Sociology 8701: Sociological Theory

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Office hours: Tuesday 9:00-11:00 or by appointment

Fall 2015, Tues/Thurs 2:30-3:45, 614 Social Sciences

Course overview

Theories are tools to help us understand and negotiate the world better. While many of the figures and themes we explore will be familiar to you already, this work is the basis for every professional sociologist’s toolkit. Ultimately, our goal is to make sure that we are all conversant with the main lines of thought that guides research in sociology, and that researchers use position themselves in relation to the field. This class covers mostly the classical paradigm, but with forays into contemporary theory and modern work that shows how classical themes still resonate in different ways. Although what counts as “theory” has varied widely in our discipline, there are central themes that echo throughout the course: modernity and social transformation in culture, economy, mindset and social relations; the exercise and effects of social power, from interpersonal to international and material to symbolic; the social boundaries that divide us and the patterns of macro and micro level solidarity that keep us together. Along the way, we will think a great deal about the connections between theory, method and empirical observation.

Requirements

Attendance and participation. I expect everyone to attend class and participate each seminar day. Please let me know in advance when you plan to miss class. Emergencies are sometimes unavoidable, but catch up with me as soon as possible—ideally the day of seminar. Along with comments, this will be 30% of course grade.
Engagement memos and comments. Everyone will write six short, focused (800-1200) word memos for six of the seminar days. We will set the schedule for memos, which will be then posted before class. For seminar days when you do not have a memo due, you should comment on one or more of the memos. Together, the memos and comments provide the basis for much of the discussion in the seminar. Memos count for 40% of course grade; comments are counted as part of participation score.

Epistemic modes paper. We do not have a final exam in this class. Rather, there will be a longer paper (10-12 pages) that considers the connections between theoretical positions and empirical research. We will discuss the specifics of the paper later in class, but it will be tied to our discussion of Isaac Reed’s book, which we read at the end of the semester. 30% of course score.

The memos are both short and focused, and they need clear thinking and careful writing. In the memos, you should aim to: (1) Critically engage with the texts, assessing analytic strengths and weaknesses and considering a given reading in the context of others we have seen; (2) Identify and explain key concepts and arguments in the theory. It is best to focus on one or two that you find especially important rather than try to summarize everything. Go deep rather than broad! Also note that sometimes it may be better to identify and assess key parallels and distinctions between texts; and (3) Pose clear questions and issues for discussion that we should expand upon and develop in class.

Please print out the memos for a given class day and bring them with you, since everyone is collectively responsible for building the discussion. On the days when you are not writing a memo, you should respond with focused comments to one or more of the posted memos. You may also write a shorter memo of your own if there are issues you think need to be raised that are not reflected in the other memos. These comments will typically be shorter than the engagement memos and we do not expect the same care in writing. Yet these too should be engaged and thoughtful. It is also a good idea to use comments to think through how a text or idea may inform or complicate your research areas in productive ways.

Memos are due without fail by 6:00 pm on the evening before a given seminar. You will have until Friday evening of the same week to amend or re-edit the memo if you wish, though please inform me if you choose to do so. Comments must be posted before 9:00 am on the seminar day, but I highly encourage you to do your comments the evening they are posted. The goal is to have already have some interaction going before the session starts.
Readings

Negotiating the first year in graduate school with an orderly and calm mindset is like trying to take a careful sip from a firehose, but please make sure that you block out the time you need in the week, every week, to do the work. I have done everything I can to keep the reading focused, but it is a substantial amount and even still we will have to leave out a great deal of important work. I have mostly assigned “original texts” but sometimes it may be helpful to consult secondary summaries if you are lost. Overview works like George Ritzer’s Social Theory or Jonathan Turner’s The Structure of Sociological Theory can be very helpful.

Core books listed below are available at the Bookstore. If you order separately, please make sure you get the same translations and editions, since we will do close readings and we will often need to reference particular passages and pages. I strongly suggest hard copies for the same reason. Plus you can mark up your physical texts—get a good mechanical pencil while you are at it.


Seminar schedule

Tues, Sept. 8  Introduction to Sociological Theory
  • Craig Calhoun, “Introduction” to Classical Sociological Theory [2012].

Thurs, Sept. 10  Spirit of the Enlightenment
  • Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” [1784].
  • Adam Smith, “Wealth of Nations” [1776].
  • Harriet Martineau, “Political Non-Existence of Women” [1837].
  • Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” [1984].
  • Memos: Stacey Brumbaugh-Johnson, Kriti Budhiraja.

Tues, Sept. 15  Social Production and Alienation
  • Karl Marx, “For a Ruthless Critique of Everything Existing” [1843].
  • Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” emphasis pp. 70-105.
  • Memos: Ethan Johnson, Miray Philips.

