

Sociology 6060
Sociological Theory Since 1920
Professor David Fasenfest

Section 001, CR# 29070
Winter 2017
Monday, 5:00-8:20pm
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...the writer must distinguish between what a particular author says and what he believes he says. This applies even to philosophical systems--what Spinoza considered the cornerstone of his system, namely, that what he thinks and what really is are two different things entirely--Marx to Kovalevsky, April 1879

I have only to look at something, anything, and it can instantly give me an idea. Whether a face, an object, or an event, it can immediately suggest a shape to create, in painting, in photography, in sculpture...it isn't a document, it isn't the direct impression of this object or this event, it is the result of this impression, which immediately gushes out. Man Ray, Interview with Pierre Bourgeade, Paris 1972

COURSE OVERVIEW

What is theory, why do we need it, what does it do? These are core questions everyone asks (or should ask) as they undertake a journey of intellectual inquiry. In this seminar, you are expected to critically engage with the various theorists presented during the semester.

We have to consider that theory is a tool to help us understand how society operates, whether large scale historical changes or small group micro behavior. Theories are used a) to frame how to examine society at all levels, and b) to provide a context from which to investigate social relationship. See, as an example, the conceptual theoretical maps at the end of this syllabus.

The full scope of contemporary theories is beyond the purview of this semester (see the reading list by fields found in Blackboard—this list just scratches the surface). This semester we will focus on more macro aspects of social organization. Whatever your sociological focus, it is imperative that you understand theoretical arguments as you make implicit and explicit choices about what to study, what constitutes evidence, how to collect data, and in the end, consider the relationships or mechanisms in play constraining or promoting social actions and outcomes.

So, how are theories implicit in all we do? Making an *a priori* but theoretically informed decision on how we understand society, asking what is sociological about our interests, we go about framing our research questions. At that point we decide what constitute “evidence,” we select the appropriate methodology, and then we collect data to assess our understanding. Our task is to confirm our ideas, rather than argue *post hoc*, based on what we find. In other words, theorizing *a priori* informs our analysis—otherwise we mindlessly mine data or navel gaze; we may “find” something, but it may not add to any understanding of ourselves or society at large.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

There is no way to avoid reading, lots of reading. Furthermore, there is no point in coming to the lectures unprepared. Each class will begin with a review of readings, answering questions and continuing past discussions. The organization of each class will be an analysis of the readings and an integration into the larger theoretical frame of the author being studied. You will be expected to do the reading PRIOR to coming to class since what is discussed and how the material is presented will be, in large part, a function of where you have problems with understanding and interpreting the material. A cautionary word: IT WILL BE NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE (AND POINTLESS) TO CATCH UP IN A MARATHON READING EFFORT.

Your grade is based on three activities: A) weekly 3-page essays from your close reading of some of that week’s assigned items; B) participation comprised of at least two instances where you will be leading class discussions, and then serving as a discussant for one student’s in-class presentation of a draft seminar paper; and C) the presentation of your seminar paper topic, and the final product written as a journal submission quality analysis. More on that in class.

A) For eight topics (from January 23st to March 20th) you will provide a 3-page essay that reflects your reading of that week’s assignments. These will be due by 10pm Saturday **prior** to our class meeting on that following Monday. These essays should be points of departure from, and not final conclusions about, the content in the articles for that week:

- 1) Undertake a close reading of the assigned texts, by which I mean a careful exploration into the author’s main argument, how that argument is formed, and your own reaction to and thoughts on whether this argument can be challenged.
- 2) You should be able to present this argument in than three pages. Take longer and you are simply writing a “book report” where you merely summarize what you just read.
- 3) Your essay should provide examples from the text that support your particular claims regarding what the author is telling us, and offer your own reactions to those claims.

B) Participation refers to your various roles in class.

- 1) You will be tasked to lead the weekly discussion in each of 8 weeks (most likely in groups of 2 or 3 in changing compositions over the course of the semester). You should not make “book report presentations” since I will assume we all read the material. Rather, you should present your understanding of a main point in the text,

and raise some questions that can guide a full class discussion. Assignments of which student will present each week to be determined at our first meeting—but you might consider having your first and second choices in mind (see sign-up sheet on Blackboard, which we will fill out on January 9th).

- 2) You will present a preliminary version of your seminar paper in a conference style format. There will be four presenters in each of the two weeks allocated for these (April 3 and April 10). The assigned discussant will have 15 mins to present the main ideas in your paper, followed by your reactions and clarification, and then we will have a group discussion. The written discussant's comments and in-class discussion will inform your revisions in preparing your final paper.
- 3) Each of you will serve as a discussant for another student's paper presented in this conference format. The discussant will prepare written comments in advance, outlining the main points of the paper, raising any concerns, and offering constructive suggestions as well as critical (note that "criticism" is not "negative") comments designed to a) help improve the paper and b) initiate a general discussion in class.

