

SOC 424 SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY
Tuesday/Thursday 2:30-4:00 pm
Daniels Hall Room 305
Fall 2017

Instructor: Paige L. Sweet
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Office hours by appointment

Course Description

We all construct and use social theories in our everyday lives. Theory is simply a means of understanding and explaining the social world around us. Social theory allows for seeing patterns, forces, and power relations, encouraging us to make sense of all kinds of social phenomena – ranging from everyday interactions between friends to decades of violent colonization.

In this course, we will read theoretical texts every week, and then we will spend time understanding how they have been used to understand specific social phenomena. Theory must be relevant to real life “social facts” for it to survive, and we will work toward bridging the abstract concepts in our readings with the world around us. By the end of the class, you will likely find that some theories are your favorites – more relevant to your everyday life and your own sociological interests than others.

Usually, sociological theory is divided into two separate courses: classical theory and contemporary theory. However, we will cover both sets of theory in one semester. Although the dividing line between the two sets of theory is arbitrary, classical theory usually refers to the works of the “founding fathers”: Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim. These were the first thinkers who conceptualized “the social” or “society” as an object of analysis. Next, we will explore several important theorists who bridge the gap between the “classical” and the “contemporary.” We will challenge the theory “canon” by including theorists who write about gender and race. Then, we will move into “contemporary theory,” exploring some of the key themes and debates that have characterized the profession from the 1960s until the present.

This course requires you to read a lot of social theory, which will be abstract and difficult. I assign primary texts, meaning that they were written by the theorist him/herself. While we will contextualize the readings by learning about the theorist’s life, it is important that you learn to read with patience and diligence. I am here to help, as are your colleagues. If you are struggling to understand course material on your own, that’s okay! No sociologist learns theory on her own. When you come to class, we will put the reading in historical and biographical context and in conversation with other readings. Through lectures, multiple readings of the material on your own, and class discussions, we will – together – arrive at a deeper understanding of the social world and of the history of sociological thought.

Course Grading System

Participation: 20% of grade

- Participation in class discussion is necessary for your development as a critical scholar and for your understanding of the course material. This is an upper-level course with difficult reading material that requires us to establish an *informed and critical discourse* with each other. Participation includes actively listening, as well as sharing your ideas, criticisms, and frustrations with course material. I expect students to come to class having read and taken notes on all material.
- Every Thursday, we will begin class with students' own observations about the material. This may be in the form of a discussion question, an observation, a critique, or a connecting thought to previous readings. If you have come to class unprepared for this exercise, I will deduct from your participation grade.
- Attendance is absolutely essential to your success in this course. I expect students to attend all classes. You are allowed two unexcused absences, but more than two will result in a reduction of your grade. Additional absences will only be excused with formal written documentation. If you expect to miss class because of a religious observance, you will need to notify me beforehand. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to catch up.

In-Class Writing & Quizzes: 10% of grade

- We will frequently have in-class quizzes or writing assignments based on reading material. Quizzes will be open-note. It is your responsibility to prepare for potential quizzes by reading the assigned material. Requests for make-up quizzes will not be accommodated. I will drop your lowest quiz grade at the end of the semester.

Midterm Exam: 25% of grade – in-class exam on Thursday, October 19

- This will be a “blue book” essay exam covering the concepts and theories from the first half of the course. Students will be given 4 prompts when they walk into the midterm and are expected to answer two questions. Open-note, 1 hour 30 minutes. We will have a group “study day” in advance of the exam, in class, on Tuesday, October 17th.

Three Short Papers: 15% each – due Thursday Sep. 28 in class, Thursday Nov. 16 in class, Thursday Dec. 14 by email at 1:00 pm

- You will be asked to write three 5-page papers, each worth 15% of your overall grade. Due dates are noted on the syllabus. I will provide paper topics two weeks before they are due. The best papers will make connections between theorists or ideas, generating an original analysis. Grading rubrics will be distributed in class.

