

Notes for Sociological Theory Class

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The Three Elements of Our Anthology Title

- **Classic**
 - Something that rewards repeated readings
 - It is substantially important
 - Provides an exceptionally clear statement of a theoretical position
 - Readers return to the text
 - Because substantially important
 - Exceptionally clear, well stated position
 - Originality
 - Foundational
 - Survives scrutiny / enduring or proven value
 - Continuing relevance / applicability
 - Stylistic Template
 - “Repositories of Truth”
 - Timeless
 - Canon for the Subject
- **Sociological**
 - Socio=Society
 - Logical= the science of
 - Intuitive Definitions
 - Explaining aspects of everyday life that are beyond the individual
 - Explains the causal relationships between events / sites (how what happens at work is related to what happens at home, for example)
 - Focuses on the group/society
 - Explains variation in cultures
 - “Social Life” is the object of study
 - Study of interactions at different units of analysis & at different levels of abstraction
 - Textbook Definition
 - Development of systematic knowledge about social life, the way it is organized, how it changes, its creation in social action, & its disruption and renewal in social conflict. P. 1
 - Dr. Brush defines “sociology standing on one foot” = **Sociology** is the effort to come to terms with the primary circumstances of daily life by studying individuals and groups in social context and interaction.
 - T. B. Bottomore defines **sociology** “as a systematic reflection upon the trends of social development in present-day societies and upon the political choices which they pose.”

- **Theory**
 - An idea that helps one predict outcomes
 - “Accepted wisdom”
 - Statements about how the world works
 - Framework for explanation
 - What is Theory For? (Theoretical Purpose)
 - Systematic interpretation / Systematize knowledge production
 - Guide research – Frame empirical inquiry
 - Clarify concepts
 - Contribute to exegetical tradition
 - Guide social:

-diagnosis - how things got to be how they are

-prognosis - what should be done and what the consequences will be

-rationale - who should do it and why

Transition from Social Thought → Social Theory

- Development of science
- Development of the “social”
 - Individualism (Reformation)
 - Rise of modern nation-states (Political & French Revolutions)
 - Industrialization & large scale markets (Industrial Revolution)
 - European expansion & colonization
 - Trying to understand the range of cultures and peoples

Elements of the toolbox: Think about the following questions while reading

- What? (Substance, idea, theory of)
- Where does it apply? (Geographic/ special extent & specificity)
- When? (Temporal extent & specificity)
- Who? (Agent? Audience? Actor? Theorist?)
- How? (What are the mechanisms? Propositions?)
- Why? (motivations for theorist, actors, agents, and theoretical purpose)

Analytical Reading

- Preview the text before reading
 - Signposts (title, headings, subheadings, bold words)
 - Background on author
 - Summary of the text at beginning or end
- Read actively
 - Pen / highlight key terms or ideas
 - Take margin notes if needed
 - No random marking
 - Look up terms
 - Create exam charts, study sheets
- Examine the Text (ask questions)
 - Literal questions

- Inferential questions
- Application questions
- Identify the thesis. Identify the argument in support of the thesis. Identify the evidence in support of the argument in support of the thesis.

More Professor Bottomore: "The greatest social scientists have been passionately concerned about some social problem, and usually extremely partisan ... and this may account for the significance and the intellectual excitement of their work. The question is whether this partisanship manifests itself too strongly, not simply in the selection of subjects for inquiry, but in the formation of concepts and models, which become ideal-types of too ideal a kind, and in the conduct and presentation of their investigations, which become too selective, too well insulated against the possible discovery of counter-instances."