

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
University of Utah

Seminar: Classical Social Theory
Sociology 6050 001
Fall 2012
T: 2pm – 4:45pm
BEH S 315

Professor Julie Stewart
411 BEH S
julie.stewart@soc.utah.edu
Office Hours: R: 12:30 –
2:30 and by appt.

Please note that this is a preliminary syllabus. Due to a university transition in educational software, certain components of the syllabus may change. A final syllabus will be available the first day of seminar.

Description ¹

This seminar introduces graduate students to some of the foundational texts and central traditions of the discipline of sociology. Given the very specialized division of labor that is a hallmark of the contemporary academy, the concepts and concerns of classical social theory provide us with a common frame of reference and a sense of disciplinary unity. Accordingly, in this seminar we will examine a series of questions that fascinated the founding theorists of our discipline and continue to resonate today:

- What generates social solidarity?
- How is culture developed, shared and transformed?
- What are the causes and consequences of capitalism?
- Are ideas or material conditions the fundamental agents in historical change?
- What are the defining characteristics of modernity?
- Can individuals shape their social world or are they inherently constrained by macro-structural forces contained within modern economic and political systems?

The course begins with a brief overview of the Enlightenment, the industrial revolution and the democratic revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries. Together, these interwoven social transformations produced modernity, arguably the issue nonpareil for classical social theory. It then devotes considerable attention to the writings and legacy of Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, three pivotal social theorists for the discipline. The last portion of the course is concerned with “newer” classical theorists, typically the emerging American sociologists with a more pronounced interest in the individual and his/her experience with modernity and social change.

This seminar has three main goals. First, this seminar aims to expose graduate students to a body of research that will contribute to their general literacy in sociology. My second goal is to provide students with a set of tools – concepts, methodologies and theories – that will enrich and improve their research as they begin careers as sociologists. Finally, part of my intellectual project is to demonstrate the continued relevance of classical

¹ To create this syllabus, I drew heavily from two great social theorists: David Garland, of New York University and Michèle Lamont, of Harvard University.

social theory. Accordingly, where possible, I include in the syllabus contemporary readings that utilize key classical concepts. As you read for this class – and for other classes – I encourage you to continually reflect on how/why the author builds upon the foundation provided by the classical social theorists.

Course Requirements

Reflection Papers: Students are required to submit six memos, due on alternating weeks during the course of the semester. The memos should focus on a substantive theme or question raised in the readings and provide a critical evaluation. They should be approximately three typed and double-spaced pages. Memos are due at the beginning of class the day the readings are discussed. Memos will constitute thirty percent of your final grade.

Exams: In this seminar, we will have a mid-term and final exam. The exams will be take-home and essay in format, and will require that the student show mastery of the readings assigned in the class. Each exam constitutes twenty-five percent of your final grade. The due dates for the exams are as follows: mid-term, due: **Oct. 30**; final, due: **Dec. 14**.

Class Participation: Finally, I would like to highlight that in addition to the above requirements, I expect you to complete all of the readings *prior* to that day's seminar. You should prepare for each seminar by thoroughly reading and taking notes on the assigned reading. Prior to each session, you should post two discussion questions to the discussion board I will set up for the course. They are due each week by 8pm on Monday (the day before the weekly seminar). Then come prepared to discuss and respond to the questions posed, in addition to questions I will pose during class. While I will provide background information and clarification, we will spend most of the class time in discussion. If you are not adequately prepared, it will show. A seminar is only as good as the students that comprise it, and your efforts will pay off. Twenty percent of your final grade will reflect your weekly participation in class discussions and your weekly postings.

Faculty-Student Communication: If you have not already done so, please register with CIS, indicating your preferred e-mail address. When you register for classes, CIS automatically generates a class list (comprised of student-provided e-mail addresses), which the university requires we use for all student communication. I will occasionally send course announcements, syllabus changes, etc. to this list, so please regularly check your e-mail.

Course Materials

The readings for the seminar are a mix of books and book chapters. To the best of my knowledge, all of the books for this course have been ordered from the campus bookstore. You may also find these books at more competitive prices if you search for them from Barnes & Noble and Amazon.Com – both used and new versions. Note that Weber's volume is available from both of these sites, as used versions. Please make sure that you order the specific copies indicated in the syllabus, to ensure that the pagination corresponds to the assignments in the syllabus. I have also placed copies of these books

on reserve at the Marriott Library. I strongly encourage you to purchase these books, as they should be a part of every sociologist's library:

Durkheim, Emile. 1951 [1897]. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson (Translation). George Simpson (Editor & Introduction). New York: The Free Press.