Thurs, Sept. 17  Consciousness, Ideology, and Historical Materialism
  • Karl Marx, “The German Ideology, Part I” [1845].
  • Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” [1848], emphasis Part I.
  • Memos: Stacey Brumbaugh-Johnson, Kriti Budhiraja.

Tues, Sept. 22  Capitalism and Labor Process
  • Karl Marx, “Wage Labor and Capital” [1849].
  • Karl Marx, “Capital, Vol 1” [1867], emphasis pp. 302-403, 431-438.
  • Memos: Brit Henderson, Isabel Arriagada.
Thurs, Sept. 24  Marx Beyond Marx
  • George Ritzer, “Prosumer Capitalism” and responses [2015].
  • Memos: Brit Henderson, Anuradha Sajjanbar.

Tues, Sept. 29  Solidarity and Social Divisions
  • Émile Durkheim, Division of Labor in Society [1893], emphasis Books I and III.
  • Memos: Ethan Johnson, Manami Bhattacharya.

Thurs, Oct. 1  Solidarity and Difference in the Modern World
  • Jeffrey C. Alexander, “Integration Between Difference and Solidarity” and “Encounters with Others” (from The Civil Sphere) [2006].
  • Memos: Miray Philips, João Fontes Zagni, Anuradha Sajjanbar.

Tues, Oct. 6  Society and Social Facts
  • Émile Durkheim, “Rules of Sociological Method” [1895].
  • Memos: Brit Henderson, Amber Joy Powell.

Thurs, Oct. 8  Egoism, Anomie and Social Organization
  • Émile Durkheim, Suicide [1897]. emphasis on Book 2.
  • Memos: Anuradha Sajjanbar, João Fontes Zagni, Isabel Arriagada.

Tues, Oct. 13  Collective Consciousness and Social Divisions
  • Émile Durkheim, “The Dualism of Human Nature and its Social Conditions” [1914].
  • Émile Durkheim, “Elementary Forms of Religious Life” [1912].
  • Memos: Manami Bhattacharya, Ethan Johnson.
Thurs, Oct. 15  Punishment, Power, and Society

• Michel Foucault, selections from Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison [1979].

• Erving Goffman, selections from Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity [1963].

• Memos: Isabel Arriagada, Anuradha Sajjanhar.

Tues, Oct. 20  Religion and Rationality


• Suggested to skim: Max Weber, “Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism” [1904].

• Memos: Brit Henderson, Amber Joy Powell, Manami Bhattacharya.

Thurs, Oct. 22  Method of Social Science

• Max Weber, “‘Objectivity’ and the Social Sciences” [1904].

• Max Weber, “Basic Sociological Terms” [1914].

• Memos: Brit Henderson, Manami Bhattacharya.

Tues, Oct. 27  Distinctions of Power

• Max Weber, “Distribution of Power Within the Political Community: Class, Status, Party” [1914].

• Max Weber, “Types of Legitimate Domination” [1914].

• Memos: Isabel Arriagada, Victoria Piechocki.

Thurs, Oct. 29  Rationality and Modernity Extended


• Anthony Giddens, “Consequences of Modernity” [1990].

• Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, “The Iron Cage Revisited” [1983].

• Memos: Ethan Johnson, Miray Philips.
Tues, Nov. 3  Social Formations, Identity, Power

- Georg Simmel, “Group Expansion and the Development of Individuality” [1908].
- Georg Simmel, “The Dyad and the Triad” [1908].
- Memos: Victoria Piehowski, Amber Joy Powell, Manami Bhattacharya.

Thurs, Nov. 5  Individuals and Institutions

- Jürgen Habermas, “The Rationalization of the Lifeworld” [1981].
- Memos: Kriti Budhiraja, Isabel Arriagada, João Fontes Zagni.

Tues, Nov. 10  The Self, Whole and Fractured

- Georg Simmel, “The Stranger” [1908].

Thurs, Nov. 12  Making “Self” Work

- Erving Goffman, Presentation of Self in the Social World [1959], chapters 1-3.
- Memos: Miray Philips, João Fontes Zagni, Anuradha Sajjanhar.

Tues, Nov. 17  Gaps in Presentation of Self

- Erving Goffman, Presentation of Self in the Social World [1959], chapters 4-6.
- Memos: Manami Bhattacharya, Ethan Johnson, Stacey Brumbaugh-Johnson.
Thurs, Nov. 19  Subjectivity, Discourse and Social Power

- Michel Foucault, “The Repressive Hypothesis” [1978].
- Franz Fanon, “Black Skin, White Masks” [1952].
- Memos: *Miray Philips, Victoria Piebowski, Kriti Budhiraja*.

