

SOCIAL THEORY (SOC 303)

Department of Sociology & Anthropology
DePauw University
Spring 2016
MWF 9:10-10:10 a.m.

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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 course 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, and postmodernism. 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 postmodern 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 READINGS

The following books are available on-line and at Eli's Books:

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

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

Additional readings can be found in library Reserves.

***See Appendix A for suggestions on how to read for this course.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Examinations. There will be 3 examinations (dates are indicated on the schedule below).

B. “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. 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. A sign-up sheet will be distributed in class.

C. Class facilitation. Everyone will take a turn (either with a partner or alone) facilitating discussion of an assigned article. **You and your partner MUST meet with me prior to the discussion.** A sign-up sheet will be handed out in class.

D. Analytic paper. You will write an 8-10 pp. paper (due at the end of the semester) analyzing a social problem of your choice using two of the theories we have learned this semester. More details will be handed out during class.

E. Daily class participation. Everyone is expected to come to class on time having completed, thought about, and prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Class participation (both oral contributions and active listening) will be assessed in terms of the quality and regularity of your participation. You will be graded on class participation at mid-term and at the end of the semester. In deciding on a grade, I will take into consideration a self-evaluation you will complete beforehand. Because you can only contribute to and listen during a discussion if you are present, attendance is required. More than 2 absences will begin to seriously jeopardize your grade. Coming to class late twice will count as 1 absence. See Appendix B for more details.

COURSE POLICIES

How Grades are Calculated. Grades will be determined using the following point and percentage system. In order to pass the course, students must complete all of the assignments.

Exam 1	100 points
Exam 2	100 points
Exam 3	100 points
Analytic Paper	100 points
WSTRW assignment (turn in notes)	50 points
Discussion facilitation (turn in notes)	50 points
Class participation	100 points (50 for each half of semester)
Total	<hr/> 600 points

Final Grade:

90% and above = A-, A

80%-89% = B-, B, B +

70%-79% = C-, C, C+

60-69% = D

59% and below = F

What the Grades Mean.

A = Work that goes beyond the requirements of the assignment by adding new insight, creativity and/or particularly thoughtful analysis. Demonstrates a comprehensive command of the course material, an exceptional ability to apply concepts to the real world, and a superior ability to organize and express ideas.

B = Work that adequately meets the requirements of the assignment. Demonstrates a solid command of the course material, an ability to apply concepts to the real world with only minor problems, and good organization and expression of ideas.

C = Work that partially meets the requirements of the assignment. Demonstrates acceptable command of the course material, a basic ability to apply concepts to the real world with some gaps and problems, and moderate skill in the organization and expression of ideas.

D = Work that marginally meets the requirements of the assignment. Demonstrates little command of the course material, minimal attempt to apply concepts to the real world, and limited ability to organize and express ideas.

F = Work that does not meet the requirements of the assignment. Demonstrates no command of the course material, unable to appropriately or consistently apply concepts to the real world, and insufficiently organizes and expresses ideas.

***Please note that the above descriptions are **not** consistent with the common belief among students that a B is average and a C is failing.

Late Work/Make-up Work. Assignments are due on the dates indicated on the syllabus, unless I receive, in advance, an official notification that you will be off campus on university business (e.g., athletic or academic event) or if you are gravely ill and contact me before class and make alternative arrangements. Unexcused late assignments will be penalized 5 points for every 24-hour period in which they are late. Out of fairness to the entire class, no exceptions will be made (this includes job interviews, weddings, delayed planes, senioritis, etc.)

Extra Credit. None. No exceptions.

Security Measures. Please secure a copy of your paper (hardcopy and/or electronic) in case your computer crashes the morning your paper is due. Do not put late papers in my mailbox or under

my office door. It is your responsibility to contact me and make arrangements to give me your late work in person.

Honor Code. As with all courses at DePauw University, you are bound by the policy on academic integrity. I highly encourage you to reread the policy if you have not reread it this semester: <http://www.depauw.edu/handbooks/student/acadlife/app/aip/dishonesty/> Academic dishonesty includes the following: cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, plagiarism, multiple submissions, abuse of academic material, deception and misrepresentation, electronic dishonesty, and carelessness. Each of these violations is described in detail in the Student Handbook. See me if you have any questions about your obligation to uphold this policy.

Special Accommodations. According to Pamela Roberts, Coordinator of Academic Success and Student Disability Services, “DePauw University is committed to providing equal access to academic programs and University administered activities and reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Amendments (ADAAA). Accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis. 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, Coordinator of Academic Success and Student Disability Services, for further information on how to receive accommodations and support.” Academic Success and Student Disability Services is located on the second floor of the UB: [765-658-6267](tel:765-658-6267).

