**Soc 303**

# Social Theory

Spring 2015

MWF 9:10-10:10

Asbury Hall 206

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Social theory is a basic survival skill. This may surprise those who believe it to be a special activity of experts of a certain kind. True, there are professional social theorists, usually academics. But this fact does not exclude my belief that social theory is something done necessarily, and often well, by people with no particular professional credential. When it is done well, by whomever, it can be a source of uncommon pleasure (Lemert 1999, p. 1).

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is an advanced seminar for sociology majors. In conjunction with research methods, its intent is to prepare you for conceptualizing theoretically informed, original sociological research for your senior thesis. To provide you with a foundation in theory, we will consider why theory is important and how, in many ways, we “do” social theory in our everyday lives.

The seminar is structured around the major classical and contemporary theoretical traditions that constitute the discipline of sociology. We will trace developments across classical theorists (Marx, Weber, Durkheim, DuBois, Gilman) and within contemporary schools of thought: conflict theory, the functionalist tradition, rational choice theory, micro-interactionist perspectives, postmodernism and theories that emerged from identity politics movements (feminist, critical race and queer theories). Within each theoretical tradition we will be reading and discussing primary texts of theorists, secondary analyses of the tradition and empirical applications of the theory in the real world.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. To recognize the influences of historical conditions and personal biography on the development of social theory.

2. To understand the foundational questions, ideas, and debates that shaped the development of sociology as well as the voices and perspectives not heard.

3. To discover the ways in which contemporary social theories have drawn on as well as diverged from classical theoretical traditions in sociology.

4. To grasp the post-modern critique of social theory and to recognize what sociology might learn from it.

5. To recognize and understand the different views on the following:

a) the nature of reason, science, knowledge, and truth within sociology

b) the nature and relationship of history, society, and the self

c) the processes producing shared belief and social integration in human societies

d) the nature of conflict and domination in human societies

e) how change occurs in human societies

f) the factors motivating individual behavior

g) how meaning is constructed and negotiated in human interaction

6. To see the connections between social theory and sociological research.

7. To discover how the insights of social theory can be applied in everyday life and the value of doing theory in one’s own life.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

Farganis, James. 2014. *Readings in Social Theory: The Classic Tradition to Post- Modernism,* 7th edition*.* NY: McGraw-Hill.

Kivisto, James (ed.). 2013. *Illuminating Social Life: Classical and Contemporary Theory Revisited,* 6th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge.

The required articles (listed in italics in the course schedule) are available on eReserve on Moodle.

### EVALUATION

**Exams:** There will be three exams in this course. The exams will be essay based. We will discuss this further in class.

**Paper:** Please see handout.

**“What does social theory have to do with the real world?” assignment (WSTRW):**

Throughout the semester, we will begin class with a 10 minute discussion of a contemporary issue of your choice and relate it to a theory or theoretical concept that we have covered in class (it does not have to necessarily relate to the theory we are currently covering). Each of you will sign up for a specific date, bring in an article from the New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, or Washington Post, present the application to the class and facilitate a “mini” discussion of it by raising questions. Bring in enough copies for the class or email the article to the class with ample time.

**Class Facilitation:** Everyone will take a turn (either with a partner or alone) facilitating discussion of an assigned article. **You must meet with me prior to discussion. Please plan accordingly in scheduling your meeting with me (don’t wait until the last minute).** You will first briefly outline the article and findings. You may include discussion questions during this point and throughout the facilitation. You must also **stimulate connections** with other course materials, issues, criticisms or questions that remain concerning the reading. You may bring in outside material (newspaper articles, film/TV clips, current events, etc.) that will facilitate these goals. In short, while you must flesh out the main points of the readings, you must go above and beyond the reading and introduce something fresh.

**Active participation:** I expect you to attend class on time, prepared, and ready to *engage* with the material and the class community. Simply showing up to class having skimmed the readings is insufficient. If everyone does this, we will have a boring class (and you will have to listen to me the whole time). If only a few people are prepared, we will only know their opinions and miss out on the full classroom experience of everyone participating. Being an engaged student involves not only classroom participation, but can include coming to office hours, bringing in articles/news stories, or sharing information from the media/popular culture pertaining to social theory. You can earn up to 50 points of your grade from your *active participation*. So, how do I actively participate you may ask?

