

HISTORY OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY SOCIOLOGY 215 (SPRING 2006)

The History of Sociological Theory
Sociology 215
TTH 9:30-10:45 L 213

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This course presents a survey of major sociological perspectives from Auguste Comte in the 1830's, through the work of George Herbert Mead in the mid-1930's. This period of sociological thinking is marked by momentous changes in research methodology and by the emergence of competing explanations of social phenomena. To illustrate and to explore the significance of these changes you are asked to read and to critically assess the work of major social thinkers, among them: Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Emile Durkheim, Vilfredo Pareto, and George Herbert Mead. In the process of studying these and other social theorists we will evaluate major themes characterizing general schools of sociological thought. We'll give special attention to connecting concepts, issues, and perspectives articulated by early social theorists with twentieth century sociological views. And, we'll close the course with an assessment of the agendas of conflict, functional, and interactional theory in the 1940's and 1950's. A major objective of the course is to enable you to see elements of the social world through the eyes of the theorists we're reading. Another is to provide you with insights into social life that have endured the test of time, that have relevance to building valid understandings of what's going on in the world today.

To meet the need for textual analysis and close critical reading, as well as to cover a wide range of sociological theory for this period of history, we use both synopses of theorists' texts and original texts. This semester we will pay particular attention to Durkheim (The Division of Labor), Marx (selected excerpts including some from Political Economy), Weber (The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism), Simmel (Simmel on Culture, Edited by Featherstone) and Mead (Mind, Self and Society and George Herbert Mead on Human Conduct by Herbert Blumer, Edited by Morrione). An extensive set of material relating to these theorists is available on the web. Throughout the semester we will strive to link ideas of the theorists we cover to current issues. Any newspaper articles or other items that you run across that illustrate connections between classic theory and contemporary issues should be shared among us. So, feel free to e-mail them to us or to bring them to class!

Note: Please become familiar with sociological and general social science reference materials in the library and on the web and to consult them as needed. I will note a number in class. I expect you to know how to access more than "JSTOR" and Lexis-Nexis for articles and to be able to manage basic web access as well. I urge you to consult with Reference Librarian Marilyn Pukkila well before starting to write your paper. From time to time I will e-mail you with URLs for particular articles and web sites relevant to topics we discuss in class. Please share with all of us any you find that are not already noted.

Course requirements. The course contains 5 graded components:

1. There are three opportunities to write short (3-page) papers covering material relating to Durkheim, Marx, Weber, Pareto, Simmel, and Mead, two before the mid-term and one after it. Topics for these papers ask you to elaborate upon and to interpret critically

- specific sections of text and to examine a particular concept or theoretical issue in the theorist's work. You may write on two or three of the paper topics. If you write on all three I'll select the grade for paper #2 and whichever of the other two paper grades that is the higher one. The grade on the second one may not be dropped. So, to be clear, if you skip paper #1 you can not go back and do it later; so, you'll have to write on #'s 2 and 3. Once more, everyone must write on paper topic #2. These short papers are worth 30% total.
2. There is an in-class mid-term exam worth 15% of your grade. It is on Tuesday, March **21st**. **NOTE:** this is the Tuesday before Spring Vacation. (So, you'll be able to relax on break and I'll have to read them.)
 3. There is a final exam worth 15% of your grade. Under no circumstances may this examination be taken before its scheduled time. This is a College rule.
 4. There is a 10-page paper *and brief presentation* worth 25% of your grade. The paper is due on **May 9th**, Tuesday, in class. Papers not handed in on time will be dropped one full grade on the date they are due and thereafter one grade per day that they are late. You may choose to write a draft of this paper and hand it in at least 7 days before the due date. I will grade it and count that grade as 60 percent of its grade. This arrangement is designed to encourage you to take seriously both the paper topic and the process of writing. The 5-6 minute "presentation" of your paper will be evaluated on the degree to which you state your primary research question and evidence for your conclusions clearly and concisely. Rehearse it to make sure it's brief and right to the point. Prepare a one-page handout for everyone in class summarizing your paper. It should include three or four references as well.
 5. "Homework" as assigned (10%) and class participation (5%) constitute 15% of your grade. Homework: Unless we agree otherwise, any assignment noted as "homework" must be written and submitted in class— *hard copy*, NOT e-mailed. *A grade of zero will be entered if they are not handed in on time.* Effective class participation is, of course, predicated on attendance. Your absence will be conspicuous. *Travel for athletic contests is not an acceptable excuse for missing a class.*
 6. RE: class participation – this term it includes your required attendance at the Kingsley Birge Lecture (evening March 7th). And, if possible, I'd like you to also attend Professor Troy Duster's (the Birge Lecturer) open class as well. The Department is aiming for 100% major participation in the Birge Lecture events.