Tucker, Robert C. (Editor). 1978 [1972]. *The Marx Engels Reader, 2nd ed.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Weber, Max. 2002 [1920]. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, 3rd ed.* Stephen Kalberg (Translation and Introduction). Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Co.

Freud, Sigmund. 1989 [1961]. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. James Strachey (Translator & Editor), Peter Gay (Introduction). New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Calhoun, Craig (Editor), Joseph Gerteis (Editor), James Moody (Editor), Steven Pfaff (Editor), Indermohan Virk (Editor). 2007. *Classical Sociological Theory, 2nd Edition*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

All of the supplemental book chapters for the seminar are available through the e-reserve service provided by the university library. Students can access and print materials on e-reserve course reserves by selecting the course reserves tab in the Marriott Library catalog: <http://www.lib.utah.edu/>. Select "Go" on the window prompt and that will bring you to the "Course Reserves" tab that you can select. Additional information on using course reserves can be found in the Course Reserve "How to Guide." It provides a walkthrough that will explain searching courses, filtering courses and finally how to access copyrighted material from off campus.

http://campusguides.lib.utah.edu/course_reserves_guide

ADA Statement

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

Schedule of Discussions & Readings

August 21 **Introductions & overview of seminar and syllabus**

August 28 **Reflections on the parameters, content and future of social theory**

Nisbet, Robert. 1993. "The Unit Ideas of Sociology." Pp. 3-20 in *The Sociological Tradition*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers. (E-Reserve)

Nisbet, Robert. 1993. "The Two Revolutions." Pp. 21-44 in *The Sociological Tradition*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers. (E-Reserve)

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 1987. "The Centrality of the Classics." Pp. 11-57 in Anthony Giddens and Jonathan H. Turner (eds.) *Social Theory Today*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. (E-Reserve)

Adams, Julia, Elisabeth Clemens and Ann Shola Orloff. 2005. "Social Theory, Modernity, and the Three Waves of Historical Sociology." Pp. 1-72 in Julia Adams, Elisabeth Clemens and Ann Shola Orloff (eds.). *Remaking Modernity: Politics, History and Sociology*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. (E-Reserve)

September 4 Intellectual precursors to social theory

Calhoun et al. 2007. Readings on the Social Contract, the Enlightenment, Wealth of Nations, Democracy in America. Pp 1 – 72.

September 11 Marx: humanism and history; class struggle and revolution

Tucker. *The Marx-Engels Reader*.

Preface to "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," pp. 3-6.

"Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," pp. 66-105.

"Theses on Feuerbach," pp. 143-145.

"The German Ideology," pp. 146-200.

"The Communist Manifesto," pp. 469-500.

"The Class Struggles in France," pp. 586-93.

September 18 Marx: foundations of political economy

Tucker. *The Marx-Engels Reader*.

"Wage Labour and Capital," pp. 203-217.

"The Grundrisse," pp. 222-294.

"Capital Volume One," pp. 294-438.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. Selections from *Nickel and Dimed*. Pp. 121-191 (E-Reserve).

September 25 Weber: ideal and material interests and their elective affinities

Weber. *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

October 2 Weber: power and domination; rationality and bureaucracy

Calhoun et al. 2007. Readings on key Weberian concepts. Pp. 203-227; pp. 247-274.

Ritzer, George. "An Introduction to McDonaldization." Pp. 4-24 (E-Reserve).

October 9 Fall Break – No Class

October 16 Durkheim: on the sociological method and suicide

Durkheim. *Suicide*.

October 23 **Durkheim: society and social facts; solidarity and the collective conscience.**

Calhoun et al. 2007. Readings on key Durkheimian concepts. Pp. 131-192.

Conover, Ted. Selections from *New Jack: Guarding Sing Sing*. Pp. 95-151 (E-Reserve).

October 30 **Mid-term Exam due**

No reading – during seminar we will discuss the points of agreement and conflict of the founding scholars of sociology

November 6 **Introducing the individual: on civilization and repression**

Freud. *Civilization and its Discontents*.

November 13 **Contemplating the place and role of self in society**

Calhoun et al. 2007. Readings on the Self, the Stranger, Groups and Individuals, and the Souls of Black Folk. Pp. 275-314; 323-328.

Pattillo, Mary. Selection from *Black on the Block*. Pp. 113-147 (E-Reserve).

November 20 **Critical theory and the sociology of knowledge**

Calhoun et al. 2007. Readings on ideology, utopia, art and culture. Pp. 329-389.

November 27 **Structural-Functional analysis, part 1**

Calhoun et al. 2007. Readings on position, structure and social systems. Pp. 399-440.

December 4 **Structural-Functional analysis, part 2**

Calhoun et al. 2007. Readings on functions, the middle range and anomie. Pp. 441-470.