1) Really, truly listen to others.

2) Ask others to clarify their statements if you don’t understand or need more elaboration.

3) Try to answer questions that are raised in class.

4) Ask questions about readings, lecture, etc.

5) Support your statements with *evidence* (from lecture and/or readings).

6) Summarize various statements made in class; show the linkages or disparate concepts discussed.

7) *Constructively* criticize your colleagues.

I do not expect you to be able to practice these skills perfectly. Instead, they will be a goal to strive for. Some of us are shyer than others, but these are acquired skills that can benefit everyone. I will assess not only the *regularity* of your comments but the *quality* as well.

You will be able to self evaluate your participation at mid term and at the end of the semester. I will take your evaluation into consideration. Your active participation will be graded according to the following rubric:

 “A” grades are for those students who are almost always in class. These students have read the articles and are always prepared to discuss them in some depth. These students listen well, help guide discussion, offer ways to *thoughtfully* frame readings or issues and go beyond a recitation of the articles. These students ask questions about the readings.

“B” grades are for students who are nearly always in class and take a thoughtful part in discussion. These students participate and are engaged in the readings with some depth and occasionally take leadership roles in discussion.

“C” grades are for students who come to class regularly but rarely speak, or if you are active in discussion but have missed classes or if you participate in a manner that shows little evidence of engagement with the readings.

“D” grades are for students who come irregularly to class and rarely show any signs of having done or thought about the readings.

“F” grades are for students who have missed lots of classes, rarely speak and show no evidence of having done the readings.

**Grading:**

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|  |  | **My points** |
| **Exam 1**  | **100 points** |  |
| **Exam 2**  | **100 points** |  |
| **Exam 3** | **100 points** |  |
| **WSTRW** |  **15 points** |  |
| **Class facilitation** |  **25 points**  |  |
| **Active Participation** |  **50 points** |  |
| **Paper** | **100 points** |  |
| **Total** | **480 points** |  |

I will follow the usual DePauw University grading system whereby:

A or A- reflects, “achievement of exceptionally high merit.”

 B+, B, B- reflects, “achievement at a level superior to the basic level.”

 C+, C, C- reflects, “basic achievement.”

D+, D, D- reflects, “achievement which falls short of satisfying the quantitative and qualitative requirements yet warrants credit.”

Remember, you do not start the course with an A and lose points. You essentially start with zero points and *earn* your grades along the way. Please meet with me if at any time you have questions about your grades. **Do not wait until the end of the semester**.

\*\*\* An important point to note about grades. Grades do NOT reflect your effort, but the result of your efforts. We are not all alike and some of us must put forth more effort while others put forth minimal effort and earn higher marks. We are simply diverse people with different talents and abilities. Therefore, I do NOT grade your effort. In addition, grades do NOT reflect what I think you do or do not deserve. Your grade is what YOU earn in the course.

**OTHER POLICIES**

### Classroom Etiquette: In order to have a positive and safe learning environment, we as a class will have to agree to disagree at times. Some of us may have strong feelings and/or reactions to class materials, readings, etc. Expressing these reactions is encouraged as long as this is done in a respectful manner. Hostile and/or disrespectful behavior is not allowed. In addition, we must be watchful to not take up too much “airtime” and allow for *everyone* to share. Talking *a lot* is generally *not* a good way of actively participating. Instead, carefully listening to others and clearly and concisely expressing your input is the best strategy. Remember to address each other when talking rather than directing your comments to me (unless they are solely intended for me!) Of course, all cell phones must be turned off. Texting is NOT appropriate behavior in class. Chronic tardiness and/or habitual sleeping, disruptiveness, etc. will lead to embarrassing public shaming (not to mention the effects on your grade). Finally, about laptops, I discourage use of laptops in class and recommend taking notes by hand. A laptop is often a distraction and hinders active participation.

### Absences: It is *your responsibility* to find out what happened in class, not mine. Asking me, “What did I miss?” or “What did we do in class on …?” are not appropriate inquiries. I am, however, more than happy to go over notes *after* you have gotten them from another student. Remember, in order to *actively participate,* you have to be present.

