

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL
Fall, 2006

Sociological Theory

(SOCI 250)

Section 001 MWF 10:00–10:50 Peabody 217 and 218

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Office hours: Monday, 2:00–3:30; Thursday, 10:00–11:30; or by appointment

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is designed to give you an overview of major themes in sociological theory. In addition, it should give you an idea of the relationship between sociological theory and sociological research, and of the process of building sociological theory.

This course has four broad goals:

1. To present the history of sociological theory
2. To encourage a theoretical mode of thought
3. To consider the theoretical implications of social research and action
4. To promote excellent writing

READINGS AND RESOURCES

Required Books

Jean Baudrillard. *America* (Verso, 1989).

Sigmund Freud. *The Ego & The Id* (Norton, 1962).

Émile Durkheim. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Free Press, 1995).

Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (Vintage, 1978).

Erving Goffman. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Doubleday, 1959).

Recommended Books

Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels (ed. Tucker). *The Marx-Engels Reader, 2nd ed.* (Norton, 1978).

Graff and Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (Norton, 2006).

Supplementary Readings

All other readings are available either on the web or on the course website. Readings available on the course website are marked with the WWW symbol. Those available on the web are linked from the course website. A few readings are on reserve in the library, and should also be available by electronic reserve; these are marked with the LIB symbol. The course website is available through <http://blackboard.unc.edu> and is also linked from <http://perrin.socsci.unc.edu>.

Other Resources

Have a dictionary close at hand to look up words you don't know. You can find an adequate one at <http://www.dictionary.com> if you prefer using an online version.

The UNC Writing Center (<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb>) can help you with writing clearly and correctly. These are requirements of the class; you cannot do social theory adequately without writing well.

There is an astonishing amount of information available on the World Wide Web. A significant proportion of that information—though by no means all—is true and relevant. By all means, use the Web to supplement your reading and knowledge, but use it critically and make sure you know the source of the information.

FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

The requirements of this course are as follows:

Reading You must complete all the course readings. *You are responsible for understanding the readings*—make use of your fellow students, your dictionary, the Internet, your TA, and me to make sure you understand the readings. Course time is to be used for substantive discussion and further exploration of the implications of course readings, *not* for grasping the basic contents.

Reading is due on the first *discussion* session about the reading. You may decide whether to do readings before or after a lecture pertaining to them.

Participation You must attend, *and participate in*, all class discussions. Participation in discussions means actively talking in them; attendance counts only for a very small portion of the credit. Come to discussions prepared to ask questions and discuss the readings. You are also responsible for the information contained in course lectures.

Vocabulary Exercises You must turn in two short (one page or less) exercises in which you learn the meaning of a word in one of the class readings *whose meaning you did not previously know*. You should note the word, its definition, and its meaning in the context of the reading.

Exams There will be two examinations. The midterm examination will be a one-period, essay-style test held in class on October 23. You may consult any notes or printed materials you wish during the midterm exam.

The final exam will be a time-limited, take-home exam, due on December 11. It will be available for pickup on December 6 in class. **You may be required to view a video before taking the exam. If so, this will be announced in class.**

Reading Response Choose one of the readings listed as “recommended” and write a short (2–4 page) response that relates the reading to other readings from the class. Your response may be synthetic (discussing the points made and how they are similar to, and different from, others in the class) or evaluative (judging the reading's usefulness in understanding social phenomena). **Due October 9 in class.**

Final Paper The final paper is your opportunity to synthesize what you have learned during the class with outside interests and experiences. Your final paper must develop a sociological argument using appropriate sources. It is an academic paper and, as such, must be written in an appropriate style.

Choose an everyday setting—for example, a shopping mall, a café, a restaurant, etc.—and observe *closely* the interactions you see going on there. Analyze these interactions, and the social system of your observed setting, using *at least* two theorists from class.

If you have another topic, relevant to the course and its readings, on which you would like to write, you must discuss it and get approval *before* you begin work on it. Papers on other topics that have not been pre-approved will receive no credit. **Due November 17 by 5:00 pm.**

Completing these requirements adequately will earn you a **B-** in the course. Completing them *exceptionally well* will earn you a B+, A-, or A, depending on the quality of work.

