

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
University of Utah

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS A PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS AND IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. A FINAL SYLLABUS WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE BEGINNING OF SPRING SEMESTER

Seminar: Contemporary Social Theory
Sociology 7050 001
Spring 2013
W: 2:00 PM-5:00 PM
BEH S 315

Professor Julie Stewart
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Office Hours: TBA

Description

This seminar offers graduate students an introduction to a variety of theoretical approaches, methodological considerations and conceptual innovations associated with contemporary sociological theory. In this seminar, we will consider such questions as: What is social theory? Whose knowledge counts? What is the relationship between deductive and inductive reasoning and the construction of social theory? Do new contexts demand new theories and new concepts, or did the classical theorists provide us with the necessary tools to grasp our current world? Is the age of meta-narratives forever behind us or is a new grand narrative just around the corner?

The course begins with a brief inquiry into the nature and purpose of social theory, highlighting some thoughts on the qualities and concerns that distinguish contemporary from classical social theory. Discussion then turns to four major approaches contained within contemporary social theory: symbolic interactionism, critical theory, post-modernism and feminist theory. The final section of the seminar delves into three important concepts that are hotly contested in sociology today: culture, social capital and globalization.

This seminar has two main goals. First, this seminar aims to expose graduate students to a body of research that will contribute to their general literacy in sociology and social theory. 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 or in other social science disciplines.

Course Requirements

Reflection Papers: Students are required to submit six reflection papers, due on alternating weeks during the course of the semester. The papers 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. These papers are due at the beginning of class the day the readings are discussed. They will constitute thirty percent of your final grade.

Student Presentations: Each student will present on one or two sessions during the semester, depending on the size of the seminar. These presentations should provide a general orientation to that week's reading and should touch on theoretical, conceptual and/or methodological issues covered in the reading assignment. Students may also choose to orient their comments around what they find most compelling about the reading or most problematic. Student presentations will constitute ten percent of your final grade.

Final Paper: This third major seminar requirement is a final paper, due at the end of the semester. Students may choose to write an original research paper that engages with the work of one of the theorists or themes covered in the seminar, they may write a paper comparing the work of two contemporary theorists (or theories), or produce an in-depth review (much like a typical literature review) of one of the theorists or themes covered in the seminar. Papers should be approximately twenty to twenty-five pages, typed and double-spaced. All students will meet with me prior to beginning the paper to discuss your topic (individual meetings are scheduled for **April 3**, during regular class). The final paper will constitute forty percent of your final grade.

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 Canvas discussion board I will set up for the course. They are due each week by 8pm on Tuesday (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.

The readings for the seminar are a mix of books and articles. 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. I have also placed copies of these books on reserve at the Marriott Library.

All of the individual readings (articles & book chapters) for this class 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

January 9 Introductions & Overview of Seminar and Syllabus

January 16 What is Social Theory?

Alford, Robert R. 1998. *The Craft of Inquiry: Theories, Methods & Evidence*. New York: Oxford University Press: pp. 1-7 & 32-53.

Connell, R.W.. 1997. "Why is Classical Theory Classical?" *American Journal of Sociology* 102: 1511-57.

Collins, Randall. 1997. "A Sociological Guilt Trip: Comments on Connell." *American Journal of Sociology* 102: 1558-64.

Always, Joan. 1995. "The Trouble with Gender: Tales of the Still-Missing Feminist Revolution in Sociological Theory." *Sociological Theory* 13, 3: 209-228.

January 23 Symbolic Interactionism

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday.

January 30 Symbolic Interactionism (cont.)

Venkatesh, Sudhir. 2008. *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets*. New York: Penguin Books.

February 6 Critical Theory

Marcuse, Herbert. 1967 [1964]. *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, 3rd ed. Boston: Beacon Press.

****Focus on Part One (One-Dimensional Society) and Part Three (The Chance of the Alternatives); Skim Part Two (One-Dimensional Thought)****

February 13 Critical Theory (cont.)

Sennett, Richard. 1998. *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company

February 20 Post-modernism

Foucault, Michele. 1977. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Random House.

February 27 Post-modernism (cont.)

Ferguson, James. 1990. *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

March 6 Feminist Theory

Smith, Dorothy E. 1987. "Women's Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology." pp. 84-96 in Sandra Harding (ed.) *Feminism and Methodology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hartmann, Heidi. 1976. "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1(Spring):137-169

West, Candace and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender & Society* 1, 2: 125-151.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. "Black Women and Motherhood." pp. 173-199 in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.

Bordo, Susan. 1993. "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity." pp. 165-184 in *Unbearable weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

March 13 Spring Break – No class!

March 20 Feminist Theory (cont.)

Lee, Ching Kwan. 1998. *Gender and the South China Miracle: Two Worlds of Factory Women*. Berkeley: University of California.

March 27 Culture

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." Pp. 3-30 in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.

Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review* 51: 273-86.

Emirbayer, Mustafa & Jeff Goodwin. 1994. "Network Analysis, Culture & the Problem of Agency." *American Journal of Sociology* 99, 6: 1411-1454.

Lamont, Michele. 1997. "Colliding Moralities Between Black & White Workers." Pp. 263-285 in *From Sociology to Cultural Studies*. Elizabeth Long (ed.). New York: Blackwell.

Wherry, Frederick F. 2008. "The Social Characterizations of Price: The Fool, the Faithful, the Frivolous, and the Frugal." *Sociological Theory* 26, 4: 363-379.

April 3 Student-Faculty Consultations for Research Papers

April 10 Social Capital

Putnam, Robert D. (with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Nanetti). 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press: 163-185.

Putnam, Robert D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster: 15-28 & 350-363.

Woolcock, Michael. 1998. "Social Capital and Economic Development: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis and Policy Framework." *Theory and Society* 27: 151-208.

Portes, Alejandro. 1998. "Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 1-24.

April 17 Globalization

Kellner, Douglas. 2002. "Theorizing Globalization." *Sociological Theory* 20, 3: 285-305.

Robinson, William. 2001. "Social Theory and Globalization: The Rise of a Transnational State." *Theory and Society* 30: 157-200.

Sklair, Leslie. 2002. "Transnational Practices: Corporations, Class and Consumerism." Pp. 84-117 in *Globalization: Capitalism & its Alternatives, 3rd ed.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ritzer, George. 2006. "An Introduction to McDonaldization." Pp. 4-24 in *McDonaldization: The Reader, 2nd ed.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Stewart, Julie. 2006. "When Local Troubles Become Transnational: The Transformation of a Guatemalan Indigenous Rights Movement." Pp. 197-214 in *Latin American Social Movements: Globalization, Democratization and Transnational Networks*. Hank Johnston & Paul Almeida (eds.). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

April 24 Student Presentations of Research Papers

The due date for the final paper is: Monday, May 6th