

Sociology 201
Contemporary Social Theory
Spring 2009

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 Mindscales: 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: March 2 in class
Mid-term exam (in class): March 19
Paper Two: April 23 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.

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.

Grades will be determined as follows:
Short assignments/participation/attendance: 15 %
Paper I: 20%
Mid-Term: 20%
