

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL  
Fall, 2019

# Social Theory

(SOCI 700)

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v3 09/18/2019    Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:00–12:15    Hamilton 151

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## COURSE OVERVIEW

### *Course Goals*

1. To acquaint students with the idea of sociological *paradigms* and the tools for understanding and evaluating specific paradigms;
2. To introduce students to the “sociological canon” of major works in sociological theory;
3. To introduce students to the form, content, and practice of current debates in sociological theory;
4. To demonstrate the importance of sociological theory as a part of sociological research and practice; and
5. To consider critically the possibilities for empirical application and testing of social theory.

### *Requirements*

1. Attendance and active participation in class discussions
2. Two team-based presentations of readings and discussion leadership
3. A final paper considering at least two theorists and contributing an original comparative, synthetic, or applied argument relevant to some sociological concern. The final paper is due in class on December 3.

### *Class Discussion*

One or more students will be responsible for organizing the discussion of readings during each class session. These students are responsible for:

- Preparing a “seminar paper,” to be distributed via <http://sakai.unc.edu> to the rest of the class no later than 12:00 noon the day before class; and
- Organizing and directing class discussion of the readings for the class.

The seminar paper need not be a polished product; it should raise ideas, issues, concerns, and opportunities presented by the readings, and thereby form a provocative basis for the class discussion. The seminar paper should *not* be primarily a summary, nor primarily a list of discussion

questions. It may be particularly helpful to focus our attention on particular pieces of the reading worth discussing in class.

All students are responsible for reading all the assigned readings. That does not mean you need to come to class fully *understanding* them; if you come to class with a good sense of what you don't understand, that will set us up for an excellent conversation.

We may decide to adjust the readings based on how the class is going, new material that comes out, or student interest. If we do so, I will announce the change via email and post a revised syllabus on Sakai.

### *Grading Policy*

The main principle is this: *Nobody pays attention to, or cares about, your grades in graduate classes, provided you pass the class.*

For the qualitatively inclined, the grading policy is essentially this: students who excel *both* in classroom elements of the course (e.g., seminar papers, presentations, discussion) *and* in the writing project will receive **H** grades. This is unlikely to be more than 2 or 3 students in a class, although it can of course vary. Students who excel in one or the other, but not both, will receive grades in the **P+** to **H-** range. The vast majority of students will receive a **P**, which represents substantive mastery, at a PH.D. level, of sociological theory—a significant accomplishment.

For the quantitatively inclined, think in these terms:

Assignment	Grade percentage
Attendance & Participation	30%
Presentations	20%
Final Paper	50%

## READINGS AND RESOURCES

Most required readings that are not in the books listed below are available for download from the course readings site, <http://perrin.socsci.unc.edu/readings>, or from <http://sakai.unc.edu>. You will need a username and password to access this site; these will be provided in class. Many of the links from the Sakai site will only work from the UNC campus or via the UNC Library's proxy service using your ONYEN login.

The recommended readings listed under many class sessions are suggestions for further reading in the field. Students presenting on those dates, and those with particular interests in the areas, may find them useful. You are *not* required or expected to read them for the class.

### *Required Books*

**Claudio E. Benzecry, Monika Krause, and Isaac Ariail Reed, eds.** *Social Theory Now* (University of Chicago Press, 2017).

**Émile Durkheim (trans. Fields).** *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Free Press, 1995).

**Michel Foucault.** *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (University of Chicago Press, 1991).

**Max Weber.** *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Oxford University Press, 1958).

### *Recommended Book*

All of the necessary material for our study of Marx is available from the <http://www.marxists.org> website. However, you may find it useful to have the definitive selection in your library for this and future classes.

**Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels (ed. Tucker).** *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed. (W. W. Norton, 1978).

### *Textbooks*

I have not assigned a textbook for this course; take your pick of one or more of these six if you would like a convenient reference.

