

Sociology 6050
Sociological Theory Before 1920
Professor David Fasenfest

Section 001, CR# 19101
Fall 2014
Tuesday, 5:30-9:20pm
323 STATE

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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. Why do we need to know about theories that are so old, that do not seem to be current?

To answer the first set of questions, 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 focus on how to understand both 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).

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 contradiction or oppositional explanations.

Consider the following pair of statements:

- 1) You are poor because you are powerless.
- 2) You are powerless because you are poor.

On first glance one can ask “so what?” and assume this is just semantics; what difference does the order of these words make? Be prepared to discuss these two statements in class at our first meeting. Be prepared to argue about the statements’ 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, posing and answering questions about the readings and discussing past lectures. Each class will be a discussion and an integration of the readings placed into the larger theoretical frame of the author being studied.

This is a theory course and you will be expected to read (I can’t say this too often!). The course books are listed below, and the order of assigned readings is detailed in the schedule of classes below. All these required texts will be available as a PDF on Blackboard. There is, therefore, no excuse for not reading for class. The three books for your final essay have been ordered. Books are readily available from Amazon and other online sources, if you want to own your own copy.

The class discussions during the third week for each theorist will be based on the required readings—both the author and the modern commentators (read in advance of the class meeting), and on your assignment essays, to be provided to me electronically before we meet (by 5pm). Note that I have assigned in the three readers only the excerpts by the theorists. You may well find the “modern” essays useful as you work to understand what those theorists have to say. For a full and solid understanding of the theoretical foundations of contemporary sociology you should, sooner than later, also read the recommended readings listed below.

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 assigned readings are available on Blackboard.

Required (available as a PDF on Blackboard)

Antonio, Robert J. ed., *Marx and Modernity, Key Readings and Commentary*
Emirbayer, Mustafa ed., *Emile Durkheim, Sociologist of Modernity*
Kahlberg, Stephen ed., *Max Weber. Readings and Commentary on Modernity*

Engels, Frederick *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State.*
Marx, Karl *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*
Tawney, R. H. *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*
Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Required for the final paper (Available on campus, cheaper if ordered on Amazon):

Arendt, Hannah, 1948 [1976] *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace, Javanovich ISBN 9780156701532 [Weber] -- Parts One and Two ONLY

Fanon, Franz, 1963 [2004] *Wretched of the Earth*, New York, NY: Grove Atlantic
ISBN 0802141323 [Durkheim] -- Parts I to IV ONLY

Lenin, Vladimir Illyich, 1917 [1939, 2011] *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*,
Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Fine Books ISBN 9781614271907 [Marx] – THE
WHOLE BOOK
(Available online <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/>)

Highly Recommended

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 *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*
Durkheim, Emile *Suicide, a Study in Sociology*
Durkheim, Emile *Rules of Sociological Method*
Heinrich, Michael, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*
Marx, Karl *Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*
Marx, Karl *Capital (3 vols)*
Marx, Karl *Grundrisse*
Marx, Karl *Economic and Philisophic Manuscripts, 1844*
Marx, Karl and Fredrick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*
Pearce, Frank *The Radical Durkheim*
Weber, Max 1998 *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*
Weber, Max *Economy and Society (2 vols)*
Weber, Max *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*

COMMUNICATION

All course information will be broadcast via the Internet, and posted on Blackboard. I will post any notices, revisions to this syllabus, supplemental material and other information in the Content section of the course Blackboard.

GRADING

Your final grade is a composite of: participation, short essays, and a final paper.

Participation: I expect you to come to class prepared to participate in this seminar. There is no “attendance” policy (nor require you give me an excuse when absent). You are expected to catch up on your own, and come prepared the following week. You must be ready to engage in class discussions and demonstrate your understanding of (or questions about) the reading and concepts presented. I do not take off points for participation unless there is a consistent pattern of missed classes or if you routinely come to class unprepared to discuss that week’s readings. I do not “repeat” lectures, though I am happy to answer any particular question you might have about material from a class you did not attend.

Short Essays: You will be asked to write 3 essays, each between 3-5 pages. The essay is a critical engagement with the main theorist covered in the module—that means you are to elaborate on some aspect of the readings as it relates to the question posed. Reading questions, due dates and instructions follow at the end of this syllabus.

Final Essay: Your final paper, 8-10 pages, will be a discussion of two of the three major works that are informed by the central theorists covered in class. One will be your main volume, the other the context volume. In your paper you are to elaborate a) how the main text follows in the tradition of one or more of the theorists, b) how the two works compare in both framework and analysis, and c) how the main work might have been conceived had the author taken as a point of departure a different theoretical tradition. Contemporary scholars rarely rely solely on one theoretical tradition; more likely they will be influenced by several.

I am prepared to read a draft of your final paper, offer a provisional grade for the paper and course, and indicate strengths and weaknesses if submitted by Nov 23rd. That permits a review, with time for you to undertake any revisions. Two caveats: 1) there is no guarantee a revision will improve your grade, and 2) I cannot give you an extension to submit a draft for preview. You can, however, turn in your final paper at any time you feel you are finished.

Grading Criteria: Finally, let me explain my grading scheme. It is necessarily subjective, and as such I am always willing to listen to an appeal. But it is, in the end, my decision. Your final grade will be based on the trend of your performance on assignments throughout the semester.

“A” level work consists of cogent, well-articulated, and well-developed written 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 is 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 as you begin your theoretical exploration.

“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 one 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 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 feel you can’t manage this class. “P” is given when you have completed all work to date in a satisfactory manner but must withdraw from the course (I do 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; please pay attention to the Registrar’s revised deadlines below.

ODDS and ENDS

...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

- 1) Writing matters for several reasons. First, it is the way you communicate with the discipline; poor writing will never make it into print. If you have problems with writing there are support systems available to you at WSU (see <http://clas.wayne.edu/writing>). Second, it is not the reader’s responsibility to interpret what you meant; if it is not said coherently it is likely you will not convey your argument well. I will not grade down for writing per se, but, from past experience, poorly written papers generally receive a lower grade at the end of the day. To improve your writing, work in groups and critique each other’s work—something that you will always need.
- 2) Departmental, College and University rules and requirements with regard to plagiarism and falsification of work will apply. They will govern any action I will take, and outline any rights and responsibilities you may have. All references (whether you quote directly or paraphrase) and a list of works must be cited. Those that fail to observe a recognized citation convention will receive an F for the assignment. **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.**

- 3) “Pages” mean double spaced, 12 pitch fonts, with no less than 1” and no more than 1.25” margins. Use Arial or New Times Roman 12 point only; a page consists on average of 250 words.
- 4) As a rule, collected readers of any theorist summarize and excerpt their work, but it is a mistake to rely on another’s interpretation of the original texts. Summaries by others provide you with an interpretation of the work; but you won’t develop your own understanding or interpretation.
- 5) In my experience you will learn more from each other than you will just from my lectures. As a result, I 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!
- 6) 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 any question, ask it—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.
- 7) 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 to more fully comprehend the material.
- 8) Consider the recommended 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. [These theorists wrote in either German or French—many translations exist, some better than others. There is a benefit to reading in the original language.]
- 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. 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 are there 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.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

<u>WEEK</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>READING</u>
9/2		What is Theory and Why We Should Care?
9/9	Karl Marx	<i>Marx and Modernity</i> (Parts 1-4)
9/16	Karl Marx	<i>Marx and Modernity</i> (Parts 5-8)
9/23	Karl Marx	<i>Unfinished business and open discussion</i> Essay 1 due
9/30	Emile Durkheim	<i>Emile Durkheim, Sociologist of Modernity</i> (Durkheim selections in Parts I and II)
10/7	Emile Durkheim	<i>Emile Durkheim, Sociologist of Modernity</i> (Durkheim selections in Parts III, IV and Appendix)
10/14	Emile Durkheim	<i>Unfinished business and open discussion</i> Essay 2 due
10/21	Max Weber	<i>Max Weber, Readings and Commentary on Modernity:</i> (Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 8)
10/28	Max Weber	<i>Max Weber, Readings and Commentary on Modernity:</i> (Chapters 11-20)
11/4	Max Weber	<i>Unfinished business and open discussion</i> Essay 3 due
11/11	Religion	<i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i> <i>Religion and the Rise of Capitalism</i>
11/18	Class and the State	<i>The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State</i> <i>Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte</i>
11/25		Thanksgiving Break (Optional: Draft final papers for preview due 5pm 11/23)
12/5		FINAL PAPER DUE (5pm as email attachment)

LIST OF ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

II. Due: September 23: Marx (750-1250 words maximum)

Sociological theory was born from philosophy, so we begin with the German philosopher, Karl Marx. Marx helped frame the “problem” of our science and all subsequent social theory had to contend with Marx and Marxism. Marx sees history as the perpetual conflict between contending social groups, strata and classes. Examine Marx’s theory of history and its application to the “transition” from feudal society to the capitalist mode of production.

Key Terms: *mode of production, means of production, class struggle, capitalism, feudalism, bourgeoisie, proletariat, ideology, conflict theory, social relations*

III. Due: October 14: Durkheim (750-1250 words maximum)

Durkheim was the first semiotic sociologist. He studied the life of symbols in society and the power of language over the human mind. Examine the differences and similarities between “science” and “religion,” and the way society “marks” its members, through totems, tattoos, and various symbols of social life. For Durkheim, the human being is a “sign.” How does that work out in his theorizing about social development and transition?

Key Terms: *conscience collectif, social fact, organic solidarity, mechanical solidarity, moral society*

IV. Due November 4: Weber (750-1250 words maximum)

We concluded our study of Marx with an examination of the theory that all ideas or ideologies are the result of economic forces and transformations (the “base-superstructure” model). The German sociologist, Max Weber, uses his study of the relationship between the Protestant religions and the origin of modern capitalism to criticize and revise this Marxian theory of history. Max Weber’s book is a story about the emergence of capitalism within a single community, and its extension across the globe. What begins as a new social movement for liberation then ends in the “iron cage” of bureaucracy.

Key Terms: *protestant ethos, predestination, charisma, rationalization, bureaucracy, iron cage, power, authoritarianism*