C) Your seminar paper should be targeted for a journal in your area of interest. Each student will be required to provide a short "proposal" (a summary of no more than 2 pages) of your paper topic, and include 3-4 relevant readings in PDF form. As indicated in the schedule below, the proposal and readings are due by 5pm February 3rd. The readings should inform us of your theoretical perspective and will be made available to the rest of the class.

Your seminar paper will be prepared in two stages: **First**, a working draft of your paper will be presented in class (see above), at which time you will receive written comments, and oral reactions about any strengths and weaknesses in your argument.

Second, you will incorporate these comments as you prepare a properly structured final seminar paper of no more than 8000 words (inclusive of all content). Class presentations will be over by April 10th and, to the extent possible, your paper should reflect how the comments received have been addressed (or, alternatively, discuss why suggestions raised in the discussion or written comments don't need to be incorporated).

You have the option of submitting a full draft of your final paper to me by **5pm on Friday April 14th**. I will comment on the draft, suggest a provisional grade should you choose to not revise that paper, and return it to you by Monday evening, April 17th. That will leave you a week to revise and return the final paper. Regardless of whether you submit a draft, your final seminar paper is due as an email attachment no later than **5pm on April 24th**.

NB: I WILL NOT ACCEPT LATE PAPERS OR GIVE AN INCOMPLETE FOR THE COURSE

Any grading scheme is necessarily subjective, and as such I am always willing to listen to an appeal. But it is, in the end, my decision. Since I expect everyone to participate fully, the seminar paper carries the major portion of your final grade weight.

“A” level work consists of a cogent, well-articulated, and well-developed written and oral presentation, demonstrating insight, originality, and complexity in both form (e.g., language, expression, organization) and substance (e.g., logical argumentation, factual accuracy, and appropriate examples); critical thinking skills are amply demonstrated; sociological imagination is highly active; tasks are completed on time and according to the guidelines, often going “above and beyond”. “A” level work is considered excellent.

“A-/B+” level work may be thoughtful and developed, but may not be very original, particularly insightful, or precise. While ideas might be clear, focused, and organized, they are less likely to be comprehensive or dialectical. Critical thinking skills are satisfactory; sociological imagination is active. “A-” level work is considered good and shows some originality. “B+” work is still good, but only demonstrates the most basic grasp of concepts and ideas, though with satisfactory levels of communication. This is my most common grade range.

“B” level work is barely competent, and may be unclear, inconsistent, and minimally inadequate in form and/or content. Critical thinking skills are minimal; sociological imagination is weak. “B” level work is considered mediocre and hardly adequate graduate work. Keep in mind that you must get at least a “B” in any graduate course for a passing grade, and your overall average in your core courses be better than a “B+”. Receiving a “B” grade will reflect my concern about your overall grasp of the material and/or your ability to convey what you know effectively.

“B-” level work is not competent, appropriate, relevant, complete, and/or adequate in form and/or content, thereby not fully meeting the minimum requirements for graduate level work. Critical thinking skills are largely absent; and one’s sociological imagination is lacking. “B-” level work is not passing at the graduate level, and you will be required you to retake this course if you remain in the graduate program. I do not give a grade lower than “B-” for the course.

“WN/P/F” is only given when you withdraw from the course. “N” is given when no work was done—and I encourage you to quickly withdraw to get a refund in that case. “P” is given when you have completed all work to date in a satisfactory manner but must withdraw from the course (and I will not require an explanation from you). “F” is given when you decide to withdraw late in the semester and you have not maintained the work and assignments. All requests for withdrawal are initiated by the student, and pay attention to the posted deadlines.

[**NB:** Failure to submit the weekly summaries *on time* will result in a one-step reduction in your final grade. Failure to submit all the weekly summaries or the written discussant comments will result in a one-step reduction of your final grade. E.g. A to A-, B+ to B, etc.]

COURSE READINGS

This is a theory course and you will be expected to read. The order of assigned readings is detailed in the schedule of classes below. All these works will be available as a PDF on Blackboard. There is, therefore, no excuse for not doing the reading.

The class discussions each week will be based on the assigned readings—consider these a minimum. The discussion “leader or leaders” will be the student(s) assigned to summarize the

main points on the week's reading at the start of the class meeting. Leading the discussion means just that; everyone will be expected to contribute. Required readings form the basis of our class discussion and your written assignments over the course of the semester.

Student seminar paper presentation will be based on readings submitted by them, and will be made available on Blackboard before the presentation. More on this when we meet in class.