**Lewis Coser.** *Masters of Sociological Thought* (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972).

**Craig Calhoun, et al.** *Classical Sociological Theory* (Blackwell, 2002).

**Craig Calhoun, et al.** *Contemporary Sociological Theory* (Blackwell, 2002).

**George Ritzer.** *Sociological Theory* (McGraw-Hill, 1996).

**Jonathan Turner.** *The Structure of Sociological Theory*, 6th ed. (Wadsworth, 1998).

**Malcolm Waters.** *Modern Sociological Theory* (Sage, 1994).

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **August 20** Class Cancelled

Take a look at:

- Perrin, Andrew J. “Note from the Chair: Theory Of, Theory And, Theory From.” *Perspectives: Newsletter of the Theory Section* December 12, 2014. <http://www.asatheory.org/newsletter/theory-of-theory-and-theory-from>
- Perrin, Andrew J. “Note from the Chair: Theorizing Across the Academy” *Perspectives: Newsletter of the Theory Section* May 22, 2015. <http://www.asatheory.org/newsletter/theorizing-across-the-academy>

Other similar works if you’re interested:

- Abend, Gabriel. “The Meaning of ‘Theory’.” *Sociological Theory* 26:2 (2008), 173–199. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9558.2008.00324.x/abstract>
- Sanderson, Stephen K. “Reforming Theoretical Work in Sociology: A Modest Proposal,” and responses by Adams, Perrin, Kidd, and Wilkes, and Sanderson’s rejoinder. <http://www.csun.edu/~egodard/asatheory/docs/theoreticalplural.pdf>

### **August 22** Introduction and Preliminary Challenges

- Why theory? Introductions and substantive basis of the class
- Organization of presentation dates
- Readings:
  - Theodor W. Adorno, “Introduction” to *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* [WWW]
  - Karl R. Popper, “The Logic of the Social Sciences,” in *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* [WWW]
  - Richard Ned Lebow, “If Mozart had Died at Your Age: Psychologic Versus Statistical Interence.” *Political Psychology* Volume 27 Issue 2, Pages 157 - 172. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2006.00466.x>
  - We will also discuss ideas from the Aug. 20 readings

### **August 27** Marx: The Philosophical Roots

- Excerpts from “The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844”: pp. 70–81, 93–105.
- “Theses on Feuerbach”: pp. 143–145.
- “The German Ideology: Part I,” excerpts: pp. 146–175.

### **August 29** Marx: The Critique of Capitalism I

- *Capital*, vol. I, Book I, Part I, Chapters I (<http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch01.htm>) and II (<http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch02.htm>)

### September 3 Marx: The Critique of Capitalism II

- *Capital*, vol. I, Part II:
  - <http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch05.htm>
  - <http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch06.htm>
- Marx & Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*
- Marx & Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (selections)

### September 5 Ripples of Marx

- Silver D. “Alienation in a four factor world.” *J Theory Soc Behav.* 2019;49:84–105. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12192>
- Karl Polanyi. “Our Obsolete Market Mentality.” *Commentary* 3 (1947): 109-117. <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/our-obsolete-market-mentality/>
- Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.” <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>.
- Fred Block, “The Ruling Class Does Not Rule,” *Socialist Revolution* 33 (May-June, 1977). [WWW](#)

### September 10 Durkheim

- Chapters 1–3, *The Rules of Sociological Method* [WWW](#)

### September 12 Durkheim

- *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Translator’s Introduction; Introduction; Book I, Chapter 1; Book II, Chapter 1
- **Optional:** Read the blog thread beginning at <http://scatter.wordpress.com/2011/06/06/sociologists-behaving-badly/>, continuing at <http://scatter.wordpress.com/2011/06/07/on-the-value-of-religious-experience-to-sociology/>, and culminating with Kieran Healy’s very insightful comments at <http://orgtheory.wordpress.com/2011/06/08/durkheim-and-religious-experi>

### September 17 Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Book II, Chapter 8; Book III, Chapter 5; Conclusion

