

Sociology 201
Contemporary Social Theory
Spring 2008

Professor Thomas Cushman
Pendleton East 334
Office Hours: M: 1:30 -2:30; Th: 1:30- 2:30

This course examines important sociological theories of the 20th century. There are three basic objectives for the class: to help you develop the capacity to read and "unpack" complex theoretical texts, to develop a vocabulary of key analytical concepts, and to develop the capacity to use these concepts to interpret a broad range of social and cultural phenomena from multiple perspectives.

Course Readings

The following books are required and can be purchased at the bookstore.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Anchor, 1967)
Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Anchor, 1959)
Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (Free Press, 1964)
Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts* (Polity, 2004)
Eviatar Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes: An Invitation to Cognitive Sociology* (Harvard, 1999)

A number of articles are on e-reserve and are indicated as such in the course schedule. These are available in the course folder, which every student registered in the course will have on her desktop.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Attendance and participation is required of all students and will factor into the grade. Students who miss four or more classes will receive no credit for the class, unless they have a written medical excuse. It is absolutely crucial that all readings be done by the date on which they are listed. All students are required to do short 1-2 page weekly assignments, one per week (as a general rule). These will be distributed on the course conference. These will be used as the basis for class discussions and are to be turned in after class each week as evidence of attendance. These are not to be emailed to me and they will not be accepted late. If you don't have them in class, they will not be accepted.

There will be two six page essays on topics to be provided, an in-class mid-term exam, and a take-home final examination. The paper due dates are as follows:

Paper One: February 28 in class
Mid-term exam (in class): March 17
Paper Two: April 17 in class

No late papers or examinations will be accepted, unless by previous arrangement. All students must turn in hard copies of papers: no papers may be submitted as email attachments unless asked for. All emailed papers and assignments will be deleted and considered as not turned in. This is a firm policy and based on the fact that I have 75 students this semester in two classes.

Students are responsible for all reading and lecture material on exams. Papers and exams will be graded rigorously according to the highest professional standards and according to the official grade scale as put forth in College Articles of Government (see: <http://www.wellesley.edu/DeanCollege/bk2a7.html>). Grammar and writing style are considered in the determination of grades on papers.

Course Outline and Reading Assignments:

January 28: Introduction to the Course: What is Theory?

January 31- February 7: Exercises in Connecting the Classical and Contemporary Traditions of Sociological Theory

I : From Weberian theory to Neo-Weberian Theory

Read: Max Weber, "Excursus on Markets," in Economy and Society ®

Edward Tiryakian, "Dialectics of Modernity: Reenchantment and Dedifferentiation as Counterprocesses." Pp. 78-94 in Haferkamp and Smelser, eds. Social Change and Modernity. ®

II: From Durkheimian Theory to neo-Durkheimian Theory

Read: Emile Durkheim, Excerpt from "Origins of These Beliefs", pp. 236-245 in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.* ®

Lloyd Warner, Ch. 8, "The Symbolic Relations of the Living and the Dead," and Ch. 9, "The City of the Dead," in *The Living and the Dead: A Study of the Symbolic Life of Americans,* pp. 248-320.

February 11: The Social Construction of Reality, I

Read: Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, pp. 1 -128.

February 11: The Social Construction of Reality, II

Read: Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, pp. 129-189

February 14: No class (develop concept sheets, to be discussed)

February 21: Berger and Luckmann, continued

February 25: The Interaction Order: Dramaturgical Analysis

Read: Anthony Giddens, "Erving Goffman as a Systematic Social Theorist" from Social Theory and Modern Sociology, e-reserve

Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, pp. 1-140

First Paper Due, February 28

February 28: The Interaction Order: Dramaturgical Analysis (continued)

Read: Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, pp. 167-256

March 3: Discussions of Student Observations based on Goffman's Concepts (details to be announced)

March 6: Functionalist Theory

Read: Talcott Parsons, *The School as a Social System*, e-reserve

Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore, "Some Principles of Stratification", e-reserve

March 10: Functionalist Theory, continued

Read: Read: Robert Merton, "The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Action," and "Manifest and Latent Functions", e-reserve

March 13: Functionalist Theory, continued

March 17: Mid-Term Examination

March 20: No class

March 31: Social Conflict, I

Read: Ralf Dahrendorf, "On the Origins of Inequality Among Men",
e-reserve

April 3: Social Conflict, II

Read: Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*,
pp, 15-66

April 7: Social Conflict, III

Read: Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*,
pp. 67-120

April 10 : Social Conflict, IV

Read: Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*,
pp. 121-158

April 14: Modernity Theories, I

Read: Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life,"
e-reserve

Read: George Simmel, "Cynicism" and "The Blasé
Attitude" in *The Philosophy of Money*, e-reserve

Second Paper Due, April 17

April 17: Modernity Theories, II

Read: Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck- Gernsheim,
"Individualization and 'Precarious Freedoms':
Perspectives and Controversies of a Subject-orientated
Sociology, e-reserve

April 22: Modernity Theories , III

Read: Keith Tester, "Indifference", e-reserve

April 24: Modernity Theories, IV

(Tuesday)

Read: Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives*, in entirety

April 28: Cognitive Sociology, I

Read: Eviatar Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes*, Chapters
1-4, pp. 1-67

May 1: Cognitive Sociology, II

Read: Eviatar Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes*, Chapters
5-8, pp. 68-114

May 5: Wrap up and review