Laptops and Phones. No laptops in class unless I specifically ask you to bring them. This means that you will need to make hardcopies of the readings posted on Reserves and/or bring in notes from the reading. Please silence your phone and put it away. No texting during class.

Challenges. We face three major challenges this semester. First, Social Theory (SOC 303) is required for majors so not everyone has “freely” chosen to be here. Second, social theory is often considered dry, archaic, and impractical. Third, this course is discussion-based and some people are petrified to speak in class and/or loathe listening to others. I invite you to join me in overcoming all of these obstacles. If you keep an open mind, you will discover that a required class is not necessarily as painful as your friends have made it out to be. By making sure we routinely consider the practical implications of theory, I hope you will see how theory might actually help you understand your everyday life (e.g., Why did my lover want to go home early last night? Is it a waste of time to join the protesters on the quad speaking out against racial hatred? Why am I going to Cleveland for Spring break and all my friends are going to Jamaica? Will there be such a thing as a liberal arts education when my grandchildren are considering college? Why are people who care for other human beings valued less than those who tell people who care for other human beings how to do their work? Why can I drop this course on April 1, but not on April 2?) Finally, I hope to create a safe environment so all of us can work on our discussion skills, whether they be speaking in groups, listening to others, or grounding oral contributions in the course material.

***If you have read and understand the course policies above, please email me (rbordt@depauw.edu) with the subject line: "I have read and understand the course policies."

COURSE SCHEDULE (approximate)

Readings marked with an * can be found in library Reserves. All others are either in the Farganis or Kivisto books and are marked as such.

<p>WEEK 1 Feb 1, 3, 5</p>	<p>Why Study Theory?</p> <p>M: Introduction to class</p> <p>W: *Mills, "The Promise," pp. 3-24 (Reserves) *Lemert, "Social Theory: Its Uses and Pleasures," pp. 1-20 (Reserves)</p> <p>F: "The Classic Tradition to Post-Modernism: An Overview," pp. 1-26 (Farganis)</p>
<p>WEEK 2 Feb 8, 10, 12</p>	<p>Placing Sociological Theory into Context</p> <p>M: *Collins, "The Rise of the Social Sciences," pp. 3-46 (Reserves)</p> <p>I. Classical Theories: Karl Marx</p> <p>W: "Karl Marx: Alienation, Class Struggle, and Class Consciousness," pp. 29-31 (Farganis)</p> <p>F: No class (RB at conference)</p>

<p>WEEK 3 Feb 15, 17, 19</p>	<p>M: “Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: The Manifesto of the Communist Party,” pp. 31-43 (Farganis); “Karl Marx: “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof,” pp. 43-50 (Farganis) [Film clips]</p> <p>W: Adair, “Celebratory Capitalism and the Commodification of Information,” pp. 5-28 (Kivisto) [STUDENT FACILITATION]</p> <p>Max Weber</p> <p>F: “Max Weber: The Iron Cage,” pp. 81-85 (Farganis) [WSTRW presentation]</p>
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<p>WEEK 4 Feb 22, 24, 26</p>	<p>M: “Max Weber: The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,” pp. 85-89 (Farganis); “Max Weber: Bureaucracy,” pp. 89-100 (Farganis) [WSTRW presentation]</p> <p>W: Ritzer, “The Weberian Theory of Rationalization and the McDonaldization of Contemporary Society, pp. 29-49 (Kivisto) [STUDENT FACILITATION]</p> <p>F: No Class (RB out of town)</p>
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<p>WEEK 5 Feb 29, Mar 2, 4</p>	<p>Emile Durkheim</p> <p>M: “Emile Durkheim: <i>Anomie</i> and Social Integration,” pp. 55-58 (Farganis) [WSTRW presentation]</p> <p>W: “Emile Durkheim: Egoistic Suicide and Anomic Suicide,” pp. 64-72 (Farganis); “Emile Durkheim: The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,” pp. 73-80 (Farganis)</p> <p>F: Hornsby, “Surfing the Net for Community: A Durkheimian Analysis of Electronic Gatherings” pp. 51-94 (Kivisto) [STUDENT FACILITATION]</p>
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<p>WEEK 6 Mar 7, 9, 11</p>	<p>M: Exam 1</p> <p>W.E.B. DuBois</p> <p>W: *Collins and Makowsky, “The Emergence of African-American Sociology...” pp. 191-206 (Reserves) [WSTRW presentation]</p> <p>F: “W.E.B. DuBois: The Souls of Black Folk,” pp. 407-412 (Farganis); *W.E.B. DuBois, “The Philadelphia Negro,” pp.141-147 (Reserves)</p>
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<p>WEEK 7 Mar 14, 16, 18</p>	<p>M: Hartmann and Bell, “Race-Based Critical Theory and the “Happy Talk” of Diversity in America,” pp. 229-248 (Kivisto) [STUDENT FACILATION]</p> <p>Charlotte Perkins Gilman</p> <p>W: *Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, “Present at the Creation: Women in the History of Sociology and Social Theory” pp. 1-21 (Reserves) [WSTRW Presentation]</p> <p>F: *Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, <i>The Yellow Wallpaper</i> (Reserves); *Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, “The Dependence of Women.” (Reserves) [Film clip]</p>
<p>WEEK 8 Mar 21, 23, 25</p>	<p>Spring Break!</p>
<p>WEEK 9 Mar 28, 30, Apr 1</p>	<p>M: Lorber and Martin, “The Socially Constructed Body: Insights from Feminist Theory,” pp. 249-273 (Kivisto) [STUDENT FACILATION]</p> <p>II. Contemporary Theories: Functionalism</p> <p>W: “Functionalism,” pp. 141-143 (Farganis) [WSTRW presentation]</p> <p>F: “Davis and Moore: Some Principles of Stratification,” pp. 143-151 (Farganis); Merton, “Manifest and Latent Functions,” pp. 161-177 (Farganis) [WSTRW presentation]</p> <p>Last day to drop the class</p>

