

Soc 334 -- Social Theory

Blocks 7-8, Spring 2007

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 12 - 1:30

What is social theory?

Social theory is the body of organized, and in principle, verifiable, ideas which scholars have developed about the workings of society. It includes definitions of just what society is, delimitations of what sorts of issues and observations are important, establishment of methods for validating information, and arguments as to the nature and change of social relationships and patterns of social organization. Social theory generally does not include ad hoc or "everyday" notions of how society works, since these are not submitted to rigorous logical or empirical validation.

How are we going to study social theory?

This course will attempt to present an overview of social theory in the historical context of its development. Instead of looking at the sayings of famous dead men in the abstract, we will attempt to see what issues in their lives prompted them to develop their theories. In addition to introducing the content of the theories we study, this course has two other objectives. One is to help you learn to think theoretically. This means trying to understand what assumptions you make and what their implications may be, using empirical evidence and logic systematically in order to answer questions of interest, and knowing what makes a question important and how best to ask it. Theoretical thinking is not about some different world from the everyday, practical one in which we live. Rather, it approaches the world in a deeper and more systematic way, giving us a better, and often wider, understanding of how it works, including its effects on us. The other subsidiary objective of this course is to help you improve your ability to read and think critically, and to consider and express abstract ideas.

What do you have to do in this course?

The reading for this course is quite dense and it is imperative that you keep up with the class assignments rather than putting them off. Be sure that you understand the material covered as we go along. Try to think of ways in which the theories relate to present day issues -- public or personal. To insure that you follow this sage advice, we will have a series of unannounced in-class writing assignments based on the day's reading.

There will also be five short papers over the course of the two blocks. These will ask you to actively use theory to make sense of the social world around you.

There will be an in-class midterm exam on the last day of Block 7 (Wednesday, April 18th) and a take home final exam the last week of Block 8 (May 14th -16th.) *You must be able to pass the final exam to pass the course.*

I consider an "A" to denote work of excellence, rising above the merely sufficient and competent to incorporate new insights as well as creative and critical thinking. It will, of course, be well written and demonstrate depth of thought and clarity of conception. A "B" denotes a mastery of the concepts and issues, competent and well-written work. A "C" is given for work with logical inconsistencies, which fails to adequately explore all the arguments related to the topic, which has errors of fact or which is badly written and poorly organized or conceptualized.

A “D” is for work that fails to meet even these minimal standards. An “NC” is for work of exceedingly poor quality, including work that is plagiarized, unintelligible, and/or handed in extremely late.

The grading break down is as follows:

Midterm exam	20%
Quizzes	20%
Short papers	25%
Final exam	35%

The extent and quality of your participation in class discussion will be factored into your grade as well. *All assignments handed in late will be marked down one grade per day.*

How will the course be organized?

The course will be taught over the course of two blocks. We will concentrate on “classical” theory during Block 7 and will move on to “contemporary” theory in Block 8.

How can we get in touch with you?

My office hours are noon to 1:30 to 3:30 on Mondays and Wednesdays. If you cannot meet with me during these hours, please talk to me and we will arrange another time to get together. You can always email me at kgiuffre@coloradocollege.edu or call me at 389-6645.

Readings: There are six required books for this course. They are :

- Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd edition
- Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*
- Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*
- Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*
- Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*
- Steven Seidman, *Contested Knowledge: Social Theory Today*, 3rd edition

These are all available at the bookstore. Readings from them are marked with a “**B**” on the reading schedule below. The rest of the readings are available on the course website.

I expect you to have completed the reading assigned for each day by the beginning of class on that day. I have tried to schedule the especially long/difficult readings for Mondays or following days off when we do not have class so that you can take advantage the extra time to read. Do not wait until the night before to begin these readings.

Schedule:

- 3/27 Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?”
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, pp. 16-21 and 25-27 from *The Social Contract*
Seidman, ch. 1 **B**
- 3/28 Adam Smith, pp. 30-86 from *The Wealth of Nations*
- 3/29 Reading Day: No class
- 3/30 Karl Marx, “Introduction”, “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*”
“Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction”
“Theses on Feuerbach”, and selections from *Capital*, (pp. xix-xxxviii, 16-26, 53-65, 143-145 and 302-329 in *The Marx-Engels Reader*) **B**
Seidman, ch.2 **B**
- 4/2 Karl Marx, “The German Ideology: Part I” (pp. 146-200 in *The Marx-Engels Reader*) **B**

- 4/3 Karl Marx, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” (sections I, II, and IV only)
 “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”
 (pp. 473-491, 499-500 and 594-617 in *The Marx-Engels Reader*) **B**
- 4/4 Max Weber, “Class, Status, and Party”
 Seidman, ch. 4 **B**
- 4/5 Reading Day: No Class
- 4/6 Max Weber, pp. vii-xxvi , 35-128 and 155-183 from *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* **B**
- 4/9 Marianne Weber, “Authority and Autonomy in Marriage”
- 4/10 Thorstein Veblen, ch. I – VII from *The Theory of the Leisure Class* **B**
- 4/11 Doing Theory: No assigned reading, but class meets at the regular time
- 4/12 Emile Durkheim, “Introduction” from *Suicide*
 Raymond Aron, *Le Suicide*
 Seidman, ch. 3 **B**
- 4/13 Doing Theory: No assigned reading, but class meets at the regular time
- 4/16 Emile Durkheim, selections from *The Division of Labor in Society* **B**
 Introduction, pp.ix-xxiv
 Introduction (pp. 1-7)
 Book I, Ch. 1: first page, section II, and section III (pp. 11, 16-29)
 Book I, Ch. 2 (pp. 31-64)
 Book I, Ch. 3 (pp. 68-86)
 Book I, Ch. 5: section I and section II (pp. 101-109)
 Book I, Ch. 7: first section (pp. 149-154)
- 4/17 Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* **B**
- 4/18 MID-TERM EXAM

Soc 334 -- Social Theory (continued)

readings:

- 4/23 George Herbert Mead, "The Self, the I, and the Me"
Charles Horton Cooley "The Looking-Glass Self"
- 4/24 Herbert Blumer, "Society as Symbolic Interaction"
Erving Goffman "The Presentation of Self to Others"
- 4/25 Reading Day: No Class
- 4/26 Georg Simmel, "Group Expansion and the Development of Individuality"
Georg Simmel, "The Stranger"
- 4/27 Doing Theory: No assigned reading, but class meets at the regular time
- 4/30 Simone de Beauvoir, "Woman as Other"
Anna Julia Cooper, "The Colored Woman's Office"
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Women and Economics"
- 5/1 Audre Lord, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference"
Deborah King, "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology"
- 5/2 Catharine MacKinnon, "Desire and Power: A Feminist Perspective"
Mary Dudziak, "Josephine Baker, Racial Protest, and the Cold War"
- 5/3 Kwame Ture and Charles Hamilton, "The Myths of Coalition"
- 5/4 Reading Day: No Class
- 5/7 Jurgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere" and "An Alternative Way Out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative vs. Subject-Centered Reason"
Hannah Arendt, "Ideology and Terror: A Novel form of Government" from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*
Seidman, ch. 8 **B**
- 5/8 Reading Day: No Class
- 5/9 Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed"
Seidman, ch. 10 **B**
- 5/10 Doing Theory: No assigned reading, but class meets at the regular time
- 5/11 Michel Foucault, TBA
Joy James, "Erasing the Spectacle of Racialized State Violence"
Seidman, ch. 11-12 **B**
- 5/14-16 FINAL EXAM