

Emory University  
Department of Sociology  
Fall Term, 2006  
MWF 9:35-10:25  
Candler 114

Dr. Frank Lechner  
Tarbutton 214  
[frank.lechner@emory.edu](mailto:frank.lechner@emory.edu)  
727-7530  
Office Hours: W 1:30-3:30

## **SOCIOLOGY 457 DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY**

### *Objectives*

This course provides a systematic overview of the development of sociological theory. We will analyze, apply, and compare the ideas of major theorists and place those ideas in their social and cultural context. The main purpose of the course is to convey the rich and diverse insights that sociological theory contains. We will repeatedly address four central problems:

1. The problem of **method**: How can social science best account for patterns in social behavior and for changes in social structure? What assumptions should guide investigation of the social world?
2. The problem of **modernity**: How can we best describe, explain, and assess the rise of modern societies? Are modern societies more free and equal?
3. The problem of **solidarity**: What makes groups hang together, and how do people belong to them?
4. The problem of **relevance**: What light can theory shed on problems and changes in American and world society? How practical is a good theory?

By the end of the course, you should have a good sense of the main lines of sociological thought and the way they inform current work in sociology that you have encountered in other courses. You should also be able to address contemporary issues with the intellectual tools provided by the major theorists.

### *Structure*

Most of the course is divided into sections focused on specific types of theory or lines of argument. Within each section, we will study

1. *Classic sources*: We will examine the ideas of a classic figure using original readings and focusing on the four main themes (supplemented by ideas and concepts discussed in the course text).
2. *Contemporary developments*: We will illustrate with specific examples how contemporary scholars extend and test classic ideas.
3. *Applications*: We will apply core ideas to an issue in modern society, in the form of research assignments that also contribute to class discussion.

## ***Requirements***

- 1. Three exams**, which everyone must take. Each is worth 20% of your final grade. The exams will consist of short-answer and essay questions. Note: the first exam will be on Friday, Oct. 6.
- 2. Six writing assignments**, about 4 pages each. All assignments will be graded, but only the best three will count toward your final grade (10% each). To satisfy the College writing requirement in this course your average grade for all assignments must be at least a C. Essays that are incomplete (e.g., because they do not cover all parts of the assignment) or do not reflect due care (e.g., because of sloppy writing) will lead to a grade reduction. You will get specific instructions for each assignment.
- 3. Preparation, participation, and attendance**, worth 10% of your final grade. You are expected to be well prepared for each class – ready to answer questions, participate in discussion, and carry out in-class assignments. You will get credit for solid preparation and active participation. Being unprepared counts as an absence. Less than three unexcused absences will increase your p/p/a grade by a full point, but each absence over three will lower your p/p/a grade by a full point (except in case of documented emergencies, major religious holidays, and prior approval from the instructor).

## ***Readings***

Laura Desfor Edles and Scott Appelrouth, *Sociological Theory in the Classical Era*  
Robert Heilbroner (ed.), *The Essential Adam Smith*  
Electronic reserve readings (available via Woodruff reserves and LearnLink)

## ***Approach***

This course deals with challenging material. I recommend the following approach as a good way to master the material:

- At the beginning of each new section, read the introduction by Edles and Appelrouth.
- Before each class, carefully read the assigned material and answer relevant study questions (usually posted on LearnLink).
- In class, ask me to clarify difficult concepts and ideas, and participate in class discussion.
- After class, review the highlights (usually posted on LearnLink).
- As you read and reflect on the assigned material, begin to think about how you can use it creatively in the application assignment that concludes each section.

As you prepare for class or for assignments, seek assistance from me or Matt Mathias (the TA) to clarify readings or review drafts. If you have short and specific questions, e-mail me at [frank.lechner@emory.edu](mailto:frank.lechner@emory.edu). You are welcome to meet with me to discuss other questions or issues. Don't wait until the day before an exam!

