

Contemporary Social Theory

Department of Sociology, Rutgers University, Newark
Fall 2013

Prof. Douglas Irvin-Erickson
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Office: Hill 620 Office Hours: Monday 11:30-12:30

Course number 21:920:415

Meeting room: Hill 208

Meeting time: Wednesdays 6 to 9

Course Description

Welcome to Contemporary Social Theory. This course provides an introduction to the works of major social theorists of the twentieth century. During the semester, we will explore the contexts, methods, and intellectual frameworks of these thinkers whose writings and theories continue to contribute greatly to contemporary social theory.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will have an overview of the major theorists who contributed to the foundation of Sociology as an academic discipline. Students will be expected to think critically about the theories and methods of these sociologists; and, by the end of this course, students will be able to apply the methods and theories of these thinkers towards understanding contemporary social issues and problems.

Course Work

This is a writing intensive seminar, which places great emphasis on engaging classical texts. The professor will not lecture, but will instead lead seminar discussions.

Your grade will be determined by:

1. 2 essays worth 25%
2. 2 presentations worth 25%

For the 2 essays, students will be required to demonstrate a critical understanding of course readings. Paper assignments will be distributed at least three weeks before due dates.

Essays must be between 1,500 to 2,000 words in length.

Late paper grades will be lowered 50%.

Students will be divided into presentation groups. The requirements are simple:

- 1) Students are graded individually
- 2) Each student must articulate an original thesis
- 3) Each presentation must connect the text to previous course readings
- 4) Presentations are not book reports: (presentations that summarize will not get more than a C)
- 5) If you are absent on your presentation day, you have to write a 20 page paper. Seriously. Missing your day will ruin your fellow presenter's presentations.

Grades

Grades will be issued according to the following scale:

A	90-100%	C+	76-79%	B+	86-89%
C	70-75	B	80-85%	D	60-69 /F: 59-0

Due Dates

☞ Paper 1 due 10/30

☞ Paper 2 due 12/11

Attendance policy

Because this is a 3 hour class, missed classes are particularly disruptive to a student's intellectual progress. Attendance will be taken at the beginning and end of class. Students who come late or leave early will be marked late. Two lates will equal one absence.

Three absences in this course equals six absences in a course that meets twice weekly.

Therefore, **more than three absences is grounds for failing this class.** This means that students will have three absences to use at their discretion (for medical emergencies, late trains, a long day at work) with no questions asked. With the fourth absence, students will fail the course.

If students miss more than three classes because of a serious medical or personal emergency, the professor will honor their excuses only if they are authenticated by the dean of student affairs. Students wishing to authenticate their absences must report the absence over the Rutgers Newark Student Attendance Reporting System.

Academic Integrity Policy

The Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “the use of another person’s words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit.” Intentionally committing plagiarism is a serious offense that results in severe consequences. All university instructors are required to report students who intentionally violate this policy to the Department Chair and to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs.

The Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy establishes levels of violations and recommends sanctions. Depending upon the severity of the case and the level of the violation, the sanctions for these violations include: failure in the course, mandatory participation in a series of noncredit academic integrity workshops, and/or suspension.

If you are in doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism or are concerned that you are misappropriating someone’s words or ideas, speak immediately with your instructor. You can also consult the Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy, which can be found at http://judicialaffairs.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_Effective_9_01_2011.pdf.

Classroom policies

No laptops, cell phones, or tablets will be allowed in class. Students whose technological devices disrupt the class will be penalized with a "late" against their attendance record. Likewise, disruptive behavior and side conversations will also be penalized with a "late" against their record. The professor will not warn students during the class session, but will simply inform them after class that the penalty has been applied.

Students with Disabilities

Rutgers University is committed to providing equal educational access for individuals with disabilities in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. An individual with a disability who is qualified for admission will have the same access to programs, services, and activities as all other students. Any student requiring special consideration should contact Ms. Charnette Q. Hockaday, Assistant Director for First Year Programs & Student Conduct, Paul Robeson Campus, Office of Student Life and Leadership, Room 352, Tel. # 973-353-5300, Fax. # 973-353-5666. Her email address is choada@andromeda.rutgers.edu

Blackboard

We'll also be using the web-based Blackboard course software. I will post the syllabus and syllabus updates there, and I'll also post course documents and assignments. Be sure that you have created a Net ID; you'll need it to access the site.

REQUIRED BOOKS

- 1) Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (London: Wiley, 2013). ISBN: 0745666485
- 2) Erving Goffman, *Asylums* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961). ISBN: 0385000161
- 3) Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* (5th edition or later) (New York: Vintage, 1990)
- 4) Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge U. Press, 1979) ISBN: 052129164x
- 5) Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (Penguin, 2006)
- 6) Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (University of Chicago Press, 2008)

OPTIONAL TEXTS

- 5a) *The Marx-Engels Reader, 2nd ed*, edited by Robert C. Tucker (Norton, 1978) **ISBN-10:** 039309040X
- 5b) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited and translated by C. Wright Mills and H. H. Gerth (Routledge, 2007) **ISBN-10:** 0415436664
- 5c) *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings*, edited and translated by Anthony Giddens, (Cambridge University Press, 1972) **ISBN-10:** 0521097126

Course Schedule

All dates are subject to change

Introduction

W 9/4 Introduction and a review of the Classics (Marx, Weber, Durkheim)

W 9/11 Carl Schmitt *Concept of the Political*

Walter Benjamin *Thesis on the Concept of History*

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>

Part 1: The “classics” of the contemporaries

W 9/18 Georg Simmel on Fashion On blackboard
on the Poor On blackboard
How is Society Possible On blackboard
The Stranger On blackboard
The Philosophy of Money On blackboard
(Read Chapter 1, skim whatever else is interesting)

Marianne Weber on Marriage On blackboard

Extra Credit: Theresa Wobbe 2004. "Elective affinities: Georg Simmel and Marianne Weber on gender and modernity."

W 9/25 George Herbert Mead The Genesis of the Self On blackboard
Talcott Parsons Structure of Social Action On blackboard
The Theory of Action On blackboard
Jane Addams Newer Ideals for Peace On blackboard
(Read chapters 1 and 2)

W 10/2 Simone de Beauvoir *The Second Sex* On blackboard

John Dewey On George Herbert Mead On blackboard
Selections On blackboard

Part 2: Revising the Classics: Capitalism, Individualism, Globalization

W 10/2	Anthony Giddens	<i>Modernity and Self-Identity</i> Problems of Action and Structure (skim)	Buy Book
W 10/9	Herbert Blumer	Symbolic Interaction What is Wrong with Theory? The Variable On G.H. Mead	On blackboard On blackboard On blackboard On blackboard
W 10/16	Erving Goffman	<i>Asylums</i>	Buy Book
W 10/23	Saskia Sassen	<i>The Global City</i>	On blackboard
	Partha Chatterjee	The Politics of the Governed Colonialism and Women (Read Chapter 1 and 2, and Afterword)	On blackboard
	Arjun Appadurai	“Global Culture” In Durham and Kellner Key Works, chp. 33 pp. 584-604	On blackboard

 **Paper 2 due 10/30**

Assignment:

Choice A: Choose two theorists in Part 2 of the semester and explain how their work builds on or refutes one of the three classical theorists (Marx, Weber, Durkheim)

Choice B: Choose two theorists readings in Part 2 of the semester and explain how their work builds on or refutes one of theorists from Part 1 of the class.

Choice C: Choose three theorists in Part 2 of the semester and explain how their work builds on or refutes each other’s work.

- The paper must be argumentative, analytical, and contain a clear thesis
- The paper must be between 2,000 to 2,500 words in length
- The paper must be synthetic
- The paper must be formatted in ASA, APA, MLA, or Chicago style with a bibliography
- NO OUTSIDE RESEARCH IS ALLOWED

Part 3:	A Week of non-academics whose theory changed the 20th century		
W 10/30	Franz Fanon	<i>The Wretched of the Earth</i>	On blackboard
	Imam Khomeini	<i>Islam and Revolution</i>	On blackboard
		(Focus on Part 1)	
	Gandhi	<i>Hind Swaraj</i>	On blackboard
		The Practice of Satyagraha	On blackboard
	Aung San Suu Kyi	In Quest of Democracy	On blackboard
Part 4:	Critical Theory		
W 11/6	Max Horkheimer	<i>Critical Theory</i>	On blackboard
	Horkheimer and Adorno	<i>Dialectic of Enlightenment</i>	On blackboard
W 11/13	Herbert Marcuse	<i>One Dimensional Man</i>	On-line
	http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/marcuse/works/one-dimensional-man/ Read whole book, especially “one-dimensional society”		
	Herbert Marcuse	<i>Repressive Tolerance</i>	On blackboard
W 11/20	Hannah Arendt	<i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i>	
Part 5:	Postmodernism		
W 12/4	Michel Foucault	<i>History of Sexuality</i>	
W 12/11	Pierre Bourdieu	<i>Outline of a Theory of Practice</i>	

 **Paper 3 due 12/11**

Choice A: Choose two theorists in Part 4 or 5 of the semester and explain how their work builds on or refutes one of the three classical theorists (Marx, Weber, Durkheim)

Choice B: Choose two theorists readings in Part 4 or 5 of the semester and explain how their work builds on or refutes one of theorists from Part 1 or 2 of the class.

Choice C: Choose three theorists in Part 4 or 5 of the semester and explain how their work builds on or refutes each other’s work.

- The paper must be argumentative, analytical, and contain a clear thesis
- The paper must be between 2,500 to 3,000 words in length
- The paper must be synthetic
- The paper must be formatted in ASA, APA, MLA, or Chicago style with a bibliography
- NO OUTSIDE RESEARCH IS ALLOWED