<p>WEEK 10 Apr 4, 6, 8</p>	<p>M: *Santore, “Romantic Relationships, Individualism and the Possibility of Togetherness: Seeing Durkheim in Theories of Contemporary Intimacy,” pp. 1200-1217 (Reserves) [STUDENT FACILITATION]</p> <p>W: No Class—DePauw Dialogue 2.0 (please take notes)</p> <p>F: Discuss DePauw Dialogue 2.0 [WSTRW presentation]</p>
<p>WEEK 11 Apr 11, 13, 15</p>	<p>Conflict Theory</p> <p>M: “Conflict Theory,” pp. 179-181 (Farganis) [WSTRW presentation]</p> <p>W: “Dahrendorf: Social Structure, Interest Groups, and Conflict Groups,” pp. 181-189 (Farganis) “Mills: The Structure of Power in America,” pp. 189-198 (Farganis) “Zweigenhaft and Domhoff: “The Ironies of Diversity,” pp. 198-215 (Farganis)</p> <p>F: *Frazier et al., “The Social Context of Race Differentials in Juvenile Justice Dispositions,” pp. 447-458 (Reserves) [STUDENT FACILITATION]</p>
<p>WEEK 12 Apr 18, 20, 22</p>	<p>M: Exam 2</p> <p>Exchange Theory and Rational Choice</p> <p>W: “Exchange Theory and Rational Choice,” pp. 217-218 (Farganis) [WSTRW presentation]</p> <p>F: “Blau, “The Structure of Social Associations,” pp. 219-232 (Farganis); “Coleman: Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital,” pp. 232-245 (Farganis)</p>

<p>WEEK 13 Apr 25, 27, 29</p>	<p>M: Prendergast, “Why Do African Americans Pay More for New Cars? A Structural Explanation” pp. 153-195 (Kivisto) [STUDENT FACILITATION--PAIR]</p> <p>Symbolic Interaction</p> <p>W: “Symbolic Interaction,” pp. 271-273 (Farganis) [WSTRW presentation]</p> <p>F: “Blumer: Society as Symbolic Interaction,” pp. 274-281 (Farganis); “Goffman, “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,” pp. 281-290 (Farganis)</p>
<p>WEEK 14 May 2, 4, 6</p>	<p>M: Kivisto and Pittman, “Goffman’s Dramaturgical Sociology: Personal Sales and Service in a Commodified World,” pp. 297-318 (Kivisto) [STUDENT FACILITATION]</p> <p>Postmodernism</p> <p>W: *Lemert, “Postmodernism is Not What You Think,” pp. 19-53 (Reserves); “Post-Modernism,” pp. 331-332 (Farganis) [WSTRW presentation]</p> <p>F: “Foucault: The Carceral,” pp. 332-342 (Farganis); “Lyotard: The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,” pp. 342-356 (Farganis) [Student Opinion Forms—Bring laptop]</p> <p>Analytic Paper due.</p>

WEEK 15 May 9, 11	M: Gotham, “Contrasts of Carnival: Mardi Gras Between the Modern and the Postmodern” pp. 319-344 (Kivisto) [STUDENT FACILITATION--PAIR] W: Wrap-Up
FINAL EXAM WEEK	EXAM 3 -Thursday, May 19, 2016, 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

APPENDIX A

Advice on Reading for this Course

Please bring your books or articles to class for discussion on the days they are assigned. Although not the eco-friendliest suggestion, I highly recommend that you print off the articles on Reserve. This will allow you to mark up the articles, make notes, and have them available during discussion. I prefer that you not use laptops during class (even to access the readings on Reserve).

