

Emory University
Department of Sociology
Wed. 2-5; Tarbuton 206

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Spring Term, 2003
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Sociology 540: Basic Theoretical Problems

Overview

This course aims to give you a better understanding of basic theoretical problems in sociology through an analysis of the work of classical theorists and some of their contemporary successors. These problems include questions about how to explain social action and social order, how to account for the rise of modernity, how to explain variation in forms of solidarity and inequality, and how to relate societal to cultural change. To gain perspective on the classics, we will study both text and context. We will discuss different ways to view the history of sociology but take a particular approach to studying it, showing the variety within a community of inquiry that focuses on certain substantive ideas about the nature of modernity. To convey the thrust of some contemporary debates about the sociological tradition, we will draw on selected feminist readings. By examining how scholars interpret, criticize, extend, and apply the contributions of their predecessors, the seminar will show how they have created a diverse yet cumulative tradition.

Texts

Robert Bellah (ed.), *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society*
Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*
Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber*
Donald Levine, *Visions of the Sociological Tradition*
Donald Levine (ed.), *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms*
Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*
Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*
Anselm Strauss, *George Herbert Mead on Social Psychology*
Robert C. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader*
Articles and chapters (photocopies available in graduate student lounge)

Requirements

1. *Preparation and participation.* For each seminar session, please be prepared to examine key terms or ideas, discuss specific passages you find important, and contribute relevant criticism.
2. *Two presentations* on the readings (10% of final grade)
3. *One assignment* explaining or reflecting on a reading (10% of final grade)
4. *Two essays*--take-home essays, one due March 19, another May 1 (30% of final grade)
5. *Paper*--about 20 pages, due May 1 (50% of final grade)

Schedule

- Week 1
Jan. 22 Introduction and History
Levine, Chs. 1-5
Weber, "Science as a Vocation" (in Gerth and Mills)
Collins, *Four Sociological Traditions*, Prologue
McDonald, "Classical Social Theory with the Women Founders Included"
- Week 2
Jan. 29 Smith
Levine, Ch. 7
Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Part I: I-I to I-IV, II-IV and II-V, skim Part II, Part III: I-V, Part IV: I, Part V: I, Part VI: Conclusion
Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book I: I-IV, skim VIII and X, Book III: I, Book IV: II, Book V: I
- Week 3
Feb. 5 Rational Choice Analysis
Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, Chs. 10, 11
Archer, "Home economicus, Homo sociologicus and Homo sentiens"
Friedman and Diem, "Feminism and the Pro- (Rational-) Choice Movement"
- Week 4
Feb. 12 Marx
Levine, Ch. 10
Tucker reader, Introduction, 1-52, 70-81, 146-63, 172-219, 291-442 (focus on 336-61, 404-42), 469-519, 579-617
- Week 5
Feb. 19 Marxian Analysis
Wright, *Classes*, Ch. 3; *Class Counts*, Ch. 14
Chase-Dunn, *Global Formation*, Ch. 1
Munck, "Unhappy Marriage: Marxism and Women"
- Week 6
Feb. 26 Durkheim
Levine, Ch. 8
Bellah reader, Introduction, 1, 2, 4, 6-10; *Elementary Forms*, pp. 1-44, 84-157, 190-241, 303-54, 418-48
- Week 7
March 5 Durkheimian Analysis
Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action*, Ch. XI
Alexander, "Durkheim's Problem and Differentiation Theory Today"
Etzioni, "Toward a Theory of Public Ritual"
Lehmann, *Durkheim and Women*, Ch. 3
- Week 8
March 19 Weber
Levine, Ch. 9
Gerth and Mills reader, Introduction, VII, VIII, IX, XI, XIII
The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, 95-128, 155-83

- Week 9
March 26 Weberian Analysis
Collins, "An Asian Route to Capitalism"
Goldstone, "The Rise of the West--Or Not?"
Beetham, "Max Weber and the Liberal Political Tradition"
Frank and Meyer, "The Profusion of Individual Roles and Identities in the Postwar Period"
D. Smith, "A Sociology for Women"
- Week 10
April 2 Simmel
Levine reader, Introduction, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 15, 18, 19, 20, 24
- Week 11
April 9 Simmelian Analysis
Levine, "Simmel as a Resource for Sociological Metatheory"
Vromen, "Georg Simmel and the Cultural Dilemma of Women"
Black, "Dreams of Pure Sociology"
Pescosolido and Rubin, "The Web of Group Affiliations Revisited"
- Week 12
April 16 Mead
Levine, Ch. 12
Strauss reader, Introduction, 2, 6, 7, 8, 14
- Week 13
April 23 Meadian Analysis
Blumer, "The Methodological Position of Symbolic Interactionism"
Goffman, "The Interaction Order"
Denzin, "Sexuality and Gender: An Interactionist/Poststructural Reading"
Glassner, "Fit for Postmodern Selfhood"