

Instructor: Eve Spangler, 400 McGuinn, 2-4146, eve.spangler@bc.edu

Class Meetings: Wednesdays: 3:00 – 5:30 p.m..

Office Hours: Tuesdays, Thursdays: 10:30 – 11:45 a.m.,
and by appointment

Welcome to the first semester of the Sociology Department's year long Theory ProSeminar. The Theory ProSeminar is designed to acquaint you with the theoretical common ground that all sociologists share as they pursue their own particular interests within the discipline. During this semester, we will spend the bulk of our time studying the work of three classical sociologists - Marx, Weber, Durkheim. Each author will be examined for his substantive contributions (and omissions), his theoretical schema, epistemological stance and methodological strategies. Together, the work of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim is the source for much of contemporary sociology, both theoretical and empirical.

Class meetings will be organized as a mix of lecture and discussion. I will take responsibility for presenting the basic analytic arguments of each author and commenting on both the methodological and substantive implications of their work. You should be prepared to come to each meeting with questions about the readings, applications of the texts to subjects of interest to you, and critical evaluations of the authors' strengths and weaknesses.

What follows is a schedule of required readings, study questions, and dates on which essays responding to the study questions are due. The assigned books are available in the bookstore. Additional readings are available through the on-line reserves at the BC library .

Introduction

September 5: The Origins of Social Theory

In our first week, we will be discussing the historical roots of our present efforts at creating social theory. From the beginning, the social theorizing has reflected the position of speakers and the experiences of the communities in which gave rise to it, raising questions about the character of the knowledge we can hope to produce.

Required Readings:

Randall Collins and Michael Makowsky *The Discovery of Society* (Random House, 7th edition), Introduction.

On line reserves:

*Dorothy Smith "A Sociology for Women" from *The Everyday World as Problematic* (Northeastern University Press, 1987)

*Peter L. Berger "Sociology and Freedom" *The American Sociologist* 1971, 6(Feb.)1-5.

*Michael Burawoy, "For Public Sociology" (ASA Presidential Address, 2004)

*Lisa Ruddick "The Near Enemy of the Humanities is Professionalism," (*Chronicle of Higher Education: The Chronicle Review*, Nov. 23, 2001)

*Peter Berger, "Sociology: A Disinvitation?" *Society*, Nov/Dec 1992.

KARL MARX

September 5 - October 3

The "discovery of society" (which is the theme of the course as well as the textbook title) begins with Marx's recognition of the systemic, interrelated character of the major institutions of society around the process of securing a living. Marx saw, moreover, that while society's institutions formed a system, their "fit" with one another was far from perfect -- and that the internal contradictions of society provided a source of social change. Finally, Marx's analysis provides a moral critique (miserization, alienation) of capitalist society.

Required Readings

Collins and Makowsky: Chapter 1, 2, and 5.

Anthony Giddens *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, Chapters 1 - 4.

Robert Tucker, ed. *The Marx Engels Reader* (Norton) "The German Ideology, Part I," "The Manifesto of the Communist Party," "Wage, Labor and Capital," "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," "The Critique of the Gotha Program."

Frederick Engels "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific" in Tucker.

On-line reserves:

*Stolzman and Gamberg "Marxist Class Analysis," from the *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*

*Heidi Hartmann "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex," *Signs* 1976 1(3):159-168.

*Myra Marx Ferree, "Between Two Worlds," *Signs* 1985 10(3): 517-536.

*Erik Olin Wright "What is Analytic Marxism," *Socialist Review*

*Erik Olin Wright and J. Singelmann, "Proletarianization and the Changing American Class Structure," in *AJS*, 88:supplement.

*Erick Olin Wright and W. Martin, "The Transformation of the American Class Structure," *AJS* 1987, 93(1):1-29.

Recommended Readings

Robert C. Tucker "The Marxian Revolutionary Idea. Norton Press.

Thomas Bottomore (ed.) Karl Marx. Prentice-Hall.

Peter Worsley. Marx and the Marxists.

Essay Questions

Due: October 3

1. How does Marx characterize the contradictory nature of the capitalist system? How is oppression/exploitation structured in this system? How is liberation possible?
2. For you, what are the three most significant strengths and the three most significant weaknesses of Marxist theory.
3. How would you use Marxist theory to analyze some sociological topic of interest to you?

