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## SOC 2004: CENTRAL THEMES IN SOCIAL THEORY

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COURSE MEETS: FALL TERM 2003 TUESDAYS 2:00 – 4:25 P.M.  
SEMINAR ROOM: 2R51 POSVAR HALL  
PROFESSOR: LISA D. BRUSH  
OFFICE LOCATION: 2J28 W.W. POSVAR HALL  
OFFICE HOURS: TUESDAYS 1-2 P.M. AND BY APPOINTMENT  
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Sections of this syllabus are adapted with permission from materials developed by Drs. Thomas Fararo and Gianpaolo Baiocchi.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

The objective of this course is to introduce you to some important statements in the history of sociological theory, as well as to offer an introduction on how to "do theory" and how to link theory to sociological research. We will not exhaust the possible schools of social theory and sociological thought. The idea is for this course to offer enough of both "the forest" and "the trees" to allow students to pursue further study in various areas of theory as well as to give students a solid foundation from which to develop theoretically informed empirical research questions. In line with the substantive focus of the sociology department, where possible we will pay special attention to issues of social inequality, especially class, race, gender, sexuality, and nation.

### LEARNING GOALS

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Contribute in an informed way to debating what constitutes "classical sociological theory". This includes defining a "classic," distinguishing "sociological" from other disciplinary theories, and identifying criteria for calling something "theoretical" (as opposed to "empirical", on the one hand, and "ideological", on the other).
- Demonstrate proficiency in reading and discussing theoretical texts.

- Connect classical theoretical statements to the empirical study of inequalities. Compare and contrast different theoretical approaches and their consequences for research on social inequalities.
- Identify and explain the usefulness of theoretical practices such as concept clarification, modeling, and typology construction.
- Link theory and research through concepts such as “level of abstraction” and “unit of analysis.”
- Draw potentially testable hypotheses from theoretical discussions. This is both skill and art, and takes practice. If you start now, you might develop what it takes to derive a compelling theoretical framework for your own research.
- Identify and assess the strengths and weaknesses of different types of theoretical arguments, including but not necessarily limited to theories that deploy functional, evolutionary, conflict, critical, exchange, interactionist, instrumentalist, structuralist, materialist, idealist, dialectical, or institutionalist strategies. The idea here is not a classification exercise; after all, these categories are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. Rather, you should feel comfortable following the threads of different types of arguments through actual examples of theoretical writing. This will enable you to pick up common and contrasting threads across theoretical writers and their works and perhaps weave those threads into your own work.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Much of the initial process of graduate study is about learning new norms and practices of literacy. To meet the learning goals of this course, you will need to read the materials every week closely, carefully, and thoughtfully. Some of the readings are shorter than others, but do not be fooled; as a general rule the shorter the reading, the more challenging it will be! Most readings will require more than one “pass”. Be sure to allot enough time to go through each reading at least twice and to take notes (in the margins, on 3x5 cards, in a notebook, on your computer, or however you prefer).

To demonstrate your learning, you will need to participate actively in class discussions, prepare weekly reading memoranda, make a presentation to the class, and complete a final essay based on a revised version of your presentation materials.

- Memoranda: Before 6:00 p.m. on Mondays (that is, the day before the class meeting), submit to the class distribution list an analytical memo of 300 to 500 words. Comment succinctly on what you found most interesting, important, puzzling, infuriating, fundamental, etc. about the readings. Pay particular attention to the learning goals as you do the reading and as you write your memoranda. Take care to demonstrate your growing capacity to meet the course learning goals through what you write in response to the readings. These abstracts will show me what you're learning and help you organize your response to the readings. Distributed over email in a timely manner, they will also serve as a guide for discussion. These written assignments plus your participation in discussion contribute 50% to your final grade.
- Presentation and final paper: During one class session, you will present a more extended "think piece" (1000 words) on the readings for that week. This is another opportunity for you to demonstrate your progress toward the learning goals for the course. Organize your essay and your presentation around showing how your engagement with the readings for that week extended or enriched your ability to meet the learning goals. In your presentation, set out what you see as the context, key concepts, and controversies from the week's readings. At the minimum, identify particularly problematic passages in the text and help the group work toward meeting the learning goals by engaging closely with the text. Provide and elicit alternate interpretations. Contextualize or imaginatively adjudicate debates implicit or explicit in the readings. Prepare specific questions for discussion. Your presentation and a revised version of your essay (on which I will provide comments; revisions are due at the last class session) will contribute the other 50% of your final grade.

## EVALUATION

Grades will be assigned on the following scale:

- A: Truly exceptional and outstanding work.
- B: Solid, acceptable graduate-level work.
- B- or below: Below acceptable level for graduate work.

## COURSE MATERIALS

The required text for this course is:

Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, Kathryn Schmidt, and Indermohan Virk (eds.), *Classical Sociological Theory* (Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

It is available (in paperback, if the book goddess answers our prayers) at the University Book Center. Unfortunately, it is not in the library and I have not been able to put it on reserve. Fortunately, it is not prohibitively expensive. It is an excellent collection of excerpts. Between this course and the companion required course next semester, you will read virtually all of it. In the Schedule of Readings and Meetings below, I refer to assignments from this book as *CTS*, pp. xx-xxx.

