

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL
Fall, 2013

Sociological Theory

(SOCI 250)

Section 001 Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30–1:45 Wilson 128; Hamilton 271

Professor Andrew J. Perrin
TA: Didem Türkoğlu
Office: Hamilton 159, (919) 962-6876
Office hours: Wednesdays, 1:30–3:30; Fridays, 9:30–11:00; or by appointment
Phone: (919) 962-6876
E-mail: andrew_perrin@unc.edu • <http://perrin.socsci.unc.edu>

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 five 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 demonstrate the ongoing project of sociological theorizing
5. To promote excellent writing

READINGS AND RESOURCES

Required Books

Émile Durkheim. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Free Press, 1995).
Erving Goffman. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Anchor, 1959).
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (, 1848).
Rebekah Peeples Massengill. *Wal-Mart Wars* (NYU Press, 2013).

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. The course website is available through <http://sakai.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.

Exams There will be two examinations. Both exams are open-book, open-note, and you may consult the Internet during the exams. You may not communicate with anyone (in class or outside of class) during the exam.

- The midterm examination will be a one-period test held in class on **October 15**.
- The final exam will be a three-hour exam. It will take place in 128 Wilson at **Noon on December 10, 2013**. **You may be required to view a video before taking the exam. If so, this will be announced in class.**

Class Papers There are three written assignments:

Big Question Reaction Paper: For this short (approx. 1,000–1,500 words) paper, identify a big question raised by one (or more) theorist(s) in our class reading. Summarize the answer(s) provided by the theorist(s) and evaluate the relative success or failure of the answer(s) provided. Consider the implications of the answer(s) for related areas and questions. At the end of the paper, offer a few related big questions that would be worth theoretical exploration. **Due September 19 in class.**

Question Development Paper: For this short (approx. 1,000–1,500 words) paper, develop a big question worth theoretical exploration. You will need to state the question and explain why it's important, presenting a set of facts from your own observations, news reports, or other sources that establish the importance and contours of the question. **Due October 24 in class.**

Final Paper: The final paper (approximately 2,000–3,000 words) 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. Provide a theoretically rich analysis of the big question you developed in the previous paper. Develop *your own* argument 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 December 3 in class.**

Completing these requirements *adequately* will earn you a **B-** in the course. Completing them *exceptionally well* will earn you a B, B+, A-, or A, depending on the quality of work. Completing them poorly or incompletely will earn you between an F and a C+.

Grading

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

Discussions	
Attendance	3%
Active Discussion	17%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	20%
Big Question Reaction paper	15%
Question Development paper	10%
Final Paper	20%

COURSE ORGANIZATION

During most weeks, Tuesday's class will be a combined lecture, to be held in New West 219. Thursday classes will usually be discussion classes; they will meet as follows:

- Last names beginning with A–J: Wilson 128
- Last names beginning with K–Z: Hamilton 271

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://honor.unc.edu>). 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. The usual sanction for academic dishonesty is failing the course *and* suspension from UNC for a semester. If you have questions as to what constitutes academic dishonesty, check <http://instrument.unc.edu/instrument.text.html#academicdishonesty> or consult your TA or me.

COURSE SCHEDULE

August 20 Lecture: Introduction to Sociological Theory

August 22 Discussion (**Whole class in Wilson 128**): Preliminary challenges

- Plato, “Allegory of the Cave” (<http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/allegory.html>)
- Kant, “What is Enlightenment” (<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html>)

August 27 Lecture: Émile Durkheim: Religion, Symbols, and Social Life

- Karen Fields, Translator’s Introduction to *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*
- Durkheim, pp. 1–20, 33–44, 99–126, 418–448

August 29 Discussion: Durkheim

September 3 W. E. B. Du Bois

- Lynn England and W. Keith Warner. “W. E. B. Du Bois: Reform, Will, and the Veil.” *Social Forces* (2013) 91 (3): 955-973 (<http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/content/91/3/955.abstract>)
- Du Bois, “Of the Dawn of Freedom.” <http://www.bartleby.com/114/2.html>
- Du Bois, “The Souls of White Folks.” http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15210/15210-h/15210-h.htm#Chapter_II

September 5 **Class Cancelled**: Rosh Hashanah

September 10 Lecture: Social Facts, Patterns, and Marginality

- Fields, Karen E. “Individuality and the Intellectuals: An Imaginary Conversation Between W.E.B. du Bois and Emile Durkheim.” *Theory and Society* 31:4 (August, 2002): 435–462. <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A%3A1020900208865>

September 12 Discussion: Durkheim and du Bois.

September 17 Lecture: Marx’s early writings

- “First Manuscript,” in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/preface.htm>

September 19 Discussion

Big Question Reaction Paper Due in Class

September 24 Lecture: Marx, later writings

Marx & Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (<http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm>)

September 26 Discussion

October 1 Lecture: Weber

- Weber, “Class, Status, Party,” pp. 926–939 in *Economy and Society* WWW
- Weber, Selections from *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Free Press, 1947): <http://perrin.socsci.unc.edu/readings/weber-soci250-readings.pdf>

October 3 Discussion

October 8 Video - High Modernism (Whole class in Wilson 128)

October 10 Video - High Modernism (Whole class in Wilson 128)

October 15 Midterm Examination

October 17 Class Cancelled: Fall Break

October 22 Lecture: Action, Situation, and Social Construction

- Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Ch. I, VI, and VII

October 24 Discussion

Question Development Paper Due in Class.

October 29 Lecture: Bourdieu and the Problem of Practice

- Pierre Bourdieu, from *Logic of Practice* <http://perrin.socsci.unc.edu/readings/bourdieu-from-logic-of-practice.pdf>

October 31 Discussion

November 5 Lecture: Foucault and the Move to Postmodernism

- Foucault, "Governmentality" from *The Foucault Effect* [www](http://www.foucault.info/documents/governmentality/foucault.governmentality.en.html)
- Jean Baudrillard. "Absolute Advertising, Ground-Zero Advertising." Ch. IX from *Simulacra and Simulation* (University of Michigan Press, 1994). <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jean-baudrillard/articles/simulacra-and-simulations-ix-absolute-advertising-ground-zero-advertising/>
- Jo Freeman, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness." (<http://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm>)
- **Recommended:** Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" (<http://foucault.info/documents/whatIsEnlightenment/foucault.whatIsEnlightenment.en.html>)

November 7 Discussion

November 12 Lecture: Using and Making Theory in Sociology

- Massengill, *Wal-Mart Wars*, ch. 1–3

November 14 Focused discussion: Law, John. "Seeing Like a Survey." *Cultural Sociology* 3:2 (2009): 239–256. <http://cus.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/1749975509105533>

November 19 Whole-class Discussion: Analyzing, Critiquing, and Extending Massengill

- Massengill, *Wal-Mart Wars*, ch. 4–7

November 21 Focused Discussion:

Richard N. Pitt, Jr. "Downlow Mountain?: De/Stigmatizing Bisexuality through Pitying and Pejorative Discourses in Media." *Journal of Men's Studies* 14:2 (Spring, 2006): 254–258. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=20913805&site=ehost-live>

November 26 Lecture: From Modernity to Postmodernity

November 28 Thanksgiving – No class

December 3 Lecture and Review: Contemporary Challenges in Social Theory

- **Final Paper Due In Class**

Tuesday, December 10, 12:00 noon Final Examination - 128 Wilson