Assignment Format

Papers should be double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, 11 or 12-point font. You will hand in a hard copy to me during class, except for the final paper, which will be submitted via email.

Assignment & Grading Policy

Please be aware that I do not accept late assignments. If you are struggling to complete the assignment, I strongly encourage you to meet with me in advance of the due date so that we can

come up with a plan. Becoming a clear, concise writer and communicator is a critical part of college education – but it is not easy. We will work together to develop your writing skills, and my evaluations will become progressively more challenging as the course (and your skill) advances. I will provide you with detailed grading rubrics in advance of each due date.

Course Materials

You will need to purchase one book for this course:

- Tucker, Robert C., ed. 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. W. Norton & Company, Second Edition.

All other reading materials will be made available to you on Blackboard. You must bring either an electronic or hard copy of all readings to class with you.

Academic Integrity

The Academic Integrity Policy appears in the Elmhurst College Student Handbook. All work for this course is governed by this policy and violation of its provisions is grounds for a failing grade for an assignment or the entire course. In addition, I am required to notify the Dean of Students office in writing regarding any infractions of the Code of Academic Integrity. This written notification remains in the student's file for the remainder of their studies at Elmhurst College. *Do not plagiarize.*

Disability Services

Elmhurst College will make accommodations for students with disabilities based on the presentation of appropriate documentation. If you believe you have a disability that may impact your work in this course, contact Dr. Corinne Smith, Disabilities Service Coordinator: corinne.smith@elmhurst.edu (630-617-6448). Located in Frick Room 229.

Learning Center – Academic Support

The Learning Center offers services to support the academic performance of all Elmhurst College students. Sessions are structured to promote principles of effective, self-regulated learning and academic management. Areas of tutoring include math, writing, reading, study skills, and special test preparation. For more information, contact Emmie McAdams, Math Specialist, at emmim@elmhurst.edu (630-617-5376) or Susan Roach, Learning Center Director, at susan.roach@elmhurst.edu (630-617-3155). Located in Frick Center Room 229.

Course Schedule Fall 2017

Week 1: INTRODUCTION

Tuesday 8.29 – Welcome

Thursday 8.31 – What is social theory?

- Lemert, Charles. 1999. "Social Theory: Its Uses and Pleasures." Pp. 1-17 in *Social Theory: The Multicultural, Global, and Classic Readings*.

Week 2: MARX

Tuesday 9.5

- Tucker, Robert C. 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader, Second Edition*. Selections:
 - Marx & Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party:" pp. 473-491
 - Marx, "Estranged Labour:" pp. 70-81

Thursday 9.7

- Tucker, Robert C. 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader, Second Edition*. Selections:
 - Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State:" pp. 734-759

Week 3: WEBER

Tuesday 9.12

- Weber, Max. 1930. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Selections: Part I, Chapters 1-3: pp. 61-97.

Thursday 9.14

- Weber, Max. 1930. "Bureaucratization, Democracy, and Modern Capitalism:" pp. 416-425
- Ritzer, George. 2007. "The Weberian Theory of Rationalization and the McDonaldization of Contemporary Society." Pp. 41-60 in *Illuminating Social Life: Classical and Contemporary Theory Revisited*, edited by Peter Kivisto.

Week 4: DURKHEIM

Tuesday 9.19

- *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings*. Giddens, Anthony, ed. 1972. Selections:
 - "Moral obligation, duty, and freedom:" pp. 108-122
 - "Forms of social solidarity:" pp. 123-140
 - "The division of labour and social differentiation:" pp. 141-154

Thursday 9.21

- Emile Durkheim. 1912. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Chapter 1: pp. 21-44.

Week 5: FREUD

Tuesday 9.26

- Freud, Sigmund. 1930. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Chapters 3-8, pp. 37-112.