Books to Purchase:

1. Emile Durkheim, The Division of Labor In Society. Macmillan, 1964.
2. C.W. Mills. The Sociological Imagination. Oxford University Press. 1959.
3. Jonathan Turner, Leonard Beeghley, and Charles Powers. The Emergence of Sociological Theory. 5th Edition, Wadsworth, 2002.
4. Herbert Blumer. George Herbert Mead and Human Conduct. Thomas Morrione, Editor. AltaMira Press. 2003.
5. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. 1998 Edition, Roxbury (With Collins's Introduction).
6. Simmel, Georg. Simmel on Culture. Edited by David Frisby and Mike Featherstone. Sage Publications. 1997.
7. Bookstore course pack (contains Marx readings among others).
8. C.W. Mills. The Sociological Imagination (Optional purchase, but must be read. Students who took SO 318 will have read it.)

Class discussion format: This course uses a variety of presentation techniques. Lectures are frequently used; but small group discussions and brief student summary presentations of readings are also a common occurrence. On one occasion we'll use a format I've found particularly useful for getting everyone involved. I call it the "advocates-critics-judges" exchange. I'll explain it in class.

Dates, Assignments and Topics: Readings may be added or deleted as appropriate over the term. If we need to we might update the syllabus. If we do this, a new one will be e-mailed to you. Please, then, discard this one to avoid confusion.

February 7th, Tuesday

-Discussion of course objectives and requirements. Defining sociology and basic concepts.
Discussion of the meaning of theory and introduction to C.W. Mills.

February 9th Thursday

-Read at least the first 5 chapters of The Sociological Imagination.
-Homework: (A) Write out (and hand in, as with all subsequent homework) the most important quote you find in each of the first 5 chapters. (B) Answer this question: What criteria does Mills use to evaluate the "adequacy" of sociological theories or perspectives? List the criteria as fully as possible. (You may Xerox pages or quotes.)

February 14th, Tuesday

-Read the remainder of The Sociological Imagination. Pay particular attention to the appendix on "Intellectual Craftsmanship."
-Homework: Write out the most important quote you find in chapters 6-10. And, summarize/condense, in your own words, each of the seven ways Mills suggests for stimulating the "sociological imagination" and the eight points he makes that define both "precepts and cautions" relating to creating and sustaining that sociological imagination. Read Chapters 1 and 2 in Turner, *et.al*.

February 16th, Thursday

The Origins of sociology and Comte's ideas.

-Read Chapter 3 in Turner, *et. al*.

-Read entry on Harriet Martineau in Mary Jo Deegan's "Women in Sociology" on Reserve. Read also any one article in the first issue of the American Journal of Sociology.

-Read the Comte excerpts in the course reader.

-Homework: Briefly (A) answer these four study questions: (1) What specific influences on Comte's thought did Saint-Simon have? (2) What are "traditional elements" in Comte's thought? (3) What was Comte's formulation of sociological methods? (4) How did he define society? (5) What is the debate about the meaning of the term "positivism?" You should keep a copy of this and all other homeworks for exam preparation.

And (B) what would Mills say about the one article from the first issue of the AJS that you read? Answer this part of the homework in not more than one paragraph. Quote the appropriate Mills criticism (or praise). Make certain that you reference the article properly. Please use AJS format.

February 21st, Tuesday and February 23rd, Thursday (Short paper #1 due on the 23rd.)

Comte, Spencer, the Organismic Analogy, and the roots of structural-functionalism
Read Chapter's 4 and 5 and 6 in Turner, *et. al*.