## *Schedule of classes, readings, and exams*

### Section 1. *Overview and Background*

- 9/1 Introduction  
9/6 How and when did sociology and sociological theory emerge?  
Edles/Appelrouth reader (EA), Introduction  
Collins, "Prologue: The Rise of the Social Sciences"  
9/8 Who were the key figures in early sociology?  
M. Pickering, "Auguste Comte"

### Section 2. *Smith and Rational Choice Theory*

- 9/11 Where do moral sentiments come from?  
*The Essential Adam Smith*, 1-10, 65-77, 100-23, 145-7  
9/13 What causes progress in the wealth of nations?  
*The Essential Adam Smith*, 159-72, 194-208, 248-67, 269-90  
9/15 How does rational choice explain the production and consumption of religion?  
L. Iannacone, "Rational Choice: Framework for the Scientific Study of Religion"  
9/18 Are human beings calculating, self-interested actors?  
Joseph Henrich et al., "'Economic Man' in Cross-Cultural Perspective"  
9/20 **Assignment 1:** How can rational choice theory help to design school choice policies?

### Section 3. *Durkheim and Durkheimian theory*

- 9/22 Why is society a powerful and distinct reality?  
Durkheim, "Individualism and the Intellectuals"  
EA, 79-97  
9/25 How can a complex society create solidarity?  
EA, 97-121  
9/27 How do social forces shape religious life?  
EA, 121-134  
9/29 Why do men and women commit suicide at different rates?  
F. Pampel, "National Context, Social Change, and Sex Differences in Suicide Rates"  
10/2 How does interaction produce social commitment and solidarity?  
R. Collins, excerpts from *Interaction Ritual Chains*  
10/4 **Assignment 2:** How would Durkheim address the rise of "bowling alone"?  
10/6 **First Exam**

#### Section 4. *Marx and Marxist Theory*

- 10/11 What are the driving forces in history?  
EA, 17-28, 64-77
- 10/13 How does (capitalist) society work?  
EA, 29-49  
Marx. "Preface to the Critique of Political Economy"
- 10/16 Why is capitalism bound to fail?  
EA, 49-64  
Marx, excerpt from *Capital*
- 10/18 Beatrice and Sydney Webb, excerpts on trade unions, capitalism, Soviet Union
- 10/20 How does capitalism develop as a global system?  
I. Wallerstein, excerpt from *The Modern World System*
- 10/23 Why does class politics become less important in capitalist societies?  
M. Hechter, "From Class to Culture"
- 10/25 **Assignment 3:** How can Marx support the anti-globalization movement?

#### Section 5. *Simmel and Simmelian Theory*

- 10/27 How do individuals create social forms?  
EA, 241-276
- 10/30 How does modern society affect the individual?  
EA, 280-299
- 11/1 How does involvement in different circles affect people?  
P. Giordano, "The Wider Circle of Friends in Adolescence"
- 11/3 How does modernity put women in a double bind?  
S. Vromen, "Georg Simmel and the Cultural Dilemma of Women"
- 11/6 **Assignment 4:** How can Simmel assess alienation in the suburbs?

#### 11/8 **Second Exam**

#### Section 6. *Du Bois, Mead and American Social Theory*

- 11/10 How does social position affect personal identity?  
EA, 301-345
- 11/13 How does the self arise out of interaction?  
Mead, "The Problem of Society – How We Become Selves"  
EA, 347-381
- 11/15 How can a more democratic society evolve?  
EA, 381-391
- 11/17 How do norms work in interaction?  
G.A. Fine, "Enacting Norms: Mushrooming and the Culture of Expectations and Explanations"

- 11/20 How do gender differences affect delinquency?  
K. Heimer, "Gender, Interaction, and Delinquency: Testing a Theory of Differential Social Control"
- 11/22 **Assignment 5:** How can Du Bois or Mead help to critique modern images of the self?

Section 7. *Weber and Weberian Theory*

- 11/27 What is the purpose of studying social life?  
Weber, "Science as a Vocation"  
EA, 135-147,
- 11/29 In what ways are modern societies becoming more "rational"?  
EA, 161-191
- 12/1 Did Protestantism cause the rise of capitalism?  
147-160
- 12/4 Can women be charismatic leaders?  
B. Finlay, "The Origins of Charisma as Process: The Case of Hildegard von Bingen"
- 12/6 Did Protestantism really cause the rise of (industrial) capitalism?  
J. Delacroix/F. Nielsen, "The Beloved Myth: Protestantism and the Rise of Industrial Capitalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe"
- 12/8 **Assignment 6:** Is modern society becoming "McDonaldized"?
- 12/11 Review
- 12/19 **Final exam**  
4:30 p.m.