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Lecture/Discussion: **Faner 3410**
Ws, 2:00-4:30 PM
Office Hours: T+TH, 2:00-4:30 PM,
W, 5:00-6:00 PM,
and by appointment

Theory and Society:
A Survey of the Classical Traditions

“Theory is [used] to challenge the givenness of the social world ... to enable researchers to see new problems and new facts ... to theorize is to open vistas of understanding.”

Craig Calhoun

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is the first semester of a two-semester sequence in social theory. It provides an introduction to the traditional classics of Sociological Theory. It is intended to give students a broad understanding of theoretical issues and questions on society.

Overall, the course has the following objectives:

- To chart the installation of social theory and explore the ways in which it has problematized the antecedents and rise of the modern condition, as well as its present-day and future manifestations.
- To question the taken-for-granted assumptions connected to social conditions and theory itself.
- To facilitate the development of critical and theoretical “thinking” about the relationship between personal experiences, social conditions, and the social processes through which these are constituted.
- To (re)activate our sociological imaginations in challenging ways so as to encourage thoughtful sociological research and open ourselves to new developments and possibilities.

TEXTS / READINGS

- *Sociological Theory* by George Ritzer
- *The Division of Labor in Society* by Emile Durkheim
- *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* by Émile Durkheim, Mark S. Cladis (Editor), and Carol Cosman (Translator)
- *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* by Karl Marx, and David McLellan (Editor)
- *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* by Max Weber, and H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Translators)
- *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* by Max Weber
- *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms* by Georg Simmel, and Donald N. Levine (Editor)
- *George Herbert Mead on Social Psychology* by George Herbert Mead, and Anselm Strauss (Editor)
- *The Women Founders: Sociology and Social Theory, 1830-1930* by Patricia Maddo Lengermann and Gillian Niebrugge
- *The Soul of Black Folk* by W.E.B. DuBois

REQUIREMENTS

This course will be run as a graduate seminar, with full student participation and some lecturing by the instructor. You are required to engage in the careful reading / analysis of theoretical material and to come prepared to have meaningful discussions on the issues and questions at stake in the various theoretical readings we will be covering. Students will be responsible for leading class discussion each week, starting on Week II.

There is a considerable amount of reading to be covered during the semester, some of which is difficult. Working collectively, however, should make it a worthwhile endeavor. Please remember that it is normal to feel overwhelmed. You will “get” some of the material, and some of it you will not. This is expected. The point is that engaging with it will provide you with a good foundation from which you can negotiate your future theoretical readings. I urge to do as much reading and note-taking as you can. This will make for a better course experience and optimal course performance.

In addition to completing the assigned readings and presenting on these, you will be required to prepare weekly written “briefs” on the readings under discussion. Six briefs in total will be required, covering 6 out of the 7 theoretical topics we are exploring in the course. You choose when to submit your briefs, so long as you submit these one at a time. Briefs are 1-2 single-spaced typed pages in length. They are intended to help you prepare for class discussions. Briefs are also a venue for the further development of your critical thinking and writing skills. Critical thinking entails a willingness “to ask any question, no matter how difficult; to be open to any answer that is supported by reason and evidence; and to openly confront one’s biases and prejudices when they get in the way” (Appelbaum and Chambliss 1995:4). “Critical” writing, moreover, reflects a concise understanding of a theme, idea, or concept, and also offers critical evaluation and/or (when possible) an alternative or more nuanced interpretation to material content.

You will also be required to submit a Final Paper, 10-15 double-spaced typed pages, on a question provided by me, and due on 12/15, the assigned Final Exam date for this course.

Grading will be based on the briefs (40%), presenting, leading, and contribution to weekly discussions (30%), and the Final Paper (30%).

