Middle East Technical University

Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences

Department of Political Science and Public Administration

2010-2011 Fall Term

QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

**POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY**

Please answer **two** of the following three questions:

1. How can the classical theories of political sociology be criticized with reference to the concepts of structuralism, foundationalism and essentialism?
2. Write an essay on the changing focus of politics as represented by social movements.
3. "How could J. Habermas and S. Benhabib discuss the act that would allow  girls to wear headscarf in primary education?"

**Previous Years:**

§         A key concept in political sociology is that of power. This concept has been defined and utilized in various forms and ways to analyze how individuals and groups in society interact with each other and influence decisions in both the state and civil society contexts. Please write an essay discussing and comparing critically Marxist and Weberian views and perspectives on the bases of power and its institutionalization in society.

§         Classical elite theorists have rejected liberal prescriptions for state-civil society relationship on the assumption that these theories are based on an essentially rational and egalitarian logic which does not correspond to reality. Who are the classical elitists and what is the reality they are talking about? How do they explain and elobarate their own position on distribution of political power in society? Please write an essay identifying the arguments of some of the main classical elitists; discussing their shared assumptions and comparing their fundamental position with that of democratic theory?

§         It is often claimed that one of the main contemporary challenges to the state has been the phenomenon of new social movements. Please state the fundamental characteristics of NSM, and write an essay discussing their relationship to and impact on the distribution of power in society and the state-civil society relationship.

§         Conventionally, the discipline of political sociology has dealt with the analysis of power relations and power structures at the societal level. Most political sociologists, thus, have focused on studies of the social bases of power, power structures and institutional and extrainstitutional aspects of politics. The conventional models of power (such as elitist, Marxist, pluralist, corporatist etc.) have often formed the bases of the theoretical and empirical analysis in this discipline along these lines. In the more recent approaches to political sociological analysis one notices a tendency to move away from the state-society axis so predominant in earlier works as well as a shift in the basic parameters of the discipline, including the power dimension as such. Such a change has, to a large extent, stemmed from the experiences and claims of the New Social Movements (NSM) (such as the feminist and environmental movements.) The ideologies and practices of the NSMs have formed some of the fundamental arguments and criticisms to existing theories and structures of political analysis. Write an essay discussing the issues presented above and critically evaluating the evolution of political sociology as a discipline. In your essay make specific references to theories and/or sources from the literature, wherever necessary, to support your ideas and/or elaborate your views.

§         Has “class” as an analytical concept lost importance in the recent social theory? Why and why not?

§         Has globalization displaced deep social structures such as capitalism, the state and bureaucracy, the nation and nationalism?

§         Discuss how classical sociologists defined what is “new” in modern society and how they studied modernity? Refer to at least two of the following names: Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Simmel and Park.

§         Discuss the relationships among agent/actor, structure/system and action/practice.

§         Discuss the relationship among class, ethnicity and gender in early, mature and late/post modern-capitalist societies.

§         Can a gender perspective be integrated into modern political theory?

§         Discuss the problem of representation in the feminist understanding of politics.

§         Discuss the main obstacles that international and transnational feminism encounter while imagining and working towards women’s equality in the world societies.

§         How is the public sphere being disorganised and/or reorganised in contemporary late capitalist societies? Discuss in relation with various theories of ‘public sphere’.

§         What could terms like ‘radical’ or ‘anti-system’ movements possibly imply in the context of social and political transformations covered under the rubric of ‘globalisation and postmodernity’?

§         In what senses politics of identity can be regarded as a field of study in social sciences? What are the “new” theoretical and methodological issues that are generated by the studies in this field? To what extent these studies challenge the established approaches in social sciences? Please discuss by referring to various debates and studies in this area of study.