

ASOC 511: Sociological Theories II

Spring 2018

Mondays 4:15-7:05pm

Massry Center for Business 368

Professor Elizabeth Popp Berman

Arts & Sciences 346

Office hours Wednesdays 4:20-5:20pm, Thursdays 2:00-4:00pm, or by appointment

Sign-up at <https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/exdpy>

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This is the second course in a two-semester sequence on sociological theory required for MA and PhD students in sociology. The purpose of the course is to provide an overview of theoretical developments relevant to sociology since the mid-twentieth century. It draws on core theoretical traditions within American sociology as well as European developments and challenges from the global South.

While there is a rough consensus about the core texts of classical sociological theory (Marx, Weber, and Durkheim at the core, with doses of Simmel, Du Bois, Mead, Tocqueville and others sprinkled in for flavor), there is much less agreement about what “contemporary sociological theory” should contain. I have selected texts with two goals in mind—goals that are in tensions with one another. The first is to learn about core theoretical traditions in American sociology, while also bringing in some of the European theorists (Bourdieu, Foucault, Latour) who have been particularly influential in sociology in the United States. The second is to read theory with an eye toward thinking about its use in empirical sociological research. Although we will read relatively little recent empirical sociology in this class, it will repeatedly frame our conversations about theory, and we will consider the relationship between theory and empirical research more explicitly in the first and last weeks of class.

There are several challenges in putting together a syllabus for a class such as this. One is how much primary versus secondary literature to assign. For the most part, we read the theorists themselves. In certain weeks, though (structural functionalism week, postcolonial theory week), we’ll draw more heavily on synthetic accounts. Another is the balance between whole books, which allow full engagement with a particular author, and shorter readings across several authors that provide a window onto a theoretical tradition. We will read a couple of books in their entirety, but I have leaned more toward the second approach. Sometimes a smorgasbord can actually be satisfying.

Finally, authors assigned in sociological theory tend to be especially (relative to other sociology classes) white, male, and Western. One reaction to this is to try to recover non-white-male-Western theorists who were historically marginalized within the discipline. Aldon Morris’s project to recenter W.E.B. DuBois within the classical theory canon is one fairly successful example of such a strategy.

I have taken a different tack in this syllabus, however. Plenty of important theory from the last fifty years is critical of sociology’s historical focus on white Western men. Since part of my goal for the class is to familiarize you with the theoretical traditions that have been central to

American sociology, I have allowed a good chunk of the semester to reflect the white-Western-maleness that has mostly dominated sociological theory. But we will also read from traditions that respond to that dominance, including postcolonial theory, feminist theory, and theories of race, and we will situate all of our authors within the historical circumstances that contributed to their influential positions in the discipline.

Class organization and requirements

This is a seminar. Accordingly, I expect you to complete the reading before class each week and to actively participate in class through questions, discussion, and verbal engagement with the texts and your classmates. Each week, you will post a reaction memo the day before class (more details below). You will also write two papers of about ten pages each, the first due **March 26**, and the second due **May 14**. Your grade will be based 20% on your memos, 20% on class participation, and 30% on each paper.

In general, we will use nearly the full class time, with a 10-minute break at the halfway point. Since I teach in another building until 4:05pm, we will actually start at 4:20pm, not 4:15pm. Most weeks I will primarily lecture for the first half of class, then the second half will be more discussion-based, and I will close by introducing next week's readings for 10-15 minutes.

Please note that I do not routinely allow incompletes; they will be given only in exceptional circumstances, such as hospitalization or family emergency.

Participation

Verbal participation in class is a must. I recognize that students are coming to this class from a variety of backgrounds and with different levels of prior exposure to social theory. Good contributions to class are less about showing off your brilliance than about demonstrating engagement with the texts and the class from whatever your starting point: asking clarifying questions, working to make connections between theory and your research interests or observations about the social world, making comparisons across texts or authors, reacting to your classmates' memos and comments.

If you are uncomfortable speaking in class—either because you feel your understanding of theory is inadequate (trust me, everyone feels this way), because English is not your first language, or because you are relatively new to graduate or seminar-style classes—it is perfectly fine to write down in advance some comments you might make or questions you have so that speaking in class is a bit easier. But I do expect verbal participation from everyone.

Memos

Each week, you will turn in a memo reacting to the week's readings. The memos should be roughly 500-750 words in length, are due by 10pm on Sundays and can be posted to Blackboard. 10pm is a hard deadline; memos submitted after 10pm will receive half credit. You can take one week off from the memos without penalty. There is (obviously?) no memo due before the first class. Please read other students' memos before you come to class on Mondays.