### September 19 du Bois: Race and American Society

- Selections from *The Philadelphia Negro* (page numbers from the 1967 Schocken edition):
  - Chapter 1, #1–3, The Scope of This Study (pp. 1–4)
  - Chapter 2, #4–5, The Problem (pp. 5–9)
  - Chapter 13, #37, The Negro Criminal (pp. 235–40)
  - Chapter 14, #43, The Causes of Crime and Poverty (pp. 282–6)
  - Chapter 15, #46, Social classes and amusements (pp. 309–21)
  - Chapter 17, Negro Suffrage (pp. 368–384)
  - Chapter 18, A Final Word (pp. 385–97)
- **Recommended:**
- W. E. B. du Bois, “Of the Dawn of Freedom.” <http://www.bartleby.com/114/2.html>
- Aldon D. Morris, “Sociology of Race and W. E. B. DuBois: The Path Not Taken.” Ch. 15 in Craig Calhoun, ed., “Sociology in America: A History.” University of Chicago Press, 2007. [WWW](#)
- Stephanie Y. Evans, “Institutionalizing the Contribution of W. E. B. du Bois: Redefining the Scope of Sociology.” *Journal of African American History* 102:4 (Fall, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.5323/jafriamerhist.102.4.0517>

- Lynn England and W. Keith Warner. “W. E. B. Du Bois: Reform, Will, and the Veil.” *Social Forces* (2013) 91 (3): 955-973 (<http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/content/91/3/955.abstract>)

#### September 24 du Bois: Race and American Society II

- “Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” Ch. I in *The Souls of Black Folk*
- “Of the Dawn of Freedom.” Ch. II in *The Souls of Black Folk*
- “The Souls of White Folks.” [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15210/15210-h/15210-h.htm#Chapter\\_II](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15210/15210-h/15210-h.htm#Chapter_II)
- “The Conservation of Races.” <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/31254/31254-h/31254-h.htm>

#### September 26 Ripples of du Bois

- Karen Fields, “Individuality and the Intellectuals: An Imaginary Conversation Between W.E.B. Du Bois and Emile Durkheim.” *Theory and Society* 31:4 (August, 2002), 435–462. <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1023%2FA%3A1020900208865>
- Troy Duster, “Comparative Perspectives and Competing Explanations: Taking on the Newly Configured Reductionist Challenge to Sociology.” *ASR* 71 (2006), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F000312240607100101>
- Victor Ray, “A Theory of Racialized Organizations.” *American Sociological Review* 84:1 (2019), 26–53. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0003122418822335>
- Julian Go, “For a Postcolonial Sociology.” *Theory and Society* 42:1 (January 2013), 25–55. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11186-012-9184-6>

#### October 1 Weber: Groups and Identification

- “Class, Status, Party,” pp. 151–162 in Kalberg
- Comment on Ploetz, “The Concepts of Race and Society,” pp. 306–314 in Kalberg
- “When and Why do People Obey?” pp. 179–193 in Kalberg
- “The Technical Superiority of Bureaucratic Organization over Administration by Notables.” pp. 198–201 in Kalberg
- “Leveling and ‘Passive’ Democratization.” pp. 209–216 in Kalberg

#### October 3 Weber II

- *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Selections. pp. 75–107 in Kalberg.
- “Science as a Vocation”
- “Politics as a Vocation”

#### October 8 Ripples of Weber

- Erin Metz McDonnell. “Budgetary Units: A Weberian Approach to Consumption.” *American Journal of Sociology* 119:2 (September 2013), 307–350. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/673295>
- Greta Krippner. “Democracy of Credit: Ownership and the Politics of Credit Access in Late Twentieth-Century America.” *American Journal of Sociology* 123:1 (July, 2017); 1–47. <https://doi.org/10.1086/692274>
- Dobbin, Frank, and Alexandra Kalev. “The Promise and Peril of Sexual Harassment Programs.” *PNAS* 116:25 (2019):12255-12260. <https://www.pnas.org/content/116/25/12255>

#### October 10 Discussion Day: Catch up and Synthesize

#### October 15 Microsociology and Action

- Claudio E. Benzecry and Daniel Winchester. “Varieties of Microsociology.” in *Social Theory Now*
- Ivan Ermakoff. “On the Frontiers of Rational Choice.” in *Social Theory Now*.

