

SOCIAL THEORY (SOC 303)

DePauw University

Fall 2012

MWF 9:20-10:20 a.m.

Professor Rebecca Bordt

Office: 332 Asbury Hall

Office phone: 658-4521

Home phone: 653-1328

Office hours: MW 1:30-3:00 p.m. (or by appt.)

E-mail: rbordt@depauw.edu

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, 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 READINGS

The following books are available on-line and at the University Bookstore:

Farganis, James. 2011. *Readings in Social Theory: The Classic Tradition to Post-Modernism*, 6th edition. NY: McGraw-Hill.

Kivisto, Peter (ed.). 2011. *Illuminating Social Life: Classical and Contemporary Theory Revisited*, 5th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge.

Additional readings are posted on Moodle.

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 a 8-10 pp. paper analyzing one theory used in two empirical settings. See Appendix B for more details.

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 C for more details.

COURSE POLICIES

How Grades are Calculated. Grades will be determined using the following point and percentage systems. 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	25 points
Discussion facilitation (with partner)	25 points
Class participation	50 points (25 for each half of semester)
Total	<hr/> 500 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.

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 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.

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 at 101 E. Seminary St., [765-658-6267](tel: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.”

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 date 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 October 26 but not on October 27?) Finally, I hope to create a safe environment so all of us can work on our discussion skills, whether they be difficulty speaking in groups, listening to others, or grounding oral contributions in the course material.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: The books are identified by the authors' last names (Farganis; Kivisto). Articles on Moodle are indicated as such in parentheses and with an asterisk.

<p>WEEK 1 August 22, 24</p>	<p>Why Study Theory?</p> <p>W: Introduction to class.</p> <p>F: *Mills, "The Promise," pp. 3-24 (Moodle) *Lemert, "Social Theory: Its Uses and Pleasures" pp. 1-20 (Moodle) Farganis, "Introduction," pp. 1-25</p>
<p>WEEK 2 August 27, 29, 31</p>	<p>Placing Sociological Theory into Context</p> <p>M: *Collins, "The Rise of the Social Sciences," pp. 3-46 (Moodle)</p> <p>I. Classical Theories: Karl Marx</p> <p>W: Farganis, "Karl Marx: Alienation, Class Struggle, and Class Consciousness," pp. 29-31</p> <p>F: Farganis, "Karl Marx: Alienation, Class Struggle, and Class Consciousness," pp. 31-50</p>
<p>WEEK 3 September 3, 5, 7</p>	<p>M: Walsh and Zacharias-Walsh, "Working Longer, Living Less: Understanding Marx Through the Workplace Today" in Kivisto (STUDENT FACILITATION)</p> <p>Max Weber</p> <p>W: Farganis, "Max Weber: The Iron Cage," pp. 73-92 WSTRW presentation</p> <p>F: Farganis, "Max Weber: The Iron Cage," pp. 92-110 WSTRW presentation</p>

<p>WEEK 4 September 10, 12, 14</p>	<p>M: Ritzer, “The Weberian Theory of Rationalization and the McDonaldization of Contemporary Society” in Kivisto (STUDENT FACILITATION)</p> <p>Emile Durkheim</p> <p>W: Farganis, “Emile Durkheim: <i>Anomie</i> and Social Integration,” pp. 51-54 WSTRW presentation</p> <p>F: Farganis, “Emile Durkheim: <i>Anomie</i> and Social Integration,” pp. 54-71 WSTRW presentation</p>
<p>WEEK 5 September 17, 19, 21</p>	<p>M: Hornsby, “Surfing the Net for Community: A Durkheimian Analysis of Electronic Gatherings” in Kivisto (STUDENT FACILITATION)</p> <p>W: Exam 1</p> <p>W.E.B. DuBois</p> <p>F: *Collins and Makowsky, “The Emergence of African-American Sociology...” pp. 191-206 (Moodle) WSTRW presentation</p>
<p>WEEK 6 September 24, 26, 28</p>	<p>M: Farganis, “W.E.B. DuBois: Double-Consciousness and the Public Intellectual,” pp. 139-154. WSTRW presentation</p> <p>W: Hartmann and Bell, “Race-Based Critical Theory and the “Happy Talk” of Diversity in America” in Kivisto (STUDENT FACILITATION)</p> <p>Charlotte Perkins Gilman</p> <p>F: *Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, “Present at the Creation: Women in the History of Sociology and Social Theory” pp. 1-21 (Moodle) WSTRW Presentation</p>

<p>WEEK 7 October 1, 3, 5</p>	<p>M: *Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, <i>The Yellow Wallpaper</i> (Moodle) *Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, "The Dependence of Women." (Moodle) WSTRW presentation</p> <p>W: Lorber and Martin, "The Socially Constructed Body: Insights from Feminist Theory," in Kivisto. (STUDENT FACILITATION)</p> <p>II. Contemporary Theories: Functionalism</p> <p>F: Farganis, "Functionalism," pp. 157-176 WSTRW presentation</p>
<p>WEEK 8 October 8, 10, 12</p>	<p>M: Farganis, "Functionalism," pp. 176-192 WSTRW presentation</p> <p>W: Colomy and Greiner, "Criminalizing Transgressing Youth," in Kivisto (STUDENT FACILITATION)</p> <p>Conflict Theory</p> <p>F: Farganis, "Conflict Theory," pp. 193-212 WSTRW presentation</p> <p>Last day to have research articles approved by RB</p>
<p>WEEK 9 October 15, 17, 19</p>	<p>Fall break</p>