Your memo should start with two bullet points suggesting topics or questions for class discussion. These may be clarifying questions; comparisons across readings; or reflections on how the text relates to other theorists, what you have read in other classes or observed, recent sociological research, or current events—almost anything you think would be worth talking about as a class.

The rest of your reaction memo should do just what it says—react to the readings. You can focus on one point in depth, or the readings as a whole. You can talk about what you don't understand. The format is relatively open. The point is to engage with what you are reading and think about what it means. Your memos should not, however, be pure summary of the readings. During two weeks (week 2 and week 13) I will ask you to do something slightly different from a standard reaction memo; instructions for those weeks are in the reading schedule below.

Memos will not be graded week-to-week, but you will receive a grade and written comments on your memos after Spring Break and at the end of the semester. You are welcome to ask for feedback sooner, and if anyone is wildly off track, I will reach out earlier in the semester.

Papers

You will write two class papers of about ten pages each (double-spaced, standard fonts and margins). Three weeks before each paper is due (on March 5 and April 23), I will provide about four suggested topics: typically comparisons across theorists, explorations of a particular theme in a theorist's work, or applications of a theoretical approach. You can also propose your own paper topic, which must be approved in advance and should similarly demonstrate understanding of class readings. Your papers will be based primarily on readings assigned in class; while some students may choose to cite additional work, it is not expected or required.

Readings

Most of the course readings will be posted to Blackboard. However, you should acquire the following books from the vendor of your choice. You will need to have the readings in class. While an electronic version is fine, accessing the reading from your phone will not be sufficient:

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction*.

Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish*.

Go, Julian. 2016. *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory*.

We are also reading significant chunks of the following books, which you might consider acquiring:

Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*.

Latour, Bruno. 1988. *Science in Action*.

If you are looking for an overview for reference or to give you more context, I find these books useful:

Collins, Randall. 1994. *Four Sociological Traditions*.

Joas, Hans, and Wolfgang Knöbl. 2009. *Social Theory: Twenty Introductory Lectures*.

Levine, Donald. 1995. *Visions of the Sociological Tradition*.

Schedule of Topics

Week 1 (1/29/18)

Theory in sociology today

We will read the following lecture in class and discuss it:

Lizardo, Omar. 2014. "The End of Theorists: The Relevance, Opportunities, and Pitfalls of Theorizing in Sociology Today." ASA Coser Lecture. Available at <http://akgerber.com/OpenBook010.pdf>

Week 2 (2/5/18)

What is theory?

Abend, Gabriel. 2008. "The Meaning of 'Theory'." *Sociological Theory* 26:173-199.

Abend, Gabriel. 2006. "Styles of Sociological Thought: Sociologies, Epistemologies, and the Mexican and U.S. Quests for Truth." *Sociological Theory* 24:1-41.

Memo assignment: In addition to reading these pieces, for this week I would like you to do the following. Skim all the abstracts for the last year of the *American Journal of Sociology* and the *American Sociological Review*. Pick one article that interests you from each of those two journals and read it. They do not have to be explicitly theoretical articles—in fact, it is better if they are not. In your memo, address how your articles use or advance theory—explicitly or implicitly, drawing on what existing theories (large or small) and making what changes to them. Please preface your memo with the titles and abstracts of the two articles you are responding to, and be prepared to summarize your two articles for the rest of the class.

Week 3 (2/12/18)

Structural functionalism in mid-20th-century sociology

Joas, Hans, and Wolfgang Knöbl. 2009. *Social Theory: Twenty Introductory Lectures*. Pp. 20-93.

Davis, Kingsley, and Wilbert E. Moore. 1945. "Some Principles of Stratification." *American Sociological Review* 10:242-249.

Parsons, Talcott, et al. 1951. *Toward a General Theory of Action*. Pp. 2-8.

Parsons, Talcott. 1951. *The Social System*. Pp. 24-29.

Merton, Robert. 1949. *Social Theory and Social Structure*. “On Sociological Theories of the Middle Range” (pp. 39-72) and parts of “Manifest and Latent Functions” (pp. 73-79, 91-109, 114-118).

Further reading:

Fox, Renee C., Victor M. Lidz, and Harold J. Bershady. 2005. “Introduction.” Pp. 1-27 in *After Parsons: A Theory of Action for the Twenty-First Century*.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 1987. *Twenty Lectures: Sociological Theory Since World War II*. Pp. 22-126.

Parsons, Talcott. 1937. *The Structure of Social Action*.

Parsons, Talcott. 1935. “The Place of Ultimate Values in Sociological Theory.” *International Journal of Ethics* 45:282-316.