Very Optional: Read Morrione's Masters Thesis on Small (Special Collections).

February 28th, Tuesday and March 2nd, Thursday

The Origin and Historical Context of Marx's Thought:

We'll view a short video on Marx in class and excerpts from the video "Seeing Red." (Lib. res.) as well as a video on Lenin if time allows.

-Read Chapters 7 and 8 in Turner, et.al.

-Read/outline for discussion in class, the Marx excerpts in the Reader.

Homework: see Tuesday's Homework assignment and get started on it.

FYI: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/guide.htm>

March 7th, Tuesday

Marx continued:

-Read Chapter 9 in Turner: Marx's Theoretical Legacy.

-Read: Web version of the "Manifesto." <http://csf.colorado.edu/psn/marx/Archive/1848-CM/>

-Read: web excerpts on Engels Industrial Manchester

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1844engels.html>

Homework: Answer these 6 study questions: What was Marx's argument with the young Hegelians? What is "dialectical materialism?" What according to Marx are the stages of history leading to communism? What is the "labor theory of value"; and, what is the difference between "absolute" and "relative" "surplus value" according to Marx? And, are you alienated? (Hand in today.)

SHORT PAPER #2 IS DUE NEXT CLASS – TUESDAY the 9th.

March 9th, Thursday

Origin and Context of Max Weber's Thought and Weber's Sociology:

-Read Chapters 10 and 11 in Turner, et. al.

Weber Handout/study guide to The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

Homework first part due next week: Prepare for discussion of the Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism using suggested study questions noted in class today.

March 14th, Tuesday and March 16th, Thursday

Max Weber Continued.

Read: The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. (finish by the 16th)

Homework Questions:

For the 16th: Answer the study questions on the Weber handout. Each person should do this independently and hand it in as an assignment separate from the second part (following) of this Weber homework.

-Select and write out the most important quote you find in each chapter and write a *paragraph* analysis of where each of those ideas fits into Weber's general thesis in the book.

March 21st Tuesday: ****Mid-term examination.**

This is a cumulative in-class examination covering all material to date. It consists of two essay questions weighted equally. You may bring to the exam two pages of *quoted material* from Comte, Spencer, Weber, and Marx, **not Turner and not quotes of these theorists**

taken from Turner. These pages must be turned in with the exam. All quotes you use must be referenced. One full grade on the exam will be deducted if *any* quotation lacks citation information. While a question on Simmel will not be on the examination, it's quite appropriate to use him as a critic of Marx should the occasion arise.

March 23rd, Thursday

Georg Simmel's sociology: Formal sociology, "generic social processes," social action, postmodern implications, the "theory of money," a critique of Marxism, and Simmel's relevance to ethnographic study.

7. Read Turner, et. al. Chapter 13
8. Read Frisby and Featherstone: Pp. 1-107. Simmel on defining culture (Part I) and Simmel on culture and crisis (Part II)

SPRING VACATION.

April 4th, Tuesday and April 6th, Thursday

Simmel continued.

-Read Turner, et. al. Chapters 14 and 15.

-Read Simmel in Frisby and Featherstone: Pp. 109-259: Culture and Interaction (Part III), Spatial and Urban Culture (Part IV), Fashion, Adornment and Style (Part V), Leisure Culture (Part VI), Money and Commodity Culture (Part VII). The last two parts of Simmel: Politics of Culture (Part VIII) and Beliefs and Culture (Part IX) are optional.

Optional: Bryan S. Turner, "Simmel, Rationalization and the Sociology of Money." *Sociological Review* 34(1986), pp. 93-114. And, "Money's Place in Society," by Simon Smelt. In, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 31, No. 2. (Jun., 1980), pp. 204-223. Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0007-1315%28198006%2931%3A2%3C204%3AMPIS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-J>

April 11th, Tuesday

Emile Durkheim's sociology. General discussion of Functionalism.

Read Turner, et. al. Chapters 16 and 17. (Focus reading groups for The Division of Labor will be assigned for next class.)

April 13th, Thursday and April 18th, Tuesday

Durkheim continued: Turner Chapter 18.