<p>WEEK 10 October 22, 24, 26</p>	<p>M: Farganis, "Conflict Theory," pp. 212-229 WSTRW presentation</p> <p>W: *Frazier et al., "The Social Context of Race Differentials in Juvenile Justice Dispositions," pp. 447-458 (Moodle) (STUDENT FACILITATION)</p> <p>F: Exam 2</p> <p>*** Last day to withdraw from course***</p>
<p>WEEK 11 October 29, 31, November 2</p>	<p>Exchange Theory and Rational Choice</p> <p>M: Farganis, "Exchange Theory and Rational Choice," pp. 231-242 WSTRW presentation</p> <p>W: Farganis, "Exchange Theory and Rational Choice," pp. 243-255 WSTRW presentation</p> <p>F: M: Prendergast, "Why Do African Americans Pay More for New Cars?" in Kivisto (STUDENT FACILITATION)</p>
<p>WEEK 12 November 5, 7, 9</p>	<p>Symbolic Interaction</p> <p>M: Farganis, "Symbolic Interaction," pp. 297-307 WSTRW presentation</p> <p>W: Farganis, "Symbolic Interaction," pp. 307-316 WSTRW presentation</p> <p>F: Kivisto and Pittman, "Goffman's Dramaturgical Sociology," in Kivisto (STUDENT FACILITATION)</p>

<p>WEEK 13 November 12, 14, 16</p>	<p>Postmodernism</p> <p>M: *Lemert, “Postmodernism is Not What You Think,” pp. 19-53 (Moodle)</p> <p>W: No class (RB at conference)</p> <p>F: No class (RB at conference)</p>
<p>WEEK 14 November 19, 21, 23</p>	<p>M: Farganis, “Post-Modernism,” pp. 357-368 Analytic Paper due.</p> <p>W: No class (Thanksgiving)</p> <p>F: No class (Thanksgiving)</p>
<p>WEEK 15 November 26, 28, 30</p>	<p>M: Gotham, “Contrasts of Carnival,” pp. 292-311 in Kivisto [STUDENT FACILITATION]</p> <p>Feminist, Critical Race and Queer Theories</p> <p>W: *Seidman, “Feminist Theory,” pp. 201-221 (Moodle) Farganis, “Sex, Gender, Queer Theory, and Race,” pp. 398-410</p> <p>F: Farganis, “Sex, Gender, Queer Theory, and Race,” pp. 410-419</p>
<p>WEEK 16 December 3, 5, 7</p>	<p>M: *Seidman, “Critical Race Theory,” pp. 222-234 (Moodle) Farganis, “ Sex, Gender, Queer Theory, and Race,” pp. 428-438</p> <p>W: *Seidman, “Lesbian, Gay and Queer Theory,” pp. 235-249 (Moodle) Farganis, Sex, Gender, Queer Theory, and Race, “ pp. 420-428</p> <p>F: Semester Wrap-up</p>
<p>FINAL EXAM WEEK</p>	<p>EXAM 3-Thursday, December 13, 2012, 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.</p>

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 Moodle articles. 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 Moodle).

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

Analytic Paper Assignment

Select one of the theories covered on the syllabus that is of most interest to you. Find two scholarly journal articles that empirically test the theory (or related theoretical concept) in two different empirical contexts. The articles must come from two academic, refereed journals (such as, but not limited to, *American Sociological Review*, *Gender & Society*, *Social Problems*, *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*). Once you have identified your sources, they should be approved by me (either send me a link or drop off a hardcopy). The articles should explicitly use the same theory or theoretical concept to frame their studies and include an ample discussion of the theory. (i.e., you are not to apply the theory yourselves). For example you might find two articles on Goffman's theory of dramaturgy. The first is an empirical analysis of strippers in a nightclub. The second is a study of a professional hockey team.

Write a 8-10 page paper assessing the strengths and weaknesses of these two applications of theory. The format of your paper is up to you, although you should in some way address the following:

1. Summarize theory or theoretical concept. (What theory or theoretical concept did you select? What is the essence of this theoretical tradition?)
2. Summarize research articles. (How is the theory or theoretical concept used in the 2 research articles? What are the author's goals regarding the theory they use? What methodology did they use? What are the major findings? What implications do these findings have for the theory?)
3. Critique the application of the theory in the articles. (Why is this theory or theoretical concept appropriate for studying the topic(s) under consideration? What are the strengths and weaknesses of using this theory or theoretical concept to study the topic(s)? Is one application better than the other? How so? Do the authors meet the goals they set out for themselves?)
4. Outline remaining unanswered questions or suggestions for future research. (What contributions do these research efforts make to the theory? What remains unanswered?)

Deadlines:

No later than October 12, 2012: 2 journal articles selected and approved by RB
November 19, 2012: Final paper due (including a copy of both articles)

APPENDIX C

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 25 points.

“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 absence) 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 or are active in discussion but have 2-3 absences or if you 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.