**Late work/Make-up Work:** All exams will be taken in class on the schedule day, unless, I receive *in advance*, an official notification that you will be off-campus on official university business or some other *legitimate and verifiable* excused absence. Out of fairness to the entire class, no exceptions will be made, do not ask for one. There will be NO EXTRA CREDIT assignments available to anyone.

**Academic Dishonesty/Misconduct:** I take academic dishonesty or misconduct extremely seriously as surely you do as well. Please be familiar with the DePauw University Academic Integrity Policy available in the *Student Handbook.* Any student violating this policy will be subject to a range of disciplinary actions.

**Students with Disabilities:**

“DePauw University is committed to providing equal access to academic programs and university administered activities with reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities, in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act and Amendments (ADAAA).  Any student who feels she or he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability or learning challenge is strongly encouraged to contact Pamela Roberts, Director of Student Disability Services and ADA Compliance for further information on how to receive accommodations and support.  Contact information for Student Disability Services is: 408 S. Locust Street, Suite 200, in The Memorial Student Union Building (765-658-6267).  It is the responsibility of the student to share the letter of accommodation with faculty and staff members. Accommodations will not be implemented until the faculty or staff member has received the official letter. Accommodations are not retroactive.   It is the responsibility of the student to discuss implementation of accommodations with each faculty and staff member receiving the letter.”

**Communication:** Please come and visit me during office hours. I am there waiting for you to discuss readings, lecture, grading, exams, classroom behaviors, sociology, etc. If you cannot come to scheduled office hours, please let me know and we will work something else out. The best way to reach me is through e-mail. I will communicate with the class through email. I expect each of you to check e-mail on a *daily* basis.

### SCHEDULE

Readings must be completed *prior* to class on the due date. We may get off schedule and I will make adjustments accordingly in the event that this occurs. The books are listed by the authors’ last names (Farganis; Kivisto). Articles on Moodle have an asterisk.