Thursday 9.28 – **PAPER #1 DUE, HARD COPY IN CLASS**

Week 6: RACE

Tuesday 10.3 – W.E.B. DuBois

- DuBois, W.E.B. 1994. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Selections:
 - Introduction: pp. vii-xi
 - Chapter 1: Of Our Spiritual Strivings: pp. 3-11
 - Chapter 9: Of the Sons of Master and Man: pp. 125-144

Thursday 10.5 – Frantz Fanon

- Fanon, Frantz. 1967. *Black Skin, White Masks*. “The Fact of Blackness:” pp. 109-140

Week 7: GENDER

Tuesday 10.10

- “Present at the Creation – Women in the History of Sociology and Social Theory.” 2006. In *The Women Founders: Sociology and Social Theory 1830–1930* by Patricia Madoo Lengermann and Gillian Niebrugge: pp 1-22.
- Addams, Jane. 1899. “A Function of the Social Settlement:” pp. 33-55

Thursday 10.12

- Simone de Beauvoir. 1949. *The Second Sex*. Selections:
 - Introduction: pp. xvii-xxx

Week 8: EXAM

Tuesday 10.17 – IN-CLASS STUDY SESSION

Thursday 10.19 – **IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM**

Week 9: FUNCTIONALISM

Tuesday 10.24

- Ritzer, George. 2008. “Introduction to Structural Functionalism.” Pp. 97-113 in *Modern Sociological Theory, Seventh Edition*.
- Parsons, Talcott. 1951. *The Social System*. “The Action Frame of Reference and the General Theory of Action Systems:” pp. 3-23

Thursday 10.26

- Ritzer, George. 2008. “Introduction to Structural Functionalism.” Pp. 114-136 in *Modern Sociological Theory, Seventh Edition*.
- Merton, Robert K. 1938. “Social Structure and Anomie.” *American Sociological Review* 3(5): pp. 672-682

Week 10: SYMBOLIC INTERACTION

Tuesday 10.31 – Symbolic Interactionism

- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Pp. 1-46.

Thursday 11.2 – WRITING DAY: NO CLASS MEETING

Week 11: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION & CRITICAL THEORY

Tuesday 11.7 – Social Construction

- Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality*. Pp. 13-61.

Thursday 11.9 – Critical Theory

- Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception.” *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*: pp. 94-136.

Week 12: FOUCAULT

Tuesday 11.14 –

- Ritzer, George. 2008. “The Ideas of Michel Foucault.” Pp. 480-490 in *Modern Sociological Theory*, Seventh Edition.
- Foucault, Michel. 1975. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. “Panopticism” (195-228).

Thursday 11.16 – **PAPER #2 DUE, HARD COPY IN CLASS**

Week 13: BOURDIEU

Tuesday 11.21 –

- Bourdieu, Pierre. [1977] 1999. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Chapter 4: “Structures, Habitus and Power:” pp. 159-197

Thursday 11.23 THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS

Week 14: POSTCOLONIAL THEORY & INTERSECTIONALITY

Tuesday 11.28

- Edward Said. 1978. “Introduction.” Pp. 1-28 in *Orientalism*.
- Chandra Talpade Mohanty. 1991. “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses.” Pp. 51-80 in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*.

Thursday 11.30

- Gloria Anzaldúa. 1987. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. [selections]
 - Introduction: pp. 1-13.
 - Chapter 7: pp. 99-120

Week 15: FEMINIST & QUEER CRITIQUE

Tuesday 12.4 – Feminist Standpoint Theory

- Dorothy Smith. 1987. *The Everyday World as Problematic*. Selections:

- Introduction: pp. 1-13
- Chapter 2: pp. 49-104

Thursday 12.7 – Woman of Color & Queer Critique

- Patricia Hill Collins. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought*. Chapter 1: “The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought:” pp. 3-18
- Stein, Arlene and Ken Plummer. 1994. “I Can’t Even Think Straight: ‘Queer’ Theory and the Missing Sexual Revolution in Sociology.” *Sociological Theory* 12(2): pp. 178-187.

Thursday December 14th by 1:00 pm: PAPER #3 DUE VIA EMAIL