

DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Sociology 920:313:01-02

Beck Hall, room 250; MW 3:20-4:40

Department of Sociology

Rutgers University

Fall 2007

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This course, designed specifically with sociology majors (and minors) in mind, provides a detailed examination of the most important works from the classical period of sociological theorizing about personhood, social organization, and social processes. To see the person as 'social' is to recognize the extent to which the human individual is constituted through social interaction and by positions occupied in a social structure. To examine social organization is to see society not as an assemblage of individuals, but as a coherent entity with formal properties or organizing principles of its own. It is to understand the seeming turmoil of social life in an abstract and elegant, and one might even say 'reduced', way. To study social processes is to acknowledge that societies change, but also to see that how they change may be shaped by governing laws or logics.

The aims of the course are fourfold. First, it will provide you with an understanding of some of the most fundamental arguments and texts in sociology—to be conversant in sociology demands an acquaintance with this material. Second, it should help you devise questions and a critical framework for your *own* analysis of the social world—these texts are excellent prompts for thinking about the human condition in general, they established the agenda for sociological inquiry in the twentieth century, and the questions they pose and the arguments they offer continue to inform contemporary empirical research. [In fact, a few of the readings assigned in this course are fairly recent ones that build explicitly and substantially upon foundational thinkers' ideas.] Third, by reading materials of a previous century, we get a sense of what most concerned scholars of an earlier time and different historical place, which in turn will help us develop a sociology of social theory itself. Fourth, this course is meant to help you develop your oral and written communication skills, insofar as I highly value thoughtful discussion in the classroom and clear, trenchant writing in written work.

Readings

I have made an effort to keep the number of required pages of reading down, but much of what remains will be DIFFICULT. You must read the material carefully before class and if possible, re-read it after class, to ensure you are achieving an adequate understanding. Some of the required material will be found on electronic reserve in Kilmer Library and on my website (<http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~pmclean/>). Those materials are explicitly identified in the lecture schedule below. The rest may be found in two books I have ordered through the Livingston Campus Bookstore. These books are:

- 1) James Farganis, ed., *Readings in Social Theory* (McGraw-Hill, 5th edition, 2008)
- 2) Jonathan H. Turner, Leonard Beeghly, and Charles H. Powers, eds., *The Emergence of Sociological Theory* (Thomson, 6th edition, 2007)

Ideally we would all use the same edition of these books with the same pagination. However, publishers charge an exorbitant amount for these books after making minimal changes to them every two or three years. For a course in which we study texts that were written a hundred years or more ago and which contain little or no explicit commentary on contemporary phenomena, that is unconscionable. If you can obtain an inexpensive copy of either or both of these books in a slightly earlier edition, you might find it minimally inconvenient and financially quite beneficial to do so.

Requirements and Evaluation

Your grade in this course will be based on the following factors:

- 1) attendance and *participation* at lectures and in recitations (10%);
- 2) one midterm test in class (25%);
- 3) two short papers, each about 5 pages in length (20% each);
- 4) a final exam (25%).

Attendance will be taken regularly at both lectures and recitations. You are expected to show up on time and stay for the duration of the class. You will also be expected to participate in class discussions. I will make an effort to call upon people if necessary to ensure such participation. The midterm test will be a combination of multiple choice questions, short definitions, and quotation identifications. The two papers will be written on a topic proposed by the instructors, although you may seek permission to write on a topic of your own choosing if the professor and the TA approve. The general idea in each paper will be to articulate and illustrate the value of some important concept or argument in one or more of the texts we have read for understanding some social phenomenon. The final exam will consist of short answer and/or essay questions covering material from the entire semester.

Lecture Schedule and Weekly Reading Schedule

Week 1 Introduction to the Course

September 5: Syllabus distribution, special permission number requests, overview, etc.