Parsons, Talcott. 1950. “The Prospects of Sociological Theory.” *American Sociological Review* 15:3-16.

Week 4 (2/19/18)

Exchange theory and rational choice

Homans, George. 1958. “Social Behavior as Exchange.” *American Journal of Sociology* 63:597-606.

Olson, Mancur. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action*. Ch. 1 (pp. 5-52—don’t get hung up on the calculus on pp. 23-33; a nontechnical summary follows).

Schelling, Thomas. 1978. *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*. Chs. 1 (pp. 11-43) and 4 (pp. 137-166).

Bearman, Peter. 1997. ”Generalized Exchange.” *American Journal of Sociology* 102:1383-1415.

Further reading:

Blau, Peter. 1964. *Exchange and Power in Social Life*.

Blau, Peter. 1977. “A Macrosociological Theory of Social Structure.” *American Journal of Sociology* 83:26-54.

Coleman, James. 1986. “Social Theory, Social Research, and a Theory of Action.” *American Journal of Sociology* 91:1309-1335.

Coleman, James. 1998. “Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital.” *American Journal of Sociology* 94:S95-S120.

Coleman, James. 1990. *Foundations of Social Theory*.

Week 5 (2/26/18)

Conflict theories and neo-Marxism

Bendix, Reinhard. 1952. “Social Stratification and Political Power.” *American Political Science Review* 46:357-375.

Dahrendorf, Ralf. 1958. "Toward a Theory of Social Conflict." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 2:170-180.

Block, Fred. 1977. "The Ruling Class Does Not Rule: Notes on the Marxist Theory of the State." *Socialist Revolution* 33:6-28.

Lachmann, Richard. 1990. "Class Formation without Class Struggle: An Elite Conflict Theory of the Transition to Capitalism." *American Sociological Review* 55:398-414.

Further reading:

Mills, C. Wright. 1956. *The Power Elite*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bendix, Reinhard. 1956. *Work and Authority in Industry: Managerial Ideologies in the Course of Industrialization*. New York: John Wiley.

Dahrendorf, Ralf. 1959. *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Lenski, Gerhard. 1966. *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Collins, Randall. 1971. "Functional and Conflict Theories of Educational Stratification." *American Sociological Review* 36:1002-1019.

Tilly, Charles. 1978. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. New York: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.

Skocpol, Theda. 1985. "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research." Pp. 1-37 in *Bringing the State Back In*, edited by Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 6 (3/5/18)

Pragmatism and interactionism

Blumer, Herbert. 1969. *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Chs. 2-3.

Goffman, Erving. 1967. *Interaction Ritual*. Ch. 1, "On Face-Work".

Goffman, Erving. 1983. "The Interaction Order: American Sociological Association, 1982 Presidential Address." *American Sociological Review* 48:1-17.

Hochschild, Arlie. 1979. "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure." *American Journal of Sociology* 85:551-575.

Further reading:

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

Goffman, Erving. 1974. *Frame Analysis*.

Spring Break

Week 7 (3/19/18)

From phenomenology to neo-institutionalism

Schütz, Alfred. 1953. "Common-Sense and Scientific Interpretation of Social Action." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 14:1-37. Read pp. 1-21.

Garfinkel, Harold. 1967. *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Pp. 1-4, 35-49, 76-94.

Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Pp. 19-128.

Meyer, John, and Brian Rowan. 1977. "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony." *American Journal of Sociology* 83:340-363.

Further reading:

Schütz, Alfred. 1932. *The Phenomenology of the Social World*.

DiMaggio, Paul, and Walter W. Powell. 1983. "The Iron Cage Revisited." *American Sociological Review* 48:147-160.

DiMaggio, Paul, and Walter W. Powell. 1991. "Introduction." Pp. 1-38 in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Sociology*.

Friedland, Roger, and Robert Alford. 1991. "Bringing Society Back In." Pp. 232-263 in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Sociology*.

Week 8 (3/26/18) *****First paper due*****

Foucault

Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish*.

Further reading:

Foucault, Michel. 1963. *The Birth of the Clinic*.

Foucault, Michel. 1976. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I*.

Foucault, Michel. 2010. *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

Miller, Peter, and Nikolas Rose. 2008. *Governing the Present*.

Week 9 (4/2/18)

Bourdieu

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Loïc Wacquant. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Pp. 94-140.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction*. Beginning of Ch. 1 (pp. 11-18), Chs. 2-3 (pp. 99-225), 5-7 (pp. 260-396), Conclusion (pp. 466-484).

Further reading:

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1996. *Rules of Art*.