MAX WEBER

October 10 – November 7

This section begins with Weber's comparative study of the major world religions. It is here that Weber's work most closely approximates "an argument with the ghost of Marx." Weber's sociology of religion poses three major problems: to describe the elective affinity which exists between the experiences of a religious community and their belief systems; to identify the social and economic consequences of theological beliefs; and to describe the transmutation of the religion developed by "adepts" into the daily practices of the lay community. Embedded in Weber's sociology of religion is the notion of the controlled comparison -- a starting point for examining Weber's contributions to the methodology of the social sciences. Weber's methodological concerns, expressed in his development of "ideal types", are a bridge of Weber's work on political and economic sociology. This section closes with a review of Weber's use of the theme of rationalization to unify his work.

Required Readings

Collins and Makowsky, Chapter 7 - 10, 12.

Giddens, Chapters 9 - 12

Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber* (Oxford University Press)
“Introduction” “The Social Psychology of the World Religions,” “The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism,” “Class, Status, and Party,” “Science as a Vocation,” “Politics as a Vocation,” “Bureaucracy.”

On-line reserves:

*Alvin Gouldner, “Aintit0Minotaur: The Myth of Value Free Sociology, *Social Problems*, 1962, 10:199-213.

*Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, “Introduction,” *The Social Construction of Reality*, 1966.

*Elizabeth Spellman “Introduction,” *The Inessential Woman*, Beacon Press, 1988.

*Dorothy Smith “A Feminist Methodology,” *The Everyday World as Problematic*

*Kathy Ferguson “Elements of a Feminist Discourse,” *The Feminist Case against Bureaucracy* Temple University Press, 1984.

*James March and Johan Olsen “Organizational Choice under Ambiguity,” *Ambiguity and Choice in Organizations*, Columbia University Press, 1979.

*S.A.M.D.S. “Welcome to Springfield, A Mass Mutual Property” Springfield Area Movement for a Democratic Society.

Recommended Readings

Dennis Wrong (ed.) *Max Weber*. (Prentice Hall)

Frank Parkin.(ed.) *Max Weber* (Tavistock)

Henry Adams. *The Education of Henry Adams* (Houghton Mifflin, 1918) Chapt. 25.

Essay Questions

Due: November 7

1. How does Weber expand Marx’s analysis of capitalism into an analysis of industrialism?
2. For you, what are Weber’s major theoretical contributions? Methodological contributions?
3. What contribution does a Weberian framework make to the study of some subject of interest to you?

EMILE DURKHEIM

November 14 - December 5

Emile Durkheim's work completes our discovery of the social system. Like Marx, Durkheim accorded great importance to the division of labor as a source of social development. Like Weber, he assigns crucial importance to religious beliefs and practices in maintaining social solidarity. Durkheim's work also represents a model of theoretical and methodological procedures that remains current. Lastly, Durkheim's analysis of the political possibilities of mass society is tinged by both the optimism of Marx and the pessimism of Weber.

Required Readings:

Collins and Makowsky, Chapter 3, 6, 11, 13 - 15, Epilogue.

Giddens: Chapters 5 - 8

Emile Durkheim *Suicide*, Introductory sections, Book 3.

Emile Durkheim *The Division of Labor in Society* Introductory materials, Book 1, Chapters 1 - 3, Conclusion.

On Line Reserves:

*Duncan, Featherman and Duncan, Chaps. 1-3 *Socioeconomic Background and Achievement* Seminar Press, 1972

*Patick Horan "Is Status Attainment Research Atheoretical?" *ASR* 1978 43(4):534-541.

*Kai Erikson "Sociology and History, *American Sociologist* 1970 5(Nove):331-338.

Recommended Readings

Robert Nisbet (ed.) *Emile Durkheim* (Prentice Hall).

John Horton "Order and Conflict Theories of Social Problems," in *ASR*

Peter Berger. *The Sacred Canopy and Rumor of Angels*.

K. Thompson (ed.) *Durkheim* (Tavistock)

Essay Questions
Due: December 13th

1. Compare Durkheim's view of modernity to that of Marx and Weber. Please pay special attention to each author's assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of modern social forms.

2. How do each of these writers explain the relationship between ideas and experiences?
3. For a subject of interest to you, specify how a Durkheimian framework illuminates and/or obscures what you want to know.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

It should go without saying that academic integrity is a standard of utmost importance in this class. Guidelines for academic integrity in written work are posted on the BC website at:

www.bc.edu/integrity

If you have any questions pertaining to the academic integrity guidelines or to appropriate use of sources, please come and talk with me. If you are caught violating BC policies on academic integrity, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment and the appropriate Dean will be notified in accordance with the rules set forth by the university.