

Sociology 6060
Sociological Theory Since 1920
Professor David Fasenfest

Section 001, CR# 17560
Fall 2013
Monday, 5:30-9:20pm
0165 MAIN

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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 as they begin the journey of intellectual inquiry.

We have to consider that theory is a tool we use to construct a model of how society operates. Assessing patterns in society, theories are used a) to anticipate how society functions under different situations, and b) to provide a frame of reference from which to investigate social relationship (in theories with a grand scale using large numbers in big places on one hand, or theories focusing on micro interactions of individuals in close interaction). In this course we will briefly examine how to understand the antecedents of contemporary theory, and focus on the more macro aspects of social organization. It is imperative that we understand the roots of theoretical arguments as we make implicit and explicit choices about what we study, how we collect data, and consider the relationships or mechanisms in play constraining or promoting social actions and outcomes.

How are theories implicit in all we do? When we see a large group of people agitating for change or against some real or perceived grievance, theories of social behavior helps us decide if

this reflects a group of unsatisfied individuals, acting out their personal failings, or alternatively if this is a coherent mass organized around principles of association. Making an a priori but theoretically informed choice, (whether we know it or not) we go about deciding what is “evidence” and then collect data to assess our assumptions (not the focus of this course). In other words, theorizing a priori informs our analysis—to ignore this rule is to run the risk of mindlessly mining data. Our task is to confirm our models using data, rather than build a model based on data analysis.

This course is designed to reflect upon a range of core sociological theories that have driven the development of contemporary theories. Identifying traditions underlying contemporary theory helps us to adjudicate when we are faced with contradictory or opposing arguments and explanations.

Conceptualizing social relationships are dependent upon our theoretical perspective. Consider the following pair of statements:

- 1) Good unions make good strikes.
- 2) Good strikes make good unions.

On first glance one can ask “so what?” and assume this is just semantics; what difference does the order of these words make? On closer examination we can see that these are fundamentally and diametrically opposing premises guided by different theoretical understanding of social processes. Be prepared to discuss these two statements in class at our first meeting. Since you should have had some introduction to social theory before this course I will leave it to you to argue in our first meeting what are the differences and why they are important.

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 discussing past lectures. The organization of each class will be a discussion of the topic of the day and an integration of the readings 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 I discuss and how I present the material will be in large part a function of where you have problems with understanding and interpretation of the material. A cautionary word: IT WILL BE NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO CATCH UP IN A MARATHON READING EFFORT AT A LATER DATE.

We are spending the first few weeks reviewing the main classical theorists, followed by contemporary theoretical traditions. We will assess, contrast and compare the theorists on central topics to sociology broadly defined.

COURSE READINGS

This is a theory course and you will be expected to read. The course books are listed below, and the order of assigned readings is detailed in the schedule of classes below. All these works, with the exception of Stinchcombe’s book, will be available as a PDF on Blackboard. There is,

therefore, no excuse for not doing the reading. All the books are available from Amazon and other online sources, should you desire to own your own copy. Be sure to order your copy of Stinchcombe's book ASAP as it is required for the first two weeks of the semester.

As a rule, collected readers of any theorist can summarize and excerpt their work, but it is a mistake to rely on another's interpretation or selection of the original texts. First, you only read those abstracts that the editor of the reader thinks is important. Second, you often read out of context and therefore may not get the full impact or meaning intended by the theorist. Finally, in summaries of what was written only provide you with an interpretation of what the editor of the reader "thinks" was meant rather than you developing your own understanding or interpretation (and if it is from a translation the summary is twice removed from the original text since different translations offer different meanings!). In a full year's course I would have had you read all the original texts (sadly in English). To accommodate the scope of material I will, however reluctantly, rely on collections of extracts from core theorists.

The class discussions each week will be based on the required readings. The discussion "leader" will be the student assigned to provide written comment on the week's reading. Students will provide the comments to me by midnight on Saturday, and they will be distributed to everyone on Sunday—to be read prior to coming to class. Leading means just that; everyone will be expected to contribute to the discussion.

Keep in mind that required readings form the basis of our class discussion and your assignments as the semester progresses. The recommended readings form the basic core of your professional library and will certainly be useful as you prepare for more advanced scholarship. Those listed in the schedule below are the barest minimum; all the readings assigned for the last three weeks (with some additions) are available on Blackboard with date of the assignment indicated. Finally, after the 1st week discussing each of the theorists I will make available my own notes. It is a mistake to rely solely on my notes—read the original texts and all assigned material.

