

Department of Sociology

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SOC. 200
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Office Hrs.
TBA

Contemporary Social Theory

Core concepts and frameworks in sociological analysis are presently going through deep transformations. The changes are compounded by the rise of new and competing paradigms, and by mutations of existing ones. Add to that the sense of urgency we face today in connecting local analysis with newly evolving global models-- crossing boundaries and merging disciplines. The rapid change is demanding, but exciting just the same.

Nevertheless, we will try to create some thematic semblance to the evolving social reality by addressing dominant strands, new trends, sentiments and modes of analysis. We tackle schools of thought that address a complex of focal concerns, both historically recent as well as newly emergent. The readings therefore cut through limits of disciplinary frameworks and open up dimensions that are post-disciplinary and which include strong American and European contributions.

Mostly we look for usefulness of Conceptual Models and how we link them to ongoing practical concerns and research.

Models such as *Structure and Agency*, *Body and Habitus*, *Human capital and Social Capital*, *Local and Global*, *Self-care and Other*, *Civil society and world*, *Sexuality and Symbolic- violence*, *Network society*, *Sub-politics and Self-identity*, *new media*, *cultural identity and Utopia*, *rise of the network Society*. *Cyberfeminism*, are examples of some of the frameworks that we tackle and which are at the core debates of modern social theory and the global reach of a new world: Bourdieu, Danahay, Stevenson, Virilio, Giddens, Mead, Juris, Held, Holton, Foucault, Castells, and others).

Whatever models we construct, they will be subordinated to the emerging global metamorphosis and to the modern imperative of living with uncertainty.

We want to work on sharpening skills to help us critically identify and articulate a fast moving reality; to conceptualize, research and apply-- this being the goal and aim of our inquiry.

In an effort to minimize the number of books related to the topics, I compiled essential articles and book-sections in a supplementary **Class Handouts**.

Reading List

G. Ritzer (ed.) **The Backwell Companion To Major Contemporary Social Theorists** Blackwell Publishing 2003

Pierre Bourdieu **Masculine Domination** Stanford University 2001

Deborah Reed-Danahay **Locating Bourdieu** Indiana University Press 2005

D Held: **Globalization/Anti globalization**. Polity 2007

A Giddens **Modernity and Self-Identity** Stanford University Press 1991

M Foucault **History of Sexuality** Vintage book

Recommended

Patrick Baert: **Social Theory** , New York University Press

Class handouts supplement the required books. They are spelled out in the syllabus, in relation to each topic.

Requirements:

A Graduate Seminar naturally calls for generous and active engagement by all participants along with a self-steering ethos of completing readings, assignments and class preparations. Let's benefit from the joys of collective analysis and learning and make it a worthy experience.

Class attendance, in-class readings, interpretations, readings preparation, small-scale student presentations are expected. Off class Individual

conferences will help me assess your papers better, your progress, your needs and broader intellectual and research interests.

2 short papers and one final take home research paper are required.

Please let me know if you have any disability related needs. I will do my best to help.

Syllabus

Topics and associated readings:

1. Habitus and Practice (Bourdieu's Theory of Action)

The concepts of Habitus , Symbolic Violence, Cultural Capital, Distinction, etc introduce us to the contributions of Bourdieu to the sociology of ... (almost everything)... ranging from the cognitive, bodily, and emotional culture and structures that orient our acting in the world, our social complicity, innovation and other modalities of adaptation. We want to do some in-depth readings of selected works that creatively restructure the concepts of Macro and Micro which individuals and groups embody in the daily techniques of their self-production.

Readings:

Bourdieu Structure Habitus Practice (Handout)

Bourdieu: **Masculine Domination (Book)**

Deborah Reed-Danahay: **Locating Bourdieu (great new book as a secondary reading on Bourdieu).**

Bourdieu and Wacquant; **An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology.**

Workshop- Interview. (handout)

Bourdieu : on Distinction

Beate Kraus: **Gender and Symbolic Violence: in light of Pierre**

Bourdieu's Theory of Social Practice. (handout)

Secondary Readings:

Craig Calhoun: **Bourdieu--- in Ritzer: Contemporary Social Theorists, chapter 11**

2. Self and Society, Self and Other

We will try to *link Bourdieu to Mead through the work of Aboulafia on Pragmatism. (handout)*

American Sociology enjoys a longstanding tradition in the well-known school of Symbolic Interaction. While originally influenced by European thought, the school has aggregated to itself a uniquely American heritage. The school has been recharged by developments that establish links between its interactive methodology and the culture of ritual.

Readings;

Baert—**The enigma of Everyday Life** (Chapter Three)

G.H. Mead: Mind, Self and Society. The second part of the work -**On the Self-** captures Mead's original mode of thinking and conceptual frameworks.

Aboulafia : **A neo American in Paris: Bourdieu, Mead and Pragmatism**

E. Goffman: *Performances(selections from Presentation of Self...)*...

Fine and Manning: **Erving Goffman**. Chapter 2 in Ritzer.

3. Structure and Agency= Structuration

The theory of *Structuration* by Giddens deepens our understanding of the dynamics of agency and structure-- how routine activity and daily forms of social behavior and communication impact and co-create the structural properties of the social system.

Giddens is also widely recognized as an influential thinker who captures the social-psychological tribulations and trajectories of the global outreach of both identity and society today. We will use his book on **Modernity and Self-identity** as well as selections from his book **The Transformation of Intimacy-** as sources for class presentations.

Readings:

Bryant and Jary, **Anthony Giddens** (in Ritzer)

Giddens: **Modernity and Self-Identity**. (book)

Giddens **The Transformation of Intimacy** (handout Selections)

Giddens: Elements of the Theory of Structuration (from The Constitution of Society) (han

Baert: Chapter 4. The skillful Accomplishment of Social Order

King : Structure and Agency (handout)

4. Foucault: Genealogy of Modern forms of Subjectivity/Sexuality , Self-care.

The influence of Foucault on modern theory is extensive and transformative. Its impact is wide ranging. We will concentrate on his work on sexuality, subjectivity, discourse and self-care.

Readings

Semantha Ashenden : Structuralism and post-Structuralism (handout)

Barry Smart : Michel Foucault –chapter 8 in Ritzer

Baert : Chapter 5 :**The History of the Present**

Foucault : **History of Sexuality (book)**

5. New Media, Network Society and Globalization

The topic is of course multi dimensional. The flow of ideas, goods, people, struggles across the Globe seem to contain a reshaping of the world both in progressive and oppressive terms. The works by Castelles, Held, Stevenson, Virilio and others present timely research when America and the world are going through a period of deep and complex transformation.

This is a topic that I am personally engaged in at the moment, and hope to provide you with new research tools in analyzing the impact of the Sociology of Globalization on civil society, cultural identity and practice -- as well as open up new paths in social critical thought and civil struggle.

Readings:

D Held: **Globalization/Anti globalization**. Polity 2007 Book

Jeffrey Juris : **Networked Social Movements For Global Justice**.

M. Castells **The Network Society A Theoretical Blueprint**) Handout.

Stevenson: **New Media and the information Society** (handout)