Tues, Nov. 24  Power and the Civil Sphere

- Alexis de Tocqueville, “Influence of Democracy” [1840].
- Jeffrey C. Alexander, selections from *The Civil Sphere* [2006].
- Memos: *João Fetes Zagni, Amber Joy Powell*.

Thurs, Nov. 26  THANKSGIVING; NO CLASS

Tues, Dec. 1  Habitus, Structure, Practice

- Memos: *Amber Joy Powell, Ethan Johnson, Isabel Arriagada*.

Thurs, Dec. 3  Practice, Capital, Domination

- Memos: *Kriti Budhiraja, Victoria Piebowski*. 
**Tues, Dec. 8**  Fields and Symbolic Space

- Pierre Bourdieu, selection from *Homo Academicus* [1984].
- Memos: João Fontes Zagni, Stacey Brumbaugh-Johnson.

**Thurs, Dec. 10**  Rethinking Epistemic Modes: Realism

- Memos: Stacey Brumbaugh-Johnson, Kriti Budhiraja.

**Tues, Dec 15**  Rethinking Epistemic Modes: Normative, Interpretive

- Isaac Ariail Reed, *Interpretation and Social Knowledge* [2011], Chapters 3-5.
- Memos: Victoria Piebowski, Anuradha Sajjanbar.

**Weds Dec 23**  Final papers due by 12:30 pm.
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS POLICY

GRADUES: University academic achievement is graded under two systems: A-F (with pluses and minuses) and S-N. Choice of grading system and course level (1xxx/3xxx/4xxx) is indicated on the registration website; changes in grade scale may not be made after the second week of the semester. Some courses may be taken under only one system; limitations are identified in the course listings. The Department of Sociology requires A-F registration in courses required for the major/minor. University regulations prescribe the grades that will be reported on your transcript.

A Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements (4.00 grade points)
A- 3.67 grade points
B+ 3.33 grade points
B  Achievement significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements (3.00 grade points)
B- 2.67 grade points
C+ 2.33 grade points
C  Achievement that meets the basic course requirements in every respect (2.00 grade points)
C- 1.67 grade points
D+ 1.33 grade points
D  Achievement worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements (1.00 grade point)
F Performance that fails to meet the basic course requirements (0 grade points)
N No credit. Its use is now restricted to students not earning an S on the S-N grade base
I Incomplete, a temporary symbol assigned when the instructor has a “reasonable expectation” that you 1) can successfully complete unfinished work on your own no later than one year from the last day of classes and 2) believes that legitimate reasons exist to justify extending the deadline for course completion. The instructor may set date conditions for make-up work. If a course is not completed as prescribed or not made up as agreed within the year, the I will lapse to an F if registered on the A-F grade base or an N if registered on the S-N grade base.
W Official withdrawal from a course after the end of the second week of the semester. You must file a course cancellation request before the end of the sixth week of the semester to ensure that the W, rather than the F, will be formally entered on your record.

FINAL EXAMINATIONS (see schedule on the Calendar web site at http://onestop.umn.edu/onestop/Calendars/FinalExams.html): You are required to take final examinations at the scheduled times. Under certain circumstances, however, you may request final examination schedule adjustment in your college office. Instructors are obligated to schedule make-up examinations within the final examination period for students who have three final examinations within a 16-hour period. Instructors also are encouraged to reschedule examinations for students with religious objections to taking an examination on a given day. You must submit your request for an adjustment in your schedule at least two weeks before the examination period begins. For assistance in resolving conflicts, call the CLA Student Information Office at 625-2020. If you miss a final, an F or N is recorded. You must obtain the instructor's permission to make up the examination. Final examinations may be rescheduled by the instructor only through the official procedure for that purpose (as noted on the above web page). Final examinations may not be scheduled for the last day of class or earlier for Study Day. If an examination is rescheduled at the instructor's request, and you have an examination conflict because of it, you are entitled to be given the final examination at an alternative time within the regularly scheduled examination period for that semester.

CLASS ATTENDANCE: As a CLA student, you are responsible for attending class and for ascertaining the particular attendance requirements for each class or department. You should also learn each instructor's policies concerning make-up of work for absences. Instructors and students may consult the CLA Classroom, Grading, and Examination Procedures Handbook for more information on these policies (http://advisingtools.class.umn.edu/cgep/).

