Course Overview

This course is designed to provide an overview of current sociological theory with a special emphasis on the theory of the public sphere.

Readings and Resources

Required Books


Jürgen Habermas. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (MIT Press, 1989).


Supplementary Readings

All other readings are available either on the web or on the course Sakai website.

Formal Requirements

Course Participation. You must read and carefully consider all the materials listed for each class session and come to class ready to discuss them actively. This is not a lecture course but a discussion.

Seminar Paper and Class Leadership. You will be part of one or more groups responsible for preparing and distributing a short, pithy, even polemical paper to the class and using it to focus discussion during one class session. Groups will be formed the first week of class.
**Final Paper.** You must write a final paper for the class. The final paper should be useful to your current intellectual focus and should engage with the questions we explore during the course. The purpose of this paper is to link your research focus with theoretical questions. Length, style, and substance are all negotiable based on how the paper fits into your intellectual development.

**Grading Policy**

The main principle is this: *Nobody sees, or cares about, your grades in graduate classes.*

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:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Grade percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team presentations</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
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**Honor Code**

*Your participation in this course is covered by the UNC Honor Code* (see [http://www.unc.edu/depts/honor/studinfo.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/honor/studinfo.html)). I take academic dishonesty—including, but not limited to, plagiarism—very seriously. There will be no excuses or second chances; if you have plagiarized the *ideas or words* of someone else without giving credit, you will be referred to the Student Attorney General. The usual sanction for the first offense of academic dishonesty is suspension from the university for a semester. If you have questions as to what constitutes academic dishonesty, check [http://www.unc.edu/depts/honor/plagiarism.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/honor/plagiarism.html) or consult me.

**Course Schedule**

**January 13:** Foundations and Introductions

**January 27:** Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, entire.

**February 3:** Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere* (PDF on Sakai), Foreword and Chapters 1, 2, 4, and 6.

**February 10:** Critical Responses to Habermas I

February 17: Benhabib, Chapters 1, 3, 5, and 6

February 24: French and American Pragmatism

March 3: Chantal Mouffe, Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically (London: Verso, 2013), Chapters 1, 5, and 6

March 17: Rosanvallon, entire

March 24: Pragmatics of Deliberation

March 31: Jeffrey Alexander, selections from The Civil Sphere (Oxford University Press, 2006). http://www.oxfordscholarship.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195162509.001.0001/acprof-9780195162509 Introduction, Chapters 5, 12, 15, 16, 17, 20 (and others as they look interesting to you)

April 7: Reed, entire

April 14: Jacobs and Townsley, Chapters 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9

April 21: Reserved for later decision or follow-up