READING SCHEDULE**WEEK I: COURSE INTRODUCTION (8/25)****Read:**

- **Sociological Theory (ST), Chapter 1**, by George Ritzer
- **Sociological Theory, Chapter 1**, by Bert Adams and R.A. Sydie (Blackboard PDF)

WEEKS II-IV: DURKHEIM (9/01, 9/08, 9/15)**Read:**

- **The Division of Labor in Society**, pp. ix-lxx, Intro, Book I (all); Book II (chaps 1-2); Book III (chaps 1-2); Conclusion
- **The Elementary Forms of Religious Life**, Intro; Book I (chaps 1+4); Book II (chap 7); Book III (all); Conclusion
- **ST, Chapter 3**
- **Classical Sociological Theory (CST), Chapter 4**, by Bert Adams and R.A. Sydie (Blackboard PDF)

WEEKS V-VI: MARX (9/22, 9/29)

Read:

- **Karl Marx: Selected Writings, Chapters 6-8, 13-14, 18-19, 25, 32, + 40**
- **ST, Chapter 2**
- **CST, Chapter 5** (Blackboard PDF)

WEEKS VII-IX: WEBER (10/06, 10/13, 10/20)

Read:

- **From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, Intro (Gerth and Mills); Part I (all); Part II (all).**
- **The Protestant ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism, pp. 13-128, 155-183**
- **ST, Chapter 4**
- **CST, Chapter 7** (Blackboard PDF)

WEEKS X-XI: SIMMEL (10/27, 11/03)

Read:

- **On Individuality and Social Forms, chaps 3-14, 15-16, 18, 22-24**
- **ST, Chapter 5**
- **CST, Chapter 8** (Blackboard PDF)

WEEKS XII-XIII: MEAD (11/08, 11/17)

Read:

- **On Social Psychology, chaps 2, 5-8, 10, 14**
- **ST, Chapter 10**
- **CST, Chapter 13** (Blackboard PDF)

WEEK XIV: THE WOMEN FOUNDERS (12/01)

Read:

- **The Women Founders: Sociology and Social Theory, 1830-1930, TBD**
- **ST, Chapter 6**
- **CST, Chapter 11** (Blackboard PDF)

WEEK XV: DUBOIS (12/08)

Read:

- **The Soul of Black Folk, All**
- **ST, Chapter 6**
- **CST, Chapter 12** (Blackboard PDF)

A COMMENTARY ON CLASS PARTICIPTION AND OFFICE HOURS

“Dialogue with the people is radically necessary to every authentic revolution.”

Paulo Freire

You are expected to diligently engage with the course material, to actively participate in class discussions. Come prepared to ask questions during the Discussion period. Bring your discoveries, identified contradictions, and / or your perspective on the readings to our get-togethers. As you engage with the course material, work to formulate questions for you to bring to class. Develop your questions: 1) After a good-faith reading of the material; 2) based on concepts, arguments, and assumptions in a theory or theories; 3) on a “critical” evaluation of these theoretical elements; and/or 4) on the connections between and within weekly readings. I will be making note of your participation throughout the term. I mention the issue of participation not to intimidate you but rather because I feel dialogue is conducive to the learning process. My role as an instructor is to stimulate the (further) development of “critical thinking.” An important element to such development or practice is the learning process itself. Discussion in the classroom facilitates the learning process. Therefore, your class participation plays an important role in what you learn.

I invite you to attend office hours. I am available to address any concerns or issues connected to your academic experience. Please feel free to talk to me about the subject matter or assignment strategies. You will do well in this course if you are prepared to study hard. Taking advantage of a more “accessible” setting may help your learning efforts. I am available to see you one-on-one in order to address your issues, questions, concerns, ideas, or discoveries. I am interested in your reactions, responses, views, or perceptions. Part of the learning process requires meaningful dialogue between the professor and the student. Therefore, your individual feedback is important and your thoughts, ideas, perceptions, concerns, questions, or doubts are essential to the learning process itself.

A COMMENTARY ON TEACHING

“[T]eaching [is] a revolutionary act... Learning and teaching are complex, endlessly fascinating collaborations. [A teacher can] learn enormous amounts from the students ... [Students are] colleagues and companions on an intellectual, potentially life-changing journey.... [Good goals for teaching] include the development of critical thinking skills, acquiring the ability to work collaboratively, honing the art of applying theoretical concepts to actual historical and contemporary situations, and making connections between what we study and how we live” (Foran 2003:02).

References

Appelbaum, Richard and William J. Chambliss. 1995. *Sociology*. New York: HarperCollins College Publishers.
Foran, John. 2003. Syllabus for Sociology 130ST, *Radical Social Change from Chile to Chiapas*, at UCSB, Summer Sessions.