- Rutar T. “For an integrative theory of social behaviour: Theorising with and beyond rational choice theory.” *J Theory Soc Behav.* 2019;1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12204>
- Frye, Margaret. “Bright Futures in Malawi’s New Dawn: Educational Aspirations as Assertions of Identity.” *American Journal of Sociology* 117:6 (May, 2012): 1565–1624. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1086%2F664542>
- **Recommended:**
- Silver, Daniel. “The Moodiness of Action.” *Sociological Theory* 29:3, 199–222. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9558.2011.01394.x>

**October 17** Class Cancelled (Fall Break)

**October 22** Structure, Agency, Culture

- William H. Sewell, Jr., “A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation.” *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (1992). (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2781191>);
- Ann Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies.” *ASR* 51(April 1986): 273-286 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2095521>
- Jo Freeman, “The Tyranny of Structurelessness.” (<http://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm>)
- Hitlin, Steven and Monica Johnson. “Reconceptualizing Agency within the Life Course: The Power of Looking Ahead.” *American Journal of Sociology*: 1429–1472. <https://doi.org/10.1086/681216>
- Neil Gross. “Why Do the Democrats Keep Saying ‘Structural’?” *New York Times* July 31, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/31/opinion/2020-democrats-change-structural.html>

**October 24** Bourdieu I.

- Chapters 1 and 2 in *Practical Reason*
- From *Logic of Practice*, pp. 52–65. [WWW](#)
- **Optional:** “The Logic of Fields” and “Interest, Habitus, Rationality,” from Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (University of Chicago Press, 1992) [WWW](#)

**October 29** Bourdieu II.

- Chapters 5 and 7 in *Distinction* [WWW](#)

**October 31** Extensions of Bourdieu

- Daniel Laurison, “The Willingness to State an Opinion: Inequality, Don’t Know Response, and Political Participation.” *Sociological Forum* 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12202>
- Monika Krause. “The Patterns In Between: ‘Field’ as a Conceptual Variable.” in *Social Theory Now*.
- Elizabeth Popp Berman. “Field Theories and the Move Toward the Market in U.S. Academic Science.” *Political Power & Social Theory*, 2014. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S0198-871920140000027015>
- Jaeeun Kim. “Migration-facilitating Capital: A Bourdieusian Theory of International Migration.” *Sociological Theory* 36.3 (2018): 262-288. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0735275118794982>

**November 5** Foucault

- “What is Enlightenment?” <http://foucault.info/documents/whatIsEnlightenment/foucault.whatIsEnlightenment.en.html>
- From *The Foucault Effect*:
  - “Politics and the Study of Discourse”
  - “Questions of Method”
  - “Governmentality”

- **Recommended:** Michael Power, "Foucault and Sociology." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37 (2011), 35–56. <http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev-soc-081309-150133>

#### November 7 Class TBD

#### November 12 Postwar French Theory

- Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot. "The Sociology of Critical Capacity." *European Journal of Social Theory* 1999. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F136843199002003010>
- Claire Laurier Decoteau. "Poststructuralism Today." In *Social Theory Now*
- Javier Lezaun. "Actor-Network Theory." In *Social Theory Now*

#### November 14 (Bio)Science

- Timmermans, "Matching Genotype and Phenotype: A Pragmatist Semiotic Analysis of Clinical Exome Sequencing." *AJS* 123:1 (July 2017). <https://doi.org/10.1086/692350>
- Alondra Nelson. "Bio Science: Genetic Genealogy Testing and the Pursuit of African Ancestry." *Social Studies of Science* 38(5), 759–783. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312708091929>
- Zuberi et al. Race, Methodology, and Social Construction in the Genomic Era. *Annals* 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0002716215589718>
- Perrin, Andrew J., and Hedwig Lee. "The Undertheorized Environment: Sociological Theory and the Ontology of Behavioral Genetics." *Sociological Perspectives* 50:2 (Summer, 2007), 303–322. <https://doi.org/10.1525%2Fsop.2007.50.2.303>

#### November 19 Causality and Mechanism

- Gross, Neil. "A Pragmatist Theory of Social Mechanisms." *American Sociological Review* 74:3 (June, 2009): 358–379. <http://asr.sagepub.com/content/74/3/358.abstract>
- Ivan Ermakoff. "Causality and History: Modes of Causal Investigation in Historical Social Sciences." *Annual Review of Sociology* 45:1 (2019). <http://libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login?url=https://doi.org/10.1177%2F136843199002003010>
- Vaiyanathan et al., "Causality in Contemporary American Sociology: An Empirical Assessment and Critique." *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12081>
- Charles Kurzman and Aseem Hasnain. "When Forecasts Fail: Unpredictability in Israeli-Palestinian Interaction." *Sociological Science* June 23, 2014. <https://www.sociologicalscience.com/articles-vol1-16-239/>