Grading

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

Discussion Participation	15%
Attendance	3%
Active Discussion	12%
Vocabulary Exercises	10%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	25%
Reading Response	10%
Final Paper	25%

COURSE ORGANIZATION

During most weeks, Monday's class will be a combined lecture, to be held in 218 Peabody. Wednesday and Friday will be discussion classes; they will meet as follows:

- **Students with a PID ending in 0–3:** Peabody 218
- **Students with a PID ending in 4–9:** Peabody 217

Check the syllabus schedule for exceptions to this rule.

Lectures and videos are integral to the content of the course. Slides and notes will *sometimes* be posted to the course website, but there is no substitute for attending the lecture.

COURSE POLICIES

YOU ARE AN ADULT. As a student in this class, you are provided with a set of resources for learning the class's contents, and you are expected to fulfill a series of requirements designed to evaluate the depth and breadth of your knowledge of those contents. Your grade, therefore, is a reflection of your success in utilizing the resources you have at your disposal.

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INFORMATION IN THE READINGS AND GIVEN DURING LECTURES. If you do not understand something I say in a lecture, ask me during the lecture, during a later class, or privately via e-mail or office hours.

ON DAYS WHEN DISCUSSIONS ARE SCHEDULED, participation is mandatory. Your participation will be useless—and graded as such—if you have not done the reading.

ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE ON THE DATES LISTED. Make sure you give yourself sufficient time to finish assignments by their due dates. You will lose roughly one letter grade per day between the due date and

the date the paper is received. You may make the calculation yourself as to whether your work will improve sufficiently in the extra time to make up for the grade reduction. In exceptional cases, I may grant an extension; you *must* discuss this with me in advance.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS COURSE IS COVERED BY THE UNC HONOR CODE (see <http://www.unc.edu/depts/honor/studinfo.html>). I take academic dishonesty—including, but not limited to, plagiarism—very seriously. There will be no excuses or second chances; if you have plagiarized the *ideas* or *words* of someone else without giving credit, you will be referred to the Student Attorney General. If you have questions as to what constitutes academic dishonesty, check <http://www.unc.edu/depts/honor/plagiarism.html> or consult your TA or me.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction and Philosophical Foundations

August 23 Lecture: Introduction to Sociological Theory

August 25 Lecture: Philosophical Foundations

Reading: Plato, “Allegory of the Cave” [WWW](#) ; Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” [WWW](#)

Week 2: Durkheim

August 28 Lecture: Émile Durkheim: Social Facts and Solidarity

Recommended Reading:

- Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* [LIB](#)
- Jeffrey C. Alexander and Philip Smith, “The Discourse of American Civil Society: A New Proposal for Cultural Studies.” *Theory and Society* 22:2 (April, 1993): 151–207
- Jeffrey C. Alexander, “On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The ‘Holocaust’ from War Crime to Trauma Drama,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 5:1 (February, 2002): 5–85. [WWW](#)

August 30 Discussion: Modernity and Sociology

Reading: Durkheim, pp. 1–18

September 1 Discussion: Religion and Classification

Reading: Fields, “Translator’s Introduction: Religion as an Eminently Social Thing,” pp. *xvii–lxi* in Durkheim

Week 3: Durkheim II

Reading: Durkheim, pp. 418–448

September 4: Labor day, no class

September 6: Lecture: Émile Durkheim: Religion and Symbols

Recommended Reading:

- The rest of Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*
- Robert Bellah, et al. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* [LIB](#)
- Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (University of Chicago Press, 2000) [LIB](#)
- Durkheim, “Secularisation and Rationality.” pp. 239–249 in “Selected Writings” (ed. Anthony Giddens). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.

