opinion: Manufacturing Islamophobia  
How did a handful of extremist pressure groups manage to mainstream Islamophobia?

Christopher Bail, *Terrified*

**\*\*11/2** “Organizing, Surviving, Resisting,” panel discussion with LA Kauffman, Kenyon Farrow, and Robyn Rodriguez. 4.30 pm, RDJC Conference Room

Nov.8. Discussion of Student Research in Progress. No reading.

Nov. 15. Media and Popular Culture

A quick survey of theories of media and popular culture as they bear on issues relating to contemporary political culture.

Jurgen Habermas, “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article” (1964)

[http://www.socpol.unimi.it/docenti/barisione/documenti/File/2008-09/Habermas%20\(1964\)%20-%20The%20Public%20Sphere.pdf](http://www.socpol.unimi.it/docenti/barisione/documenti/File/2008-09/Habermas%20(1964)%20-%20The%20Public%20Sphere.pdf)

M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" (1944).

Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* (1988).  
<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrghj/chomskyhermanpropmodel.pdf>

Stuart Hall, "Encoding and Decoding the Television Discourse," *Culture, Media, Language* (1980).

Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves To Death* (1985).

Reece Peck, "You Say Rich, I say Job Creator: How Fox News Framed the Great Recession Through the Moral Discourse of Producerism," *Media, Culture, and Society* (2014).

Francesca Poletta, "Deep Stories, Nostalgia Narratives, and Fake News," *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* (2017).

Nov. 22. No class.

Nov. 29. New Media, the Networked Society, and the "Alt-right"  
How did a racist, masculinist subculture find a home on the Internet (and in the White House)?

Angela Nagle, *Kill All Normies*

\*\*11/16 "Truth, Power, Media," panel discussion with Bilge Yesil, Jessie Daniels, and Sarah Leonard. Institute for Research on Women, RDJC Conference Room, 4:30pm.

Dec. 6. Past, Present and Future  
Can understanding the past help us defend democracy today?

Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: Lessons from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

\*\*12/7 Sabine Hark, "Discursive Dispossessions: Gender as a Resource for the Construction of Authoritarian Us/Them Dichotomies," Institute for Research on Women, RJDC conference room, 4:30

Dec. 13. Conclusion, Student presentations