COURSE PERFORMANCE AND GRADING: Instructors establish ground rules for their courses in conformity with their department policies and are expected to explain them at the first course meeting. This includes announcement of office hours and location, the kind of help to be expected from the instructor and teaching assistants, and tutorial services, if available. The instructor also describes the general nature of the course, the work expected, dates for examinations and paper submissions, and expectations for classroom participation and attendance. Instructors determine the standards for grading in their classes and will describe expectations, methods of evaluation, and factors that enter into grade determination. The special conditions under which an incomplete (I) might be awarded also should be established. The college does not permit you to submit extra work to raise your grade unless all students in the class are afforded the same opportunity.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR: You are entitled to a good learning environment in the classroom. Students whose behavior is disruptive either to the instructor or to other students will be asked to leave (the policies regarding student conduct are outlined in the CLA Classroom, Grading, and Examination Procedures online at http://advisingtools.class.umn.edu/cgep/).

ELECTRONIC DEVICES: University instructors may restrict or prohibit the use of personal electronic devices in his or her classroom, lab, or any other instructional setting. For the complete policy, visit: http://policy.umn.edu/education/studentresp

SCHOLASTIC CONDUCT: The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:
Scholastic Dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forgling, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. Students cannot evade (intentionally or unintentionally) a grade sanction by withdrawing from a course before or after the misconduct charge is reported. This also applies to late withdrawals, including discretionary late cancellation (also known as the "one-time-only drop"). For the complete policy, visit: http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND STRESS MANAGEMENT: As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu.
A REMINDER OF RELEVANT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
* SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT POLICIES *

GRADE INFORMATION: Grades are due in the Office the Registrar within 3 business days after the final examination. No information regarding grades will be released by the department office staff to anyone except designated personnel in Records and college offices. Students may access their own grades through their computer account. They may do this by following the directions on the One Stop web site at http://onestop.umn.edu/.

INCOMPLETES: It is the instructor's responsibility to specify conditions under which an Incomplete (I) grade is assigned. Students should refer to the course syllabus and talk with the instructor as early as possible if they anticipate not completing the course work. Coursework submitted after the final examination will generally be evaluated down unless prior arrangements are made in writing by the instructor. University policy states that if completion of the work requires the student to attend class in substantial part a second time, assigning an “I” grade is NOT appropriate. Incompletes are appropriate only if the student can make up the coursework independently with the same professor.

MAKE-UP EXAMINATIONS: Arrangements for special examinations must be made directly with the instructor who taught the course and who is responsible for approving and supervising the examination or making individual arrangements. Circumstances for missing an exam include, but are not necessarily limited to: verified illness, participation in athletic events or other group activities sponsored by the University, serious family emergencies, subpoenas, jury duty, military service, and religious observances. It is the responsibility of the student to notify faculty members of such circumstances as far in advance as possible.

GRADE CHANGES: Grades properly arrived at are not subject to renegotiation unless all students in the class have similar opportunities. Students have the right to check for possible clerical errors in the assignment of grades by checking with the instructor and/or teaching assistant. Students with justifiable complaints about grades or classroom procedures have recourse through well-established grievance procedures. You are expected to confer first with the course instructor. If no satisfactory solution is reached, the complaint should be presented in writing to the department Director of Undergraduate Studies or the Coordinator of Undergraduate Advising (909 Soc Sci). If these informal processes fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, other formal procedures for hearing and appeal can be invoked. See the departmental advisor in 923 Social Sciences to explore options.

DISABILITY SERVICES: Students with disabilities that affect their ability to participate fully in class or to meet all course requirements are encouraged to bring this to the attention of the instructor so that appropriate accommodations can be arranged. For more info contact Disability Resource Center in 180 McNamara.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT: University policy prohibits sexual harassment as defined in the December 1998 policy statement, available at the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action. Questions or concerns about sexual harassment should be directed to this office in 419 Morrill Hall.

SOCIOLOGY PROGRAMS INFORMATION: The Sociology Department offers two options for the Bachelor of Arts degree and a Bachelor of Science degree. We also have an Honors Program. Students interested in majoring in Sociology should view the online-information session about the major. Further information can be obtained from the following persons and offices or online at http://www.soc.umn.edu/undergrad/

General information, Sociology Department, 909 Social Sciences - 624-4300
Coordinator of Undergraduate Advising, Bobby Bryant, 923 Social Sciences – 624-4300
Director of Undergraduate Studies, Professor Kathy Hull, 1131 Social Sciences - 624-4339
Sociology Honors Advisor, Professor Joachim Savelsberg, 1144 Social Sciences - 624-0273
Director of Graduate Studies, Professor Ann Meier, 1074 Social Sciences – 624-9828 and/or Graduate Program Associate, Becky Drasin, 927 Social Sciences - 624-2093

Undergraduate jobs, internships, volunteer and research opportunities, scholarships, and much more can be found in the Undergraduate Resources site - http://z.umn.edu/socugrad