Sallaz, Jeffrey and Jane Zavisca. 2007. "Bourdieu in American Sociology, 1980-2004." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33:21-41.

Week 10 (4/9/18)

Postcolonialism

Go, Julian. 2016. *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory*.

Further reading:

Fanon, Frantz. 1965. *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Fanon, Frantz. 1967. *Black Skin, White Masks*.
 Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*.
 Spivak, Gayatri. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Nelson and Grossberg.
 Connell, Raewyn. 2006. "Northern Theory: The Political Geography of General Social Theory." *Theory and Society* 35:237-264.
 Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe*.
 Mbembe, Achille. 2003. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture* 15:11-40.
 Bhabra, Gurminder. 2007. *Rethinking Modernity*.
 Connell, Raewyn. 2007. *Southern Theory*.

Week 11 (4/16/18)

Race and gender

Smith, Dorothy E. 1974. "Women's Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology." *Sociological Inquiry* 44:7-13.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 1986. "Learning from the Outsider Within." *Social Problems* 33:S14-S32.

Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant. 1986. *Racial Formation in the United States*. Introduction, Chs. 4-5.

Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14:575-599.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43:1241-1299.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 1996. "Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation." *American Sociological Review* 62:465-480.

Further reading:

de Beauvoir, Simone. 1952. *The Second Sex*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Harding, Sandra. 1986. *The Science Question in Feminism*.

Scott, Joan Wallach. 1986. "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." *American Historical Review* 91:1053-1075.

Smith, Dorothy E. 1987. *The Everyday World as Problematic*.

West, Candace, and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender & Society* 1:125-151.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 1990. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Harding, Sandra. 1992. "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is 'Strong Objectivity?'" *The Centennial Review* 36:437-470.

Donaldson, Mike. 1993. "What Is Hegemonic Masculinity?" *Theory and Society* 22:643-657.

Emirbayer, Mustafa, and Matthew Desmond. 2015. *The Racial Order*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week 12 (4/23/18)

Actor-network theory

Callon, Michel. 1986. "Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation." Pp. 196-223 in *Power, Action and Belief*.

Latour, Bruno. 1983. "Give Me a Laboratory and I Will Raise the World." Pp. 141-170 in *Science Observed: Perspectives on the Social Study of Science*, edited by Karin Knorr-Cetina and Michael Mulkey.

Latour, Bruno. 1988. *Science in Action*. Introduction, Chs. 1-2, 6.

Further reading:

Latour, Bruno. 1993. *The Pasteurization of France*.

Latour, Bruno. 2007. *Reassembling the Social*.

MacKenzie, Donald. 2006. *An Engine, Not a Camera*.

MacKenzie, Donald. 2011. "The Credit Crisis as a Problem in the Sociology of Knowledge." *American Journal of Sociology* 116:1778-1841.

Week 13 (4/30/18)

Recent (and eclectic) developments in sociological theory

Gross, Neil. 2009. "A Pragmatist Theory of Social Mechanisms." *American Sociological Review* 74:358-379.

Schilt, Kristen, and Laurel Westbrook. 2009. "Doing Gender, Doing Heteronormativity: 'Gender Normals,' Transgender People, and the Social Maintenance of Heterosexuality." *Gender and Society* 23:440-464.

Vaisey, Stephen. 2009. "Motivation and Justification: A Dual-Process Model of Culture in Action." *American Journal of Sociology* 114:1675-1715.

Fligstein, Neil, and Doug McAdam. 2012. *A Theory of Fields*. Ch. 1.

Memo assignment: Identify a piece of sociological research from the last decade that you think makes an important theoretical contribution. Begin your memo with the title and abstract of the piece you chose, and explain 1) why you think it makes an important contribution and 2) how it fits into the theoretical conversations we have had this semester (or doesn't). In class we will select some of these pieces to read together for next week.

Further reading:

McDonnell, Terence. 2010. "Cultural Objects as Objects: Materiality, Urban Space, and the Interpretation of AIDS Campaigns in Accra, Ghana." *American Journal of Sociology* 115:1800-1852.

Frye, Margaret. 2012. "Bright Futures in Malawi's New Dawn: Educational Aspirations as Assertions of Identity." *American Journal of Sociology* 117:1565-1624.

Mayrl, Damon, and Sarah Quinn. 2016. "Defining the State from Within: Boundaries, Schemas, and Associational Policymaking." *Sociological Theory* 34:1-26.

Week 14 (5/7/18)

Student choices

Abbott, Andrew. 2001. *Chaos of Disciplines*. Ch. 1.

Plus additional work selected by students.

*****Second paper due 5/14/18*****