

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL  
Spring, 2018

# Sociological Theory

(SOCI 250)

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Section 001 Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00–12:15 Chapman 201, FedEx 1009, Dey 307

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Professor Andrew J. Perrin

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Office:

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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 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*

**W. E. B. Du Bois.** *The Souls of Black Folk* (Dover, 1903).

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

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

**Ruth Braunstein.** *Prophets and Patriots: Faith in Democracy Across the Political Divide* (University of California Press, 2017).

### Supplementary Readings

All other readings are available either on the web or on the course website, hosted on <http://sakai.unc.edu>. You may need to access some articles from an on-campus computer due to copyright restrictions.

### Other Resources

We will periodically use **PollEverywhere** for class lectures and conversations. All students need to be registered through UNC's account for PollEverywhere. Instructions for registering are part of the FAQ document at <http://help.unc.edu/help/poll-everywhere-faq/>.

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 understand 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 TAs, and your professor 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 and 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 **Thursday, March 8**.
- The final exam will be a three-hour exam. It will take place in 201 Chapman at **Noon on Monday, April 30**. **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. These are academic papers and, as such, must be written in an appropriate style. Papers should be turned in by uploading to the Assignments section of Sakai.

**Paper 1:** For this short (approx. 1,000–1,500 words) paper, you should use at least two of the theorists we have studied thus far either to:

- a.) Explain or interpret some puzzle, observation, or fact about current social life; or
- b.) Assess the theorists' approach to some issue or area, synthesizing, contrasting, and/or evaluating their approaches.

**Due February 22 before class.**

**Paper 2:** For this short (approx. 1,000–1,500 words) paper, you should assess the added value (if any) provided by one of the contemporary theorists (Goffman, Bourdieu, Foucault, Boudrillard, Freeman) beyond one of the classical theorists (Durkheim, Du Bois, Marx, Weber) on some puzzle, observation, fact, issue, or area. You may use the same focus as you did in paper 1, or you may choose a new focus. Your work should explicitly evaluate and synthesize the two approaches to explain or interpret your focus. **Due April 3 before 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.

Extend the work you did in paper 2, comparing and contrasting at least two major theorists as applied to some major question in contemporary politics, culture, or society. Examine points of particular success of each theorist as well as points of explanatory failure. Offer your own theory, building on those you've considered, to interpret the question.

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 April 26 Before 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	12%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	20%
Paper 1	15%
Paper 2	15%
Final Paper	20%

## COURSE ORGANIZATION

During most weeks, Tuesday's class will be a combined lecture, to be held in Chapman 201. Thursday classes will usually be discussion classes; they will meet in separate rooms:

**Section 601:** Chapman 201

**Section 602:** FedEx 1009

**Section 603:** Dey 307

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

**January 11** Introductory Lecture: Why Theory? (Whole class in 201 Chapman)

**January 16** 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>)

**January 18** Discussion: Preliminary Challenges

**January 23** Lecture: Émile Durkheim: Religion, Symbols, and Social Life

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

**January 25** Discussion: Durkheim

**January 30** Lecture: Marx, Theory of History and Capital

- “Estranged Labour,” <http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>
- “The Power of Money,” <http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/power.htm>
- Marx & Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (<http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm>)

**February 1** Discussion: Marx

**February 6** Lecture: Weber: *Verstehen* and Ideas

- Selections from *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Free Press, 1947): pp. 115–118, 324–345, 358–386 [WWW](#)

**February 8** Discussion: Weber

**February 13** Video: High Modernity

**February 15 Full Class in Chapman 201** Lecture: Marx and Weber: Conflicting Worldviews?

Weber, “Class, Status, Party,” pp. 926–939 in *Economy & Society* [WWW](#)

**February 20** W. E. B. Du Bois

- Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth.” <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/the-talented-tenth/>
- 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](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15210/15210-h/15210-h.htm#Chapter_II)
- **Recommended:** 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>
- **Recommended:** 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>)

**February 22** Discussion: Du Bois **Paper 1 Due Before Class**

**February 27** Lecture: Individuality and Society

**March 1** Discussion: Individuality and Society

- Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life.” [http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/content/bpl\\_images/content\\_store/sample\\_chapter/0631225137/bridge.pdf](http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/content/bpl_images/content_store/sample_chapter/0631225137/bridge.pdf)
- Horkheimer and Adorno, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception.” [https://web.stanford.edu/dept/DLCL/files/pdf/adorno\\_culture\\_industry.pdf](https://web.stanford.edu/dept/DLCL/files/pdf/adorno_culture_industry.pdf)

**March 6** Exam Review (Q&A)

**March 8** Midterm Examination

**March 13 & 15** Spring Break

**March 20** Lecture: Action, Situation, and Social Construction

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

**March 22** Discussion

**March 27** 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>

**March 29** Discussion

**April 3** Lecture: Foucault and the Move to Postmodernism

- Foucault, “Governmentality” from *The Foucault Effect* [WWW](#)
- 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>)

**April 5** Discussion

**Paper 2 Due Before Class**

**April 10** Lecture: Using and Making Theory in Sociology

- Braunstein, Chapters 1–3

**April 12** Discussion: Braunstein

**April 17** Section Presentations and Question Development

**Section 601:** Braunstein, Chapters 4, 7, and Methodological Appendix

**Section 602:** Braunstein, Chapters 5, 7, and Methodological Appendix

**Section 603:** Braunstein, Chapters 6, 7, and Methodological Appendix

**April 19** Whole-Class Discussion (**Chapman 201**): Culture, Religion, and Politics

Whole class meets in 201 Chapman; Visiting lecture/discussion with Ruth Braunstein, Ph.D.

**April 24** Review Session (Q&A)

**April 26** Lecture: From Modernity to Postmodernity; Contemporary Challenges in Social Theory

- **Final Paper Due Before Class**

**Monday, April 30, 12:00 noon Final Examination** - Chapman 201