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|  | **Why Study Theory?**  |
| 1/26 (M) | Introduction to class |
| 1/30 (F) | \*Mills, “The Promise”\*Lemert, “Social Theory: Its Uses and Pleasures” |
| 2/2 (M) | Farganis, “Introduction” (1-25) |
|  | **Placing Sociological Theory into Context** |
| 2/4 (W) | \*Collins, “The Rise of the Social Sciences” |
|  | **Classical Theories** |
| 2/6 (F) | **Karl Marx**Farganis, “Karl Marx: Alienation, Class Struggle, and Class Consciouness” (29-31)  |
| 2/9 (M) | Marx and Engels, The Manifesto of the Communist Party,” 31-43 in Farganis; Marx, “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof,” 43-50 in Farganis*WSTRW presentation* |
| 2/11 (W) | Adair, “Celebratory Capitalism and the Commodification of Information” in Kivisto*(Student Facilitation)* |
| 2/13 (F) | **Max Weber**Farganis, “Max Weber: The Iron Cage,” 81-85 in Farganis; Weber, “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,” 85-89 in Farganis***Stage 1 of paper due*** |
| 2/16 (M) | Weber, “Bureaucracy,” 89-100 in Farganis; Weber, “Power,Dominations and Types of Authority,” 100-108 in Farganis*WSTRW presentation* |
| 2/18 (W) | Ritzer, “The Weberian Theory of Rationalization and the McDonalidization of Contemporary Society” in Kivisto(*Student Facilitation)* |
| 2/20 (F) | **Emile Durkheim**Farganis, “Emile Durkheim: Anomie and Social Integration,” pp. 55-58 in Farganis; Durkheim: “The Rules of Sociological Method,” 58-64 in Farganis |
| 2/23 (M) | Durkheim, “Egoistic Suicide and Anomic Suicide,” 64-72 in Farganis; Durkheim, “The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,” 73-80 in Farganis*WSTRW presentation* |
| 2/25 (W) | Hornsby, “Surfing the Net for Community: A Durkheimian Analysis of Electronic Gatherings” in Kivisto*(Student Facilitation)* |
| 2/27 (F) | **Exam 1** |
| 3/2 (M) | **W.E.B. DuBois**\*Collins and Makowsky, “The Emergence of African-American Sociology…” |
| 3/4 (W) | Farganis, “Race,” 403-406 in Farganis; DuBois, “The Souls of BlackFolk,” 407-412 in Farganis; DuBois, \*“The Philadelphia Negro”*WSTRW presentation****Stage 2 of paper due*** |
| 3/6 (F) | Hartmann and Bell, “Race-Based Critical Theory and the “Happy Talk” of Diversity in America” in Kivisto*(Student Facilitation)* |
| 3/9 (M) | **Charlotte Perkins Gilman**\*Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, “Present at the Creation: Women in the History of Sociology and Social Theory” |
| 3/11 (W) | \*Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, “The Yellow Wallpaper”; “The Dependence of Women”*WSTRW presentation* |
| 3/13 (F) | Lorber and Martin, “The Socially Constructed Body: Insights from Feminist Theory” in Kivisto*(Student Facilitation)* |
| 3/16 (M) | **Contemporary Theories: Functionalism**Farganis, “Functionalism,” 141-143 in Farganis; Davis and Moore,“Some Principles of Stratification,” 143-151 in Farganis |
| 3/18 (W) | Merton, Manifest and Latent Functions,” 161-177 in Farganis*WSTRW presentation* |
| 3/20 (F) | \*Colomy and Greiner, “Criminalizing Transgressing Youth” *(Student Facilitation)* |
|  | SPRING BREAK |
| 3/30 (M) | **Conflict Theory**Farganis, “Conflict Theory,” 179-181 in Farganis; Dahrendorf,“Social Structure, Group Interests, and Conflict Groups,” 181-189 in Farganis***Stage 3 of paper due*** |
| 4/1 (W) | Mills, “The Structure of Power in American,” 189-198 in Farganis; Zweigenhaft and Domoff, “The Ironies of Diversity,” 198-215 in Farganis*WSTRW presentation* |
| 4/3 (F) | \*Frazier et al. “The Social Context of Race Differentials in Justice Dispositions”(*Student Facilitation)* |
| 4/6 (M) | **Exam 2** |
| 4/8 (W) | **Exchange Theory and Rational Choice**Farganis, “Exchange Theory and Rational Choice,” 217-218 |
| 4/10 (F) | Blau, “The Structure of Social Associations,” 219-232 in Farganis; Coleman, “Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital,” 232-245 in Farganis*WSTRW presentation* |
| 4/13 (M) | Prendergast, “Why Do African Americans Pay More for New Cars?” in Kivisto(*Student Facilitation)* |
| 4/15 (W) | **Symbolic Interaction**Farganis, “Symbolic Interaction,” 271-273 in Farganis |
| 4/17 (F) | Blumer, “Society as Symbolic Interaction,” 274-281 in Farganis;Goffman, “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,” 281-290 in Farganis*WSTRW presentation* |
| 4/20 (M) | Kivisto and Pittman, “Goffman’s Dramaturgical Sociology: Personal Sales and Service in a Commodified World,” 297-318 in Kivisto(*Student facilitation*) |
| 4/22 (W) | **Postmodernism**\*Lemert, “Postmodernism is Not What You Think,” 19-53 (Moodle);Farganis, “Post-Modernism,” 331-332 in Farganis |
| 4/24 (F) | Foucault,” The Carceral,” 332-342 in Farganis; Lyotard, “The Post-Modern Condition,” 342-356 in Farganis*WSTRW presentation* |
| 4/27 (M) | Gotham, “Contrasts of Carnival” in Kivisto(*Student Facilitation)* |
| 4/29 (W) | **Feminist and Queer Theories**\*Seidman, “Feminist Theory” Collins, “Black Feminist Thought” 372-383 in Farganis |
| 5/1 (F) | \*Seidman, “Lesbian, Gay and Queer Theory” |
| 5/4 (M) | **Globalization**Farganis, Global Society,” 437 in Farganis; Held and McGrew,“Divided World, Divided Nations,” 438-443 in Farganis; Stiglitz, “Globalism’s Discontents” |
| 5/6 (W) | Wrap-up/workshop paper |
| **5/12 (T) 9:30am** | **EXAM 3** |