#### November 21 Networks

- Brashears and Quintane, "The Weakness of Tie Strength." *Social Networks* 2018. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/s>
- Emily Erikson. "Networks and Network Theory: Possible Directions for Unification." In *Social Theory Now*
- Heather A. Haveman and Rachel Wetts. "Contemporary Organizational Theory: The Demographic, Relational, and Cultural Perspectives." *Sociology Compass* 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12664>

#### November 26 Economies and Policies

- Daniel Hirschman. "Rediscovering the 1%: Theory-Laden Knowledge Infrastructures and the Stylized Facts of Inequality." [http://perrin.socsci.unc.edu/webdav/to-read/Hirschman%20Rediscovering%20One%20Percent%20\(SocArXiv\).pdf](http://perrin.socsci.unc.edu/webdav/to-read/Hirschman%20Rediscovering%20One%20Percent%20(SocArXiv).pdf)
- Frederick F. Wherry. "Performance Circuits in the Marketplace." *Politics & Society* 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0032329212441598>
- Natalie B. Aviles. "Situated Practice and the emergence of ethical research: HPV vaccine development and organizational cultures of translation at the National Cancer Institute." *Science, Technology & Human Values* 43(5): 810–833. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0162243917749728>

November 28 Class Cancelled (Thanksgiving)

December 3 Contemporary Applications in Science and Knowledge.

- **Final Paper Due in Class**

- Abend, Gabriel. "Thick Concepts and the Moral Brain." *European Journal of Sociology* 52:1 (April, 2011): 143–172. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0003975611000051>
- Marion Fourcade. "Ordinalization." Lewis A. Coser Award for Theoretical Agenda Setting 2014. *Sociological Theory* 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275116665876>
- Kieran Healy. "Fuck Nuance." *Sociological Theory* (2017), 35:118-127. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0735275117709046>

## WHAT'S MISSING?

It is simply impossible even to touch upon all the subfields of sociological theory in a one-semester class. Given that constraint, there are lots of important pieces of sociological theory that are missing from our semester's overview. I will be happy to discuss these with you, informally or formally, as any of them may turn out to be useful and/or interesting to you.

**Missing classics.** Additional Durkheim classics like *The Division of Labor in Society* are left out in favor of the, in my opinion, much more interesting argument to be found in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Also missing is the foundational work of Georg Simmel, August Comte, Gabriel Tarde, and Alexis de Tocqueville.

**Older American sociology.** Early American theorists such as Cooley, Mead, Dewey, Mills, Park, and Hughes are, sadly, neglected in favor of their more famous European contemporaries. American sociology was dominated between roughly 1935 and 1975 by the structural functionalism of Talcott Parsons and the critiques thereof. These critiques were both relatively friendly in nature (e.g., by Robert K. Merton) and relatively hostile (e.g., Herbert Blumer and Erving Goffman). These debates are very interesting historically, and genealogically they are crucial to the development of our discipline. You may find Lewis A. Coser's article, "Sociological Theory From the Chicago Dominance to 1965," *Annual Review of Sociology* 2(1976), helpful.

**Frankfurt School and Post-Frankfurt critical theory.** Probably the most interesting, and frustrating, strain of postwar theory emerged from the exile intellectuals of the Frankfurt School, particularly Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer. Recent echoes include the very influential sociologist/philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who was trained at and influenced by the Frankfurt School. The most important additional strains are post-colonial theory and contemporary feminist theory, each of which could easily be taught for a semester or more.

**Normative theory.** Mostly found within our sister discipline, political science, there is a flourishing subfield of democratic theory whose aim is to discuss what constitutes a good society, a good polity, etc.

**Theory-of.** Any sociological study worth the paper it's written on contains theory: a theory of entrepreneurship, of health effects, of political participation.