Read: Farganis, pp. 1-11

Week 2 of RU Semester

September 10: A Brief Pre-history of Sociological Theory I: Thomas Hobbes, and the French Enlightenment

Read: 1) Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, **author's introduction only** (reserve/my website)
2) Turner et al., chapter 1

September 12: A Brief Pre-history of Sociological Theory II: Adam Smith and the Scottish Enlightenment

Read: Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, selections (reserve/my website)

Week 3 of RU Semester

September 17: The Scottish Enlightenment and Social Interaction

Read: 1) Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, selections (reserve/my website)
2) Thomas Schelling, *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*, selections (reserve/my website)

September 19: The Beginnings of "Sociology": Auguste Comte

Read: Turner et al., chapter 2-3

Week 4 of RU Semester

September 24: The Beginnings of Sociology II: Herbert Spencer

Read: Turner et al., chapters 4-5

September 26: Marx's Critique of Capitalism Through the Lenses of Exploitation and Alienation

Read: 1) Farganis, pp. 23-25, 37-43, 47-53
2) Turner et al., chapter 6, plus pp. 138-147

Week 5

October 1: Marx's Philosophy of History

Read: 1) Farganis, pp. 43-47
2) Turner et al., pp. 117-124

October 3: Marx's View of Classes and Political Action

Read: 1) Farganis, pp. 25-37
2) Turner et al., pp. 124-138, 147-151

Week 6

October 8: **Midterm Examination**

October 10: Emile Durkheim and the Sociological Method

Read: 1) Turner et al., chapter 12, plus pp. 292-297
2) Farganis, pp. 55-64

Week 7

October 15: Durkheim on Mechanical Solidarity

Read: 1) Turner et al., pp. 279-292
2) Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, selection #1 (reserve/my website)

FIRST PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED

October 17: Durkheim: More on the Division of Labor

Read: Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, selection #2 (reserve/my website)

Week 8

October 22: Durkheim on Suicide

Read: 1) Farganis, pp. 64-72
2) Turner et al., pp. 297-302

October 24: Durkheim on Religion and Social Organization

Read: 1) Farganis, pp. 72-80
2) Turner et al., 302-316

FIRST PAPERS DUE!

Week 9

October 29: Georg Simmel and the Formal Properties of Social Life

- Read: 1) Farganis, pp. 117-133
2) Turner et al., chapter 10 and chapter 11, except pp. 230-235

October 31: The Structuralist Simmel

- Read: 1) Georg Simmel, "The Triad," from *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, pp. 145-169 (reserve/my website)
2) Turner et al., pp. 230-235

Week 10

November 5: Some Other Cool Stuff by Simmel, and his Significance Today

- Read: 1) Simmel, "Fashion" (reserve/my website)
2) Ronald Breiger, "The Duality of Persons and Groups" in *Social Forces* 53,2 (December 1974): 181-190 (JSTOR/reserve/my website)
3) Eviatar Zerubavel, "Generally Speaking: The Logic and Mechanics of Social Pattern Analysis," *Sociological Forum* 22, 2 (June 2007): 131-145

November 7: Max Weber on Social Science Methodology

- Read: 1) Farganis, pp. 81-85, 99-106
2) Turner et al., chapter 8, plus pp. 170-176

Week 11

November 12: Weber on the Notion of Domination

- Read: 1) Turner et al., pp. 180-194
2) Farganis, pp. 106-117

SECOND PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED

November 14: Weber on Bureaucracy as the Dominant Form of Organization in Modernity

- Read: 1) Farganis, pp. 89-99

Week 12

November 19: Weber on the Protestant Ethic

- Read: Farganis, pp. 85-88

November 21: NO CLASS—RUTGERS FOLLOWS A FRIDAY SCHEDULE

Week 13

November 26: Weber on Politics (and Science)

Read: Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” selections (reserve/my website)

November 28: Early American Sociology and Pragmatism

Read: 1) Turner et al., chapter 14
2) Charles H. Cooley, selections from *Human Nature and the Social Order, Social Organization, and Social Process* (reserve/my website)

SECOND PAPERS DUE!

Week 14

December 3: George Herbert Mead

Read: 1) Farganis, pp. 133-143
2) Turner et al., chapter 15

December 5: W. E. B. Dubois on the Double Consciousness, and Empirical Sociology

Read: Farganis, pp. 145-156

Week 15

December 10 Sorokin on Social Distance and Mobility

Read: Pitirim Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Mobility*, selections (reserve/my website)

December 12: Review and question period

[But we might read R. W. Connell, “Why is Classical Theory Classical?” *American Journal of Sociology* 102, 6 (May 1997): 1511-57, if we’re not completely burnt out]

**FINAL EXAM:
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 12:00-3:00 p.m., BECK HALL 250**