Required

Lemert, Charles (ed) 2013, *Social Theory: The Multicultural, Global and Classical Readings*, 5th Edition, Boulder, CO: Westview Press

Calhoun, Craig, et al (eds) 2012, *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, 3rd Edition, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell

Stinchcombe, Art 1987, *Constructing Social Theories*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press

Additional weekly required readings will be posted on Blackboard, as follows:

September 16:

Fuchs, "How to read Capital"

Marx, Chapter 27, "Expropriation of the Agricultural Population from the Land"

Weber, Chapter 11, "Economic Relationships of Organized Groups"

September 23:

Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory"
Leonardo, "Critical Social Theory"
Fasensfest, "Critical Sociology"

October 7:

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

October 14:

Lash, "Reflexive Modernization"
Giddens, Chpts 1-2, from *The Consequences of Modernity*
Margolis, "Postscript on Modernism and Postmodernism, Both"
Bauman, "Consuming Life"

October 21:

Wacquant, "Pierre Bourdieu"
Wacquant, "Following Pierre Bourdieu into the field"
Foucault, Chapter 3, "Panopticism"
Burawoy, "The Roots of Domination: Beyond Bourdieu and Gramsci"
Deleuze, "Postscripts on Societies of Control"

October 28:

Seidman, "From Identity to Queer Politics"
Fraser "Feminism and Capitalism"
Collins, "What's in a name?"
Wacquant, "Three Pernicious Premises in the Study of the American Ghetto"

November 4:

Lyotard, "What is the Postmodern"
Said, "The Myth of the 'Clash of Civilizations'"
Mukerji and Schudson, "Popular Culture"
De Sousa Santos, "Non-Occidental West?"

November 18:

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

November 25:

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"

Background Reading

FOUNDATIONAL READING

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*
Du Bois, W.E.B. *Black reconstruction in America*
Durkheim, Emile *Division of Labor in Society*
Durkheim, Emile *Division of Labor in Society* (chapters 1-3)
Durkheim, Emile *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*
Durkheim, Emile *Rules of Sociological Method*
Durkheim, Emile *Suicide, a Study in Sociology*
Engels, Frederick. *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State.*
Marx, Karl and Fredrick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*
Marx, Karl *Capital (3 vols)*
Marx, Karl *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*
Marx, Karl *Grundrisse*
Marx, Karl *Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*
Weber, Max *Economy and Society (2 vols)*
Weber, Max *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*
Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

EDITED COLLECTIONS OF PRIMARY SOURCES AND COMMENTARY

Antonio, Robert J. ed., *Marx and Modernity, Key Readings and Commentary*
Emirbayer, Mustafa ed., *Emile Durkheim, Sociologist of Modernity*
Gerth, H and C. Wright Mills ed *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*
Kahlberg, Stephen ed., *Max Weber. Readings and Commentary on Modernity*
Pearce, Frank *The Radical Durkheim*
Tawney, R. H. *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*
Tucker, Robert *The Marx-Engels Reader*

COMMUNICATION

All course information will be broadcast via the Internet, 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. Not checking your Blackboard or not getting your email is no excuse for missing assignments or other information relevant to this course. You can learn about Blackboard at: <http://computing.wayne.edu/blackboard/>

GRADING

Participation: I expect you to come to class prepared to participate in this seminar. While it is impossible to “force” participation, but our class cannot function if students do not participate in

discussion. You will quickly find that if there is no discussion in class, lectures will be tedious and class will not last very long. There is no “attendance” policy and I will not worry about why you can’t come to class (nor require you get an excuse). In return, you are expected to find out what was covered on your own and be prepared the following week. You must come to class prepared to engage in discussions and demonstrate your understanding of (or questions about) the reading and concepts presented. In practice I do not take off points for participation unless there is a consistent pattern of missed classes or coming to class unprepared to discuss that week’s readings.

Short Essays: You will be asked to write three short essays, each to be about 3 pages, on the readings (not every student will be responsible for an essay each week). The essays will be a close reading (see below) of one of the articles assigned for the week you selected, due that week. These will be the basis for your leading role in class discussion on your article.

Final Essays: At the close of the seminar you will be given three questions. We will sit in the computer room and you will get to choose one of the questions to answer in a prelim environment (no notes, with 2 hrs to write). This will not be counted toward your final grade, though I will give you a “pass,” “conditional pass,” or “fail” based on how I would have graded the paper on a prelim examination. However, you must participate for a final grade. For your final essay, you are to then select one of the two remaining questions and spend the week writing at home. This second essay will account for 55 percent of your final grade for the course.

Grading Criteria: Finally, 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 and your final grade will be based on the cumulative performance on assignments throughout the semester.

“A” level work consists of 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 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 goes a little beyond 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 reasonably competent, yet 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 barely adequate. Keep in mind that you must get at least a “B” in any graduate course for a passing grade, and your overall average has to be better than a “B” implying offsetting “A” grades. This 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 as a final grade will require you to retake this course. I do not give a grade lower than “B-” in most instances.

“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 if you start to miss class. “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 and you have not maintained the work and assignments up to the date of your request. All requests for withdrawal are initiated by the student, and please pay attention to the revised deadlines for that decision. You can no longer wait until the semester is over to withdraw.

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 to 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 at <http://www.clas.wayne.edu/unit-inner.asp?WebPageID=1836>). It 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 it is likely it will not convey your meaning and represent your level of comprehension. I will not grade down for writing per se, but I know from past experience poorly written assignments and papers will usually receive a poor grade at the end of the day. This is very important aspect of working in groups and charitably critiquing each other’s work—something that you will always need.
- 2) Consequently, part of my assessment of each written work will include a consideration of your document’s presentation. This relates to the evidence of care, competent writing, and an awareness of your reader. For example, there is never a reason your paper should have misspellings, and careless writing also includes relying only on spellcheckers (remember, an improper word may still be correctly spelled!). Papers that appear sloppy, semi-literate or incoherent cannot be expected to receive a very good grade. In my experience, papers written at the last minute show it—both in the coherence of the argument and the form of the written work.
- 3) I expect you to do your own work. 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 outline any rights and responsibilities you may have in that regard. **PLAGARISM IS A SERIOUS TRANSGRESSION.** Blackboard provides SafeAssign which you can use to check your written work for inadvertent plagiarism—be sure to indicate that the work should be evaluated as a draft (we can discuss further in class).
- 4) “Pages” for all written work 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 of, on average, 250 words.

- 5) Please make sure your names are on top of the first page of the written work, and included in the file name of the document conveyed to me as an attachment.
- 6) In my experience you will learn more from each other than you will just from my lectures. As a result, I will encourage and 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 me. In the end you have to do your own work!
- 7) **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A BAD OR INAPPROPRIATE QUESTION!** If you have a question and do not ask I cannot know you are confused. If you are uncertain about the appropriateness of any question ask me—if I think it should be addressed outside of class I will tell you. Perhaps not so obvious, it is hard to ask questions if you don’t read the material beforehand.
- 8) All reading should be completed prior to the corresponding class meeting for maximum benefit and the best use of our time in class. It is much harder, after the fact, to read the material and on your own figure out what is going on. I do not repeat lectures. Come to class prepared. And consider that most things require two readings—the first time to get a general sense of what was being presented, the second time after discussion more fully comprehend the material.
- 9) I will not read drafts of assignments before hand. I will, however, be willing to discuss your ideas and address your particular questions in class or during office hours. If there are lots of people wanting to talk to me during office hours, I will post up a sign-up sheet on my door in order to see everyone.
- 10) Consider the additional foundation reading as more than just a suggestion. This 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.
- 11) 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. And just as there are different methods to be used according to the kind of problem examined (requiring you to decide on the appropriate method), so too there are different levels of theory, and you must assess which level and what focus is required for your purposes. This course is an introduction to theory and consequently somewhat of a survey course...it is now up to you to pursue your studies in other courses and seminars, and to focus your inquiry into specialized theories rooted in each 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. You have a responsibility to present yourself professionally; to do otherwise is a bad habit that will not serve you well in your academic career.

ON CLOSE READINGS

- 1) By close reading we mean a care exploration into what the author's main argument, how that argument is formed, and your own reaction on whether this can be challenged.
- 2) You should be able to present this argument in no more than one page. To take longer and you are really writing a "book report" in which you repeat what you just read.
- 3) The remaining two pages should provide examples from the text that support your overall claim as to what the author is telling us, and your own immediate reactions to the claims.

These essays should be points of departure and not final conclusion. They are to be sent to me as an email attachment before the start of class on the week your readings are to be discussed.

SELECTION OF READINGS

Each student enrolled in the class is expected to write up one article in each of 3 different weeks starting with the readings of October 7th. There will be no more than three students each week. We will make selections in class.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

<i>WEEK</i>	<i>TOPIC</i>	<i>READING</i>
9/9	1. What is Theory and Why We Should Care?	Stinchcombe (all)
9/16	2. Foundations of Contemporary Theory	Lemert, Parts One and Two
9/23	3. Ideological Divides and Post-Colonialism	Lemert, Parts Three and Four
9/30	READING AHEAD and GROUP DISCUSSIONS	
10/7	4. Institutions, Networks and Power	Calhoun et al, Parts III and IV
10/14	5. Re-conceptualizing Western Society	Lemert, Part Five
10/21	6. Sociology of Foucault and Bourdieu	Calhoun et al, Parts V and VI
10/28	7. Rethinking Race and Gender	Calhoun et al, Part VII
11/4	8. Post-Modernity	Calhoun et al, Parts VIII and IX
11/11	READING AND WRITING	
11/18	9. Crisis Theories, Globalization and Globalism	Calhoun et al, Part X Lemert, Part Six
11/25	10. Market Embeddedness	
12/2	Making Sense of Contemporary Theorizing—Recap, Discussion	
12/9	IN-CLASS RESPONSE, AND THEN FINAL ANSWER DUE 12/13	