Read Durkheim's Division of Labor – Discussion of Book One on the 13th; Book Two and Book Three on 18th.

- Looking ahead: SHORT PAPER #3 – Due on Thursday April 27th. We will discuss Durkheim's text in a systematic fashion, using study questions for each chapter (to be handed out) and specific quotes selected (by you and me) for each chapter. To enliven and to focus discussion, we'll divide the class into groups and assign pages to each group for close reading. Each group has the following assignment: For your group's page segment: identify the most important quote, write it out and evaluate where that particular quote fits in the *totality* of Durkheim's thesis in The Division of Labor, and hand it in not later than Tuesday's 4/22 class. This assignment and the attention given to Durkheim is not so much a celebration of Durkheim's perspective as it is an exercise in analytic reasoning and careful textual analysis and interpretation. Our concluding analysis of Durkheim relates his work to

functional theory in anthropology and sociology by summarizing essential views of Radcliffe-Brown, Malinowski, Parsons and Merton, theorists who you'll study in SO 318.

April 20th, Thursday

Vilfredo Pareto's Sociology.

-Read Chapters 19 and 20 and 21, Turner, et. al. (Focused reading assignments with question guide.)

April 25th, Tuesday and April 27th, Thursday (Optional SHORT PAPER #3 DUE on THE 27TH)

-Introduction to Mead: Read Turner Chapter 22 on G.H. Mead (James, Dewey and Cooley).

Discussion of Pragmatism and Interactionism: Utilitarianism, Darwinism.

-Read selections from "George's Page" URL to be e-mailed to you.

-Read: Herbert Blumer's George Herbert Mead and Human Conduct (Morrione, ed.). First 107 pages.

May 2nd, Tuesday

George Herbert Mead's sociological perspective.

-Read Turner, et. al. Chapters 23 and 24.

-Read remainder of Blumer: George Herbert Mead and Human Conduct – including appendices.

May 4th, Thursday and May 9th, Tuesday

Paper presentations and discussion.

May 11th, Thursday

Paper presentations and review for final, course evaluations.

NOTE: Papers are due on May 9th. Your presentation may be on either the 4th or the 9th. – As a *reminder*, the following material should be handed in along with your paper on the 9th – a one-page "abstract" of the paper. This might also be included on your one-page handout to the class. Include in this abstract a *concise* statement of your *major* thesis, a statement of your *most* compelling point (with, of course, a bit of evidence/argument), and, at least, a 3-entry bibliography (the number is arbitrary, more than 3 is fine). Think of giving someone a "package of stuff" on your work – your legacy, so to speak, from this class. This "abstract" may be the same (or not, if you wish) as the handout that you give the class to accompany your presentation.

Note: In the past, students taking this course and SO 318 have set up study groups to discuss readings and to work through ideas for papers. From what they've said, I think this has been helpful. Ideas expressed by "classic" sociologists we read are usually best understood when related to specific social and historical contexts as well as to assessments of individual and collective cultural experiences. The more this is done through good scholarship and discussion the more you will come to see the strengths and weaknesses of the perspectives we examine.

Some of the most exciting and interesting discussions we have in this course are sparked by questions you raise in class. I sincerely hope you'll take seriously my invitation to continue this "tradition." This course offers you a window through which you may view sociological theory; it's not the only one. It is offered as a starting point for you to use as you learn more about how the social world comes into existence and shapes our lives.

Academic dishonesty: As distasteful as it is for us all to have to attend to this issue, please read the student handbook on the topic. Any student who plagiarizes an other's work (including improperly or non-referenced Internet sources), hands in falsified information, or otherwise cheats on **any** of the requirements for this course, including a homework assignment or quiz, *will receive an F for the course*; and, a letter stating the reason for failure will be placed in the student's file. Using part or all of a paper that you submitted for another course's requirements to meet any part of this course's requirement(s) without permission from me to do so constitutes academic dishonesty. Again, please read the student handbook or ask me if you have any questions. It is your responsibility to know what constitutes academic dishonesty. Note also that the faculty has exceptionally effective College-sponsored and library supported web-based tools at their disposal to track text sources and to identify plagiarized material.