September 8: Discussion

Week 4: Marx

Readings: Marx, “The German Ideology,” Part I, Section A (pp. 149–175 in the *Marx-Engels Reader*, or sections A and B of the MIA: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01.htm>);

September 11: Lecture: Karl Marx: Humanity, Alienation, Capitalism

Recommended Reading:

- Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” pp. 157–210 in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, edited by Rayna Reiter. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975. [WWW](#))
- Michael Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent* [LIB](#)

September 13: Discussion

September 15: Discussion

Week 5: Marx II

Reading: Marx,

- “Wage Labor and Capital,” pp. 203–217 in the *Marx-Engels Reader* or <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/wage-labour/index.htm> (skip preface)
- *Capital*, Volume One, Part II, “The Transformation of Money into Capital.” pp. 329–343 in the *Marx-Engels Reader* or:
 - <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch04.htm>
 - <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch06.htm>

September 18: Lecture: Karl Marx: Economics and the Theory of History

Recommended Reading:

- Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air* [LIB](#)
- Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts* (Cambridge University Press 2000) [LIB](#)

September 20: Discussion

September 22: Discussion

Week 6: Freud

Reading: Freud, Ch. I, II, and III

September 25: Lecture: Freud’s Psychology as Social Theory

September 27: Discussion

September 29: Discussion

Week 7: Weber

Reading: Weber, “Class, Status, Party,” pp. 926–939 in *Economy and Society*

October 2: No class, Yom Kippur

October 4: Lecture: Marx and Weber: Opposing Worldviews?

Recommended Reading:

- Ann Swidler, *Talk of Love* (University of Chicago Press, 2001) [LIB](#)
- Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [LIB](#)

October 6: Discussion

Week 8: Weber

Reading: Weber, Selections from *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Free Press, 1947): pp. 115–118, 324–345, 358–386

October 9: Lecture: Max Weber: Rationalization and Bureaucracy

Reading Response Paper Due in class

October 11: Discussion

October 13: Discussion

Week 9: Summing up the High Modernists

Reading:

- du Bois, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” (chapter 1 of *The Souls of Black Folk*. <http://www.bartleby.com/114/1.html>)
- Fields, “Individuality and the Intellectuals: An imaginary conversation between W.E.B. Du Bois and Emile Durkheim.” *Theory and Society* 31 (2002): 435–462. <http://ipsapp007.lwwonline.com/content/getfile/5152/34/3/fulltext.pdf>

October 16: Lecture and Review: Summing Up the High Modernist Period

October 18: Video: *The Wave*

October 20: No class, Fall Break

Week 10: 20th Century American Functionalism

October 23: Midterm Exam

October 25: Lecture: Mid-20th-Century American Sociology

Reading: Parsons, “The Unit Act of Action Systems”; Merton, “Manifest and Latent Functions.”

October 27: Discussion

Reading: Rose Laub Coser, “The Greedy Nature of Gemeinschaft”

Week 11: Goffman

Reading: Goffman, Chapters I, VI, and VII

October 30: Lecture: Goffman and the Self

November 1: Discussion

November 3: Discussion

Week 12: Bourdieu

Reading: Bourdieu, “Structures, *habitus*, practices,” pp. 52–65 in *Logic of Practice*

November 6: Lecture: Bourdieu and the Problem of Practice

November 8: Discussion

November 10: Discussion

Week 13: Foucault

Reading: Foucault, Parts One, Two, and Three

November 13: Lecture: Understanding and Misunderstanding Foucault

November 15: Discussion

November 17: Discussion

Final Paper Due, 5:00 pm

Week 14: Baudrillard

Reading: Baudrillard, pp. 75–105

November 20: Lecture: From Modernity to Post-Modernity

November 22: Discussion

November 24: No class, Thanksgiving Break

Week 15: The Postmodern Moment

Reading: Baudrillard, pp. 106–118

November 27: Video: *Blade Runner: The Director’s Cut* Part I

November 29: Video: *Blade Runner: The Director’s Cut* Part II

December 1: Discussion

Week 16: Wrapping up

December 4: Lecture: Theory in Sociology

December 6: Final Examination Available in Class

December 11: Final Examination Due