I have also assembled a “reader” which contains additional required readings for this class. It is also available for purchase at the Book Center. In the Schedule of Readings and Meetings below, I refer to assignments from this collection as *Reader*, author’s last name. Reprinting permissions have been obtained for these texts for class members only. It is a violation of copyright law to make unauthorized copies of the Reader. Please either buy it or make your own “educational use” single copies of the original sources (most of which you can find in Hillman Library).

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR COURSEPACK

- Cooper, Anna Julia, *A Voice from the South* (Xenia, OH: Aldine Press, 1892).
- Davis, Kingsley & Wilbert E. Moore, “Some Principles of Stratification,”  
*American Sociological Review* 10 (April 1945): 242-249.
- Engels, Friedrich, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (New York: International Pubs., 1970).
- Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, *Women and Economics* (New York: Small and Maynard, 1898).
- Gliman, Charlotte Perkins, *Human Work* (New York: McClure and Phillips, 1904).
- Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, *The Man-Made World, or Our Androcentric Culture* (New York: Charlton Company, 1911).
- Mill, John Stuart, *The Subjection of Women* (London, 1869).
- Tumin, Melvin M., “Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis,”  
*American Sociological Review* 18 (August 1953): 387-394.
- Weber, Marianne, “Selections from Marianne Weber’s *Reflections on Women and Women’s Issues*,” trans. Elizabeth Kirchen (Unpublished manuscript, 1997)(Originally published as *Frauenfragen und Frauengedanken*, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1919).
- Wells-Barnett, Ida B., *A Red Record* (Chicago: Donohue and Henneberry, 1895).
- Wright, Erik Olin, “The Shadow of Exploitation in Weber’s Class Analysis,”  
*American Sociological Review* 67 (December 2002): 832-853.

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND MEETINGS

- 26 August – Organizational meeting.
- 2 September – CST, pp. 1-43.
- 9 September – CST, pp. 44-75.
- 16 September – CST, pp. 76-90.
- 23 September – Reader, Mill and Engels.
- 30 September – CST, pp. 103-127.
- 7 October – CST, pp. 128-161.
- 14 October – Reader, Gilman.
- 21 October – CST, pp. 165-205.
- 28 October – CST, pp. 206-232.
- 4 November – Reader, Wright and Weber.
- 11 November – CST, pp. 235-252, 273-286.
- 18 November – CST, pp. 289-338.
- 25 November – Reader, Cooper and Wells-Barnett.
- 2 December – CST, pp. 341-346. Reader, Davis & Moore and Tumin.
- 9 December – No new reading. Final assignment due.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Enrollment in this course makes you a member of an academic community. The University of Pittsburgh enforces expectations for the members of its academic community. These standards are designed to ensure the integrity of your education and of the evaluation process. Read the *Guidelines on Academic Integrity: Student and Faculty Obligations and Hearing Procedures* with great care. The expectations of academic integrity are central to the intellectual liveliness and standards of this academic community. As a student, you have a responsibility to be honest and to respect the ethical standards of your chosen field of study. You will have violated these standards if you:

- Refer to unauthorized materials (in other words, don't cheat).
- Provide unauthorized assistance (in other words, don't help someone else cheat).
- Receive unauthorized assistance (in other words, don't cheat).
- Possess, buy, sell, copy, or use unauthorized materials (in other words, don't buy a draft of your assignments from a "paper mill").
- Act as or use a substitute in an evaluation setting (in other words, although you may work in pairs or small groups, don't write an assignment for someone else, or have someone write an assignment for you).
- Present as your own, for academic evaluation, the ideas or words of another person without proper acknowledgement and citation of sources (in other words, don't plagiarize).

Academic integrity is not limited to these points, but these are the most important elements. They will be enforced without fail in this course. Do your own work. Figure out what you want to say and say it in your own words. Cite your sources when you quote or paraphrase. Violate these community standards and you will flunk so fast your head will spin.

## OTHER RESOURCES (SPECIAL THANKS TO DR. FARARO)

### JOURNALS

New theory articles appear in numerous journals today. An ASA journal dealing with theory is *Sociological Theory*. *Theory and Society* is another resource.

There are archives of articles that can be read on-line and/or downloaded from JSTOR for a number of sociology journals, including *The American Journal of Sociology*, *The American Sociological Review*, *Sociological Theory*, *The Social Psychology Quarterly*. In addition, one can gain on-line access to *The Annual Review of Sociology*, which contains articles that are commissioned to survey the recent literature in specific fields of research.

### RECENT REFERENCE WORKS

*The Blackwell Companion to Major Social Theorists*, ed. by G. Ritzer, 2000.

*Handbook of Social Theory*, ed. by G. Ritzer and B. Smart, Sage, 2001.

*Handbook of Sociological Theory*, ed. by J. Turner, Kluwer/Plenum, 2001.

*The International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Elsevier Science, 2001.