You are responsible for all of the assigned readings, even those that we do not specifically discuss in class. Reading and understanding ideas on your own is part of the college experience. This does not mean you cannot ask for help when you need it. Please take advantage of my office hours (or make alternative arrangements if my hours do not work for you)!

When to Read. You should read each assignment and come to class prepared to discuss it on the day in which it appears on the course schedule. For example, the readings listed for Monday should be read before coming to class on Monday; the readings listed for Wednesday should be done by class time on Wednesday.

How to Read. Develop a system of reading and note taking that will allow you to answer the following questions after each article:

1. What is the author’s main point or argument?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this argument? (e.g., Does the author present sufficient evidence to back up his/her argument? Can you think of counter-evidence that the author ignores? Is the logic consistent? Does the author have a particular bias?)
3. How does this article relate to this week’s topic and other readings?
4. What are the implications of this reading for your own life?

In the margins of the books/articles note places where you have questions, where the text is confusing, and where the author makes a statement that you think is especially worthy of our attention. If I don't see marginal notations, I will assume you did not complete the reading for the day. [Note: if you want to resell your books and minimize marking them up use Post-It notes or some other system to engage with the reading.]

APPENDIX B

Class Participation

An important component of this class is discussion. There are different kinds of contributions you can make to discussion, all of which you are expected to work on over the course of the semester. None of these are possible without coming to class each session having read the assigned readings:

1. Listening closely to your colleagues, in order to build on what has already been said;
2. Asking colleagues to clarify unclear contributions;
3. Summarizing key ideas that have emerged during the discussion;
4. Articulating an answer to a posed question;
5. Raising questions that help advance discussion;
6. Proposing an original idea related to the topic of discussion;
7. Drawing on evidence (social scientific data, personal experience, popular culture) to either support or challenge ideas;
8. Constructively critiquing an idea offered in the readings or by a class member (including me);
9. Pointing out how various comments complement each other or are at odds;
10. Playing "devil's advocate."

I want to stress that we will be *working* on these skills. You are not expected to have these perfected by the first day of class or even by the end. All I am asking is that you make a good faith effort to practice them. My job is to provide a safe and non-threatening atmosphere that, hopefully, will facilitate discussion.

Ground Rules

1. Come to class on time, so discussion is not interrupted.
2. Come to class having read all the readings.
3. Address each other when speaking, rather than directing comments to me (unless, of course, you are referring to something I said or want to direct a comment or question to me specifically).
4. Understand that contributing more does not necessarily mean better. The best contributors are usually those who are the best listeners. I ask that people contribute regularly and meaningfully. Dominating discussion and/or not being sensitive to the direction of the discussion are just as problematic as not saying anything at all.
5. Take to heart, especially those who have difficulty speaking up in groups, that there is no

such thing as a stupid question or comment.

6. Respect silences. Some people become anxious when there is a lull in the conversation and feel compelled to say something just to fill the silence. Periodic silences are appropriate. For example, they give more reserved people the opportunity to jump in. Or, they can give the group a chance to think about what has been said and how various comments relate to each other. On occasion I will actually call for reflective periods of silence.

Grading

At mid-term you will have the opportunity to evaluate yourself in terms of the quality and quantity of your participation. I will then respond to that self-evaluation and give you advice on how you can improve. I will give you a grade so that you have an idea of where you stand. We will repeat this process at the end of the semester. Each assessment is worth 50 points. That is a lot!!! It constitutes one-sixth of your grade and indicates how important discussion to an upper-level seminar.

“A” grades are reserved for students who are always in class; show evidence of having read and thought about the reading with some depth; listen well to other students; help focus our discussions with thoughtful comments and questions about the broader implications and comparative possibilities of the readings; take a leadership role in discussion; and generally offer creative, imaginative ways of engaging the texts and the themes of the course.

“B” grades are for students who are always or almost always in class (1-2 absences) and take a thoughtful part in our discussion; participate actively and well, engaging in texts and themes of the course with some depth; and occasionally take leadership for the direction of the discussion.

“C” grades are for students who come to class regularly but rarely speak, are active in discussion but have 3 absences, or participate in discussion in a way that shows little evidence of having done or thought much about the readings.

“D” grades are for students who attend irregularly (4 absences) or rarely show signs of having done or thought much about the readings.

“F” grades are for students who miss 5 or more classes or do not speak or show evidence of having done the reading.