COMMUNICATION

Course information will be broadcast via email, and posted on Blackboard. Each of you have been assigned an email account by WSU and if you decide to use a different account be sure you figure out how to forward any email to that alternative account. I will post any study guides, notices, revisions on this syllabus, supplemental material and other information on Blackboard.

FAQ: WHAT CONSTITUTES PLAGIARISM?

Scholarship is all about your own ideas, but it is unavoidable to use ideas of others in our work. Failing to identify these sources is a serious transgression (both in class and professionally). All Departmental, College and University rules and requirements with regard to plagiarism and falsification of work will apply. Please review those rules as they will govern any action I will take, and they outline any rights and responsibilities you may have in that regard. Blackboard provides SafeAssign, which you can use to check your written work for inadvertent plagiarism should you not be certain if it applies to you—be sure to indicate that the work be evaluated as a draft so the system does not “add” it to its inventory of written material (otherwise, you may “discover” a future assessment reveals that you have highly plagiarized your paper—from yourself!).

The rules are clear: Nothing may be copied from books, articles, websites and other materials written by others UNLESS you give the author (creator) of the idea the credit that is due her or him (or them). Here are some questions commonly asked:

- * *What is plagiarism?* Plagiarism is copying words and ideas and passing them off as your own.
- * *What constitutes copying?* Copying is writing down, word for word, something you read, written by someone else. Copying is stringing together bits and pieces from published sources to create a paragraph that reads as if you wrote it yourself.
- * *When can a researcher copy?* Copying is allowed if the researcher indicates she has copied the words. This takes the form of a direct quote, for example: **Jensen argues, “Only one objective function can be maximized by managers” (Jensen, 2001, p.45).**
- * *What if I don't copy the words, just the idea? Do I still need to reference the original work?* When you put someone else's idea into your own words, you are paraphrasing the idea. You MUST reference the creator of the ideas. This takes the following form: **According to Jensen (2001) there is less moral hazard if managers have only one objective function to maximize.**
- * *What is the best way to reference where I got the idea?* There are many books on the subject.

An easy guide is provided by the articles you read; while there are small differences in ‘styles’, all published research articles will follow basic rules on referencing; follow their lead.

** If everything I write is taken from something I have read, won't I have a reference after every sentence? Yes. This is good. It demonstrates you understand the rules. It also demonstrates that you have not done much original thinking. In that case, start doing some original thinking.*

The central rule of scholarly work is: individual authors are given credit for any ideas they have communicated in written form, (e.g. published in sources or working papers). There are many STYLES for assigning credit but all of them will allow the reader to know who presented the idea and where you (the author) found it (e.g. the citation or reference). When you submit your work for assessment, you give your word that what you have written is your own work EXCEPT for any statements or ideas that are attributed to another author as cited.

Failure to acknowledge the source of one's ideas, or to indicate paraphrases, ideas, or verbatim expressions not one's own through proper use of quotations and footnotes, constitutes plagiarism (intentional or otherwise), which is a form of academic dishonesty.

ODDS and ENDS

- 1) A note about writing. While this is not an “English” class, grammar and writing coherently matters for several reasons. First, it is the primary way in which you communicate with your peers and the discipline; poor writing will never make it into print. If you have problems with writing there are several good support systems available to you at WSU (information is available on the Department's web site or the WSU writing lab). This is how you present yourself as a professional, so make it count. Second, it is not the reader's responsibility to understand or interpret what you meant to say...and if it is not said coherently or well then more than likely it will not convey your meaning. I will not grade down for writing per se, but I know, from experience, poorly written work will usually be received a poor. I recommend working in groups and charitably critiquing each other's work; it goes a long way to improving one's writing.
- 2) That said, there is never a reason your paper should have misspellings, but do not simply rely on spellcheckers (remember, an improperly used word may still be correctly spelled!). Be sure to write in complete sentences. Papers that appear sloppy or incoherent cannot be expected to receive a very good grade. In addition, papers written at the last-minute show it—both in the coherence of the argument and the form of the written work. **PROOFREAD YOUR WORK.**
- 3) “Pages” for all written assignments are **DOUBLE SPACED, 12 PITCH FONTS, with NO LESS THAN 1” AND NO MORE THAN 1.25” MARGINS.** Please, no fancy fonts: use Arial or New Times Roman 12 point only. In general, a “page” consists, on average, of 250 words.
- 4) Please make sure your names are on top of the first page of the written work, and in the file name of the document conveyed to me as an attachment (e.g. “Smith Week 2” or “Smith final paper”).

- 5) In my experience, you will learn more from each other than you will just from class discussions. I encourage, and will facilitate, the formation of study and reading groups. As scholars, we learn to draw a line between exchanging ideas and getting feedback on one hand, and copying or taking the ideas of others. Use the group to discuss readings, get reactions to what you are writing, and help formulate your questions for class.
- 6) **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A BAD OR INAPPROPRIATE QUESTION!** If you do not ask I cannot know you are confused by or unclear about what you read. No question is inappropriate; if I think it should be addressed outside of class I will tell you. Perhaps it is obvious, but it is hard to ask questions if you don't read the material beforehand.
- 7) All reading should be completed prior to the corresponding class meeting for the best use of our time in class. Come to class prepared. Consider that most things require two readings—first to get a general sense of what was being presented, then after the discussion to reflect on the material.
- 8) Consider the additional foundation reading as more than just a suggestion. The course is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. While some of you might choose to supplement your readings with the many excerpts and collected works, there is no substitute for reading the original text in full.
- 9) At the end of the day, this course is guided by the idea that theory is a tool, much like your methods and statistics courses. Therefore, it is up to you to learn how to use the tool wisely and when to apply it. You will pursue your studies in other courses and seminars, and focus your inquiry into specialized work rooted in many of the theoretical traditions we have explored.

FINAL COMMENT:

I cannot stress enough that you will be judged in large part on your written communication. Sloppy writing, grammatical errors, and poor argumentation will adversely affect how I react to what you are trying to tell me (and later, how any reader, journal reviewer or publisher will assess your work). You have a responsibility to present yourself professionally; to do otherwise in your coursework risks developing bad habits that will not serve you well in your academic career.

CLASS SCHEDULE, ASSIGNED READING and DEADLINES

January 9

Overview of the course
Giddens, "Classical Social Theory and the Origins of Modern Sociology"

January 23

Fuchs, "How to read Capital"
Marx, Chapter 27, "Expropriation of the Agricultural Population from the Land"
Weber, Chapter 11, "Economic Relationships of Organized Groups"
Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory"
Leonardo, "Critical Social Theory"
Fasensfest, "Critical Sociology"

January 30

Gramsci, "Socialism and Marxism"
Block, "Introduction to *The Great Transformation*"
Polanyi, Chapters 4-6 from *The Great Transformation*
Burawoy, "For a Sociological Marxism"

February 3:

5PM: Seminar Paper Proposals due, including a PDF of at least 4 recommended external readings

February 6

Lash, "Reflexive Modernization"
Giddens, Chapters 1 and 2 from *The Consequences of Modernity*
Margolis, "Postscript on Modernism and Postmodernism, Both"
Bauman, "Consuming Life"
Wacquant, "Pierre Bourdieu"
Wacquant, "Following Pierre Bourdieu into the field"
Foucault, Chapter 3, "Panopticism"

February 13

Burawoy, "The Roots of Domination: Beyond Bourdieu and Gramsci"
Deleuze, "Postscripts on Societies of Control"
Seidman, "From Identity to Queer Politics"
Fraser "Feminism and Capitalism"
Collins, "What's in a name?"

February 20

Robinson, *Black Marxism* (Part 2)
Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (Parts I and IV)
Fanon, *Black Skin, White Mask*
Hudis, "Frantz Fanon's Contribution to Hegelian Marxism"
Hilton, "Frantz Fanon and Colonialism: A Psychology of Oppression"

February 27

Wacquant, “Three Pernicious Premises in the Study of the American Ghetto”
Lyotard, “What is the Postmodern”
Said, “The Myth of the ‘Clash of Civilizations’”
Mukerji and Schudson, “Popular Culture”
De Sousa Santos, “Non-Occidental West?”

March 6

Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere”
Massumi, “Fear (The Spectrum Said)”
Mészáros, Foreword, Intro and Chapter 1, “The Unfolding Crisis and the Relevance of Marx”
Pomeranz, “Putting Modernity into its Place(s)”

March 13:

SPRING BREAK

March 20

Granovetter, “Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness”
Krippner, “The Elusive Market: Embeddedness and the Paradigm of Economic Sociology”
Jessop, “Reflections on Polanyi’s Account of Market Economies and the Market Society”
Fasensfest and Ciancanelli “Re-embedding Monsieur Le Capital in Madame La Terre: Revisiting Polanian Insights for the Capitalist Crisis”

March 27

NO CLASS – Preparation of presentation drafts, personal consultation available

April 3:

Student Presentations #1 (drafts uploaded in Blackboard by March 30th, discussant comments uploaded by April 1st)

April 10:

Student Presentations #2 (drafts uploaded in Blackboard by April 6th, discussant comments uploaded by April 8th)

April 14:

5PM OPTIONAL: DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER DUE AS AN ATTACHMENT

April 17:

NO CLASS – Individual consultations are available if desired

April 24:

5PM: SEMINAR PAPERS ARE DUE AS AN ATTACHMENT