

# **Sociology 607: Contemporary Sociological Theory**

Spring 2015  
Wednesday 5-8 p.m.  
113 East Hall

Instructor	David Schweingruber
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## **Summary**

This course covers selected sociological theoretical perspectives from the 20th Century. Students will read and discuss sociological journal articles and chapters on these perspectives, read and give précis of books related to two of these topics, write a paper related to the course material, and give a presentation of this paper to the class.

Objectives for students include (1) increasing their knowledge about contemporary sociological theory; (2) improving their skills of reading, analyzing and evaluating sociological theory; and (3) stimulating their thinking about their own research.

## **Grading**

The course grade will be derived from five components.

### **1. Class participation (25%)**

Students are expected to read the assigned core readings each week and contribute to class discussion.

### **2. Leading discussion (15%)**

Each reading will be assigned to a student who will be responsible for leading discussion of it. This student is responsible for developing a list of discussion questions, which will be submitted to the instructor.

### **3. Book précis (20%)**

Each student will prepare précis of two books connected to different week's topics. Each written précis will consist of a one-page summary of the book. The student will also give a oral synopsis of the book and answer questions about it.

### **4. Paper (30%)**

Each student will write a paper related to the course. The paper need not be publishable, but should show potential for revision into a journal article, conference paper, dissertation chapter or some other scholarly product. Students should consult with the instructor about their paper.

### **5. Paper presentation (10%)**

Students will give a conference-style presentation of their paper to the class.

## Course Outline

Week	Date	Topic
1.	Jan. 14	Introduction
2.	Jan. 21	Structural Functionalism
3.	Jan. 28	Conflict theory/Neo-Marxism
4.	Feb. 4	Critical theory
5.	Feb. 11	Social constructionism
6.	Feb. 18	Symbolic Interactionism
7.	Feb. 25	Dramaturgy/Ethnomethodology
8.	March 4	Exchange Theory/Rational Choice Theory
9.	March 11	Social capital
	March 18	<i>No class (spring break)</i>
10.	March 25	Network analysis
11.	April 1	Post-structuralism/post-modernism
12.	April 18	Feminist theory
13.	April 15	Sociobiology
14.	April 22	Paper presentations
15.	April 29	Paper presentations

## Academic Integrity

Speaking and acting truthfully are skills acquired through practice. These skills are indispensable for successfully living and working with other people. If you practice dishonesty, you will endanger all of your relationships. You will be a bad spouse, a bad parent, a bad employee and a bad citizen.

Participating in academic life is an important opportunity to practice truthfulness since dishonesty is incompatible with and abhorrent to the purposes of the university. Therefore, students in this course are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty.

## Sociology Code of Ethics for Human Relations

The Department of Sociology is committed to providing a professional and educational environment that is free of discrimination and harassment. The department's Code of Ethics for Human Relations and the Procedures for Filing Complaints of Discrimination or Harassment are posted on the bulletin boards on all five floors of East Hall.

## Schedule of Readings

**Note: The instructor reserves the right to modify the reading list as needed.**

### **Week 1: Introduction**

Smith, Christian. 2003. *Moral, Believing Animals*. Oxford University Press.

### **Week 2: Structural Functionalism**

Bellah, Robert. 1998. "Is There a Common American Culture?" *Journal for the American Academy of Religion* 66(3):613-625.

Davis, Kingsley, and Wilbert E. Moore. 1945. "Some Principles of Stratification." *American Sociological Review* 10(2):242-249.

Merton, Robert K. 1936. The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action. *American Sociological Review* 1: 894-904.

Merton, Robert K. 1968 [1957]. The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy. Pp. 475-490 in R.K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*. NY: Free Press.

Merton, Robert K. 1968. On Sociological Theories of the Middle Range. Pp. 39-72 in R.K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*. NY: Free Press.

Parsons, Talcott. 1950. The Prospects of Sociological Theory. *American Sociological Review* 15(1): 3-16.

### **Suggested Books**

Bellah, Robert et al. 1985. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. University of California.

Bellah, Robert et al. 1991. *The Good Society*. Vintage.

Parsons, Talcott. 1937. *The Structure of Social Action*. Free Press.

Parsons, Talcott. 1951. *The Social System*. Free Press.

Merton, Robert K. 1968. *Social Theory and Social Structure*. Free Press.

### **Week 3: Conflict Theory/Neo-Marxism**

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. "The Promise" and "Grand Theory," Chapters 1 & 2 in *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford University.

Braverman, Harry. 1974. Chapters 3-4 in *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York. Monthly Review Press.

Burawoy, Michael, and Erik Wright. 2002. "Sociological Marxism." Chapter 22 in Jonathan Turner (ed.), *The Handbook of Sociological Theory*. Plenum Books.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2011. *Historical Capitalism*, 3rd ed. Verso.

### Suggested Books

- Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford University Press.
- Mills, C. Wright. 1956. *The Power Elite*. Oxford University Press.
- Braverman, Harry. 1974. *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Burawoy, Michael. 1979. *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process Under Monopoly Capitalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2004. *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Duke University.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel et al. 2013. *Does Capitalism Have a Future?* Oxford University Press.

### **Week 4: Critical Theory**

- Habermas, Jürgen. 1994. "Three Normative Models of Democracy." *Constellations* 1(1):1-10.
- Horkheimer, Max. 1972. "Traditional and Critical Theory." Pp. 188-243 in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*. New York: Herder & Herder.
- Marcuse, Herbert. 1964. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Boston, MA: Beacon, pp. 1-18, 106-114, 226-236, 250-257.
- Unger, Roberto Mangabeira. 1987. "The Nature and Intentions of the Argument." Chapter 1 in *False Necessity: Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy*. Cambridge.

### Suggested Books

- Unger, Roberto Mangabeira. 1987. *False Necessity: Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy*. Cambridge.
- Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor W. Adorno. 1947. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Stanford University Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1985. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Beacon Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1985. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Beacon Press.
- Marcuse, Herbert. 1964. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Beacon Press.

### **Week 5: Social Constructionism**

- Best, Joel. 2007. "Historical Development and Defining Issues of Constructionist Inquiry." Chapter 3 in James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium (eds.) *Handbook of Constructionist Research*. Guilford Publications.
- Schutz, Alfred. 1953. "Common-Sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Action." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 14(1):1-38.

- Berger, Peter L. 1967. "Religion and World-Construction." Chapter 1 in *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Doubleday.
- Spector, Malcolm, and John I. Kitsuse. 1973. "Social Problems: A Re-Formulation." *Social Problems* 21(2):145-159.
- Harris, Scott R. 2007. "Constructionism in Sociology: Objective and Interpretive Forms." Chapter 12 in James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium (eds.) *Handbook of Constructionist Research*. Guilford Publications.

#### Suggested Books

- Berger, Peter, and Thomas Luckmann. 1967. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Anchor Books.
- Berger, Peter L. 1967. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Doubleday.
- Best, Joel 1999. *Random Violence: How We Talk about New Crimes and New Victims*. University of California Press.
- Kitsuse, John, and Malcolm Spector. *Constructing Social Problems*. Transaction.
- Schutz, Alfred. 1967. *Phenomenology of the Social World*. Northwestern University Press.

#### **Week 6: Symbolic Interactionism**

- Mead, George Herbert. 1913. "The Social Self." *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 10(14):374-380.
- Mead, George Herbert. 1922. "A Behavioristic Account of the Significant Symbol." *The Journal of Philosophy* 19(6):157-163.
- Blumer, Herbert. 1966. "Sociological Implications of the Thought of George Herbert Mead." *American Journal of Sociology* 71(5):535-544.
- Becker, Howard S. 1974. "Art as Collective Action." *American Sociological Review* 39(6):767-776.
- Becker, Howard S. 1982. "Culture: A Sociological View." *Yale Review* 71 (summer). Reprinted as chapter 1 in *Doing Things Together*. 1986. Northwestern University Press.
- Stryker, Sheldon, and Peter J. Burke. 2000. "The Past, Present, and Future of Identity Theory." *Social Psychological Quarterly* 63(4):284-197.
- Schweingruber, David, and Nancy Berns. 2010. "Organizing Door-to-Door Sales: A Symbolic Interactionist Analysis." Chapter in Peter Kivisto (ed.) *Illuminating Social Life*, 5th ed.

#### Suggested Books

- Mead, George Herbert. 1934. *Mind, Self and Society*. University of Chicago Press.
- Blumer, Herbert. 1967. *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. University of California Press.
- Becker, Howard. 1963. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. The Free Press.

Becker, Howard. 1982. *Art Worlds*. University of California Press.

### **Week 7: Dramaturgy & Ethnomethodology**

Goffman, Erving. 1959. "Introduction" and "Performances." Pp. 1-76 in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Anchor Books.

Goffman, Erving. 1963. "Stigma and Social Identity." Chapter 1 in *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Simon & Schuster.

Garfinkel, Harold. 1967. "Studies of the Routine Grounds of Everyday Activities." Chapter 2 in *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Polity Press.

#### Suggested Books

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Anchor Books.

Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Simon & Schuster.

Goffman, Erving. 1974. *Frame Analysis*. Northeastern University Press.

Goffman, Erving. 1961. *Asylums*. Anchor Books.

Garfinkel, Harold. 1967. *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Polity Press.

### **Week 8: Exchange Theory/Rational Choice**

Blau, Peter. 1964. *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. New York: Wiley. Pp 88-97.

Cook, Karen and Richard M. Emerson. 1978. Power, Equity, and Commitment in Exchange Networks. *American Sociological Review* 43(5): 721-739.

Homans, George. 1964. Bringing Men Back In. *American Sociological Review* 29(5): 809-818.

Zafirovski, Milan. 2003. Some Amendments to Social Exchange Theory: A Sociological Perspective. *Theory and Science* 4(2): 91-112.

Stark, Rodney, and Roger Finke. 2000. "Rationality and the 'Religious Mind'" and "Religious Choices: Conversion and Reaffiliation," Chapters 2 & 5 in *Acts of Faith: Exploring the Human Side of Religion*. University of California.

Boudon, Raymond. 2003. "Beyond Rational Choice Theory." *Annual Review of Sociology* 29:1-21.

#### Suggested Books

Blau, Peter. 1964. *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. Transaction.

Homans, George. 1974. *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms*. Harcourt Brace.

Stark, Rodney, and Roger Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith: Exploring the Human Side of Religion*. University of California.

## **Week 9: Social Capital**

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." Pp. 241-258 in J. Richardson (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. Greenwood.
- Coleman, James. 1988. "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital." *American Journal of Sociology* 94:S95-120.
- Portes, Alejandro. 2000. "The Two Meanings of Social Capital." *Sociological Forum* 15(1): 1-12.
- Portes, Alejandro. 1998. Social Capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 1-24.
- Putnam, Robert. 1999. "Civic Disengagement in Contemporary America." *Government and Opposition* 36(2):135-156.
- Wacquant, Loie J.D. 1998. "Negative Social Capital and State Breakdown and Social Destitution in the American Urban Core." *Netherlands Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*. 13 (1): 25-40.

### Suggested Books

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard University Press.
- Putnam, Robert. 2001. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster.

## **Week 10: Network Analysis**

- Milgram, Stanley. 1967. "The Small-World Problem." *Psychology Today* 1(1):61-67.
- Granovetter, Mark S. 1972. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78(6): 1360-1380.
- Freudenburg, William R. 1986. "The Density of Acquaintance: An Overlooked Variable in Community Research." *American Journal of Sociology* 92(1): 27-63.
- Watts, Duncan J., and Steven Strogatz. 1998. "Collective Dynamics of "Small-World" Networks." *Nature* 393:440-442.
- McPherson, Miller; Lynn Smith-Lovin; and James M. Cook. "Birds of a Feathre: Homophily in Social Networks." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27:415-444.
- Dodds, Peter Sheridan; Roby Muhamad; and Duncan J. Watts. 2003. "An Experimental Study of Search in Global Social Networks." *Science* 301:827-829.
- Watts, Duncan J. 2004. "The 'New' Science of Networks." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30:243-70.

### Suggested Books

- Watts, Duncan J. 2003. *Six Degrees: The Science of a Conncted Age*. Norton.

### **Week 11: Post-structuralism/post-modernism**

Foucault, Michel. 1975. Excerpt from *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Vintage.

Lyotard, Jean-François. 1984. Excerpt from *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. University of Minnesota Press.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1995. Excerpt from *Simulcra and Simulation*. University of Michigan Press.

#### Suggested Books

Foucault, Michel. 1975. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Vintage.

Foucault, Michel. 1976. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*. Vintage.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1995. *Simulcra and Simulation*. University of Michigan Press.

Lyotard, Jean-François. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. University of Minnesota Press.

### **Week 12: Feminist theory**

Acker, Joan. 1990. "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organization." *Gender & Society* 4(2):139-158.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. Chapters 1 from *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Second Edition). Routledge: New York (pp. 1 – 19 and 252 – 271).

Connell, R.W., and James W. Messerschmidt. 2005. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender & Society* 19(6):829-859.

Deutsch, Francine. 2007. "Undoing Gender." *Gender & Society* 21(1):106-127.

Smith, Dorothy. 1990. "Women's Experience as a Radical Critique of Sociology" from *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge*. Northeastern University Press.

West, Candace, and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender and Society* 1(2):125-151.

#### Suggested Books

Smith, Dorothy. 1990. *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge*. Northeastern University Press.

Smith, Dorothy. 1987. *The Everyday World as Problematic*. Northeastern University Press.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Second Edition). Routledge.

### **Week 13: Sociobiology**

Duster, Troy. 2006. "Comparative Perspectives and Competing Explanations: Taking on the Newly Configured Reductionist Challenge to Sociology." *American Sociological Review* 71(1):1-15.



Conley, Dalton. 2009. "The Promise and Challenges of Incorporating Genetic Data into Longitudinal Social Science Surveys and Research." *Biodemography and Social Biology* 55:238-251.

Freese, Jeremy. 2008. "Genetics and the Social Science Explanation of Individual Outcomes." *American Journal of Sociology* 114(S1):S1-S35.

Guo, Guang, Yuying Tong & Tianji Cai. 2008. "Gene by Social Context Interactions for Number of Sexual Partners among White Male Youths: Genetics-Informed Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 114(S1):S36-S66.

Penner, Andrew M. 2008. "Gender Differences in Extreme Mathematical Achievement: An International Perspective on Biological and Social Factors." *American Journal of Sociology* 114(S1):S138-S170.