Sociology 106 Professor Gershon Shafir

Winter 2024 Office: SSB 494

MWF 2:00-2:50 (Mandeville B104) Office Hour: W 3:00-5:00 PM

**COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL METHODS**

The past is never dead. It’s not even past.

William Faulkner

This class is designed to introduce you to the application of historical and macro-comparative methods in sociological analysis. Together, we will explore the strengths and limitation of these methods, as well as critically examine three seminal works in which they are put to good use.

**Requirements**: There will be two types of assignments: (a) A brief, one-sentence

response to the question: ‘What is the thesis of this article or chapter?’ for twenty out of the twenty-five readings, (b) two out of three 3-page papers. Your grade will be based on attendance (20%), thesis statements (20%), two short papers (20% x 2), and the final exam (20%).

**January 6: Introduction**

1. **Uses of sociology**

**January 8:** C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, N.Y., Oxford University Press, 1959, pp. 3-13, <https://ratical.org/ratville/AoS/TheSociologicalImagination.pdf>

**B. Uses of comparisons**

**January 10**: Mattei Dogan & Dominique Pelassy, *How to Compare Nations: Strategies in Comparative Politics*, Chatham, Chatham House, 1984, pp. 99-139.

**January 13**: Theda, Skocpol, “Emerging Agendas and Recurrent Strategies in Historical Sociology,” in her *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 356-391.

**January 15**: James Mahoney, *The Legacies of Liberalism: Path Dependence and Political Regimes in Central America*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, pp. 3-28.

recommended: David Collier, “Critical Juncture Framework and the Five-Step Template,” in *Critical Junctures and Historical Legacies*, ed. by David Collier & Geraldo L. Munck, Lanham, Rowan & Littlefield, 2022, pp. 33-52.

**C. Uses of history**

**January 17**: Jack S. Levy, ”Counterfactuals, Causal Inference, and Historical Analysis,” *Security*

*Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3, September 2015, p. 378-402.

**January 20: MLK Holiday**

**January 22**: William H. Sewell Jr., “Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology,” in his *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005, pp. 81-123.

**January 24**: Neil J. Smelser, “Alexis de Tocqueville as Comparative Analyst,” in Ivan Vallier, *Comparative Methods in Sociology: Essays on Trends and Applications*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2020, pp. 19-47.

**D. Three comparative historical studies**

**I. January 27 - February 10:** Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, N.Y., Vintage Press, 2004.

**January 27**: Paxton, Chapter One: Introduction, pp. 3-23.

**January 29**: Paxton, Chapter Two: Creating Fascist Movements, pp. 24-54.

**January 31**: Paxton, Chapter Three: Taking Root, pp. 55-86.

**February 3**: Paxton, Chapter Four: Getting Power, pp. 87-118.

**February 5**: Paxton, Chapter Five: Exercising Power, pp. 119-147.

**February 7**: Paxton, Chapter Six: The Long Term: Radicalization or Entropy? pp. 148-171.

**February 10**: Paxton, Chapters Seven & Eight: Other Times, Other Places & What Is Fascism? pp.172-220.

Robert O. Paxton, “I’ve Hesitated to Call Donald Trump a Fascist. Until Now,” *Newsweek*, January 11, 2021, <https://www.newsweek.com/robert-paxton-trump-fascist-1560652>

Richard J. Evans, “Why Trump Isn’t a Fascist,” *New Statesman*, January 13, 2021,

<https://www.newstatesman.com/world/2021/01/why-trump-isnt-fascist>

recommended: Elisabeth Zerofsky, “Is It Fascism? A Leading Historian Changes

his Mind,” *New York Times Magazine*, October 23, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/23/magazine/robert-paxton-facism.html>

**II. February 12-14 & 19-28 & March 3**: George M. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981.

**February 12**: Fredrickson, Introduction, pp. xi-xxv.

**February 14**: Fredrickson, Chapter One: Settlement and Subjugation, pp. 3-53.

**February 17: Presidents’ Day Holiday**

**February 19**: Fredrickson, Chapter Two: The Rise of Racial Slavery in the South and the Cape, pp. 54-93.

**February 21**: Fredrickson, Chapter Three: Race Mixture and the Color Line, pp. 94-135.

**February 24**, Fredrickson, Chapter Four: Liberty, Union, and White Supremacy, pp. 136-198.

**February 26**: Fredrickson, Chapter Five: Industrialism, White Labor, and Racial Discrimina6ion, pp. 199-238.

**February 28**: Fredrickson, Chapter Six: Two Strange Careers: Segregation in South Africa and the South, pp. 239-282.

# March 3: Tami Luhby, ”These Charts Show How Economic Progress Has Stalled for Black Americans Since the Civil Rights Era,” CNN, July 5, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/05/politics/inequality-black-americans-civil-rights-economic-progress/index.html>

Matt Brown, “Black Americans’ Significant Economic and Civil Rights Progress Threatened,”

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/black-americans-significant-economic-and-civil-rights-progress-threatened-report-says>, *PBS (Urban League)*, March 1, 2024,

Royel M. Johnson & Kevin Kumashiro, “Understanding the Attacks on Critical Race Theory,” National Education Policy Center, 2021, <https://www.academia.edu/69394906/Understanding_the_attacks_on_critical_race_theory>

**III. March 5 - March 14:** Trouillot, Michel-Rolph, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Boston, Beacon, 1995.

**March 5**: Trouillot, Chapter One: The Power in the Story,”

**March 7**: Trouillot, Chapter Two: The Three Faces of Sans Souci, pp. 1-69.

**March 10**: Trouillot, Chapter Three: The Unthinkable History, pp. 70-107.

**March 12**: Trouillot, Chapter Four: Good Day, Columbus, pp. 108-140.

**March 14**: Trouillot, Chapter Five: The Presence in the Past & Epilogue, pp. 141-156.

# Greg Rosalsky, “'The Greatest Heist in History': How Haiti Was Forced To Pay Reparations For Freedom,” NPR, October 5, 2012, <https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2021/10/05/1042518732/-the-greatest-heist-in-history-how-haiti-was-forced-to-pay-reparations-for-freed>

Recommended: Foner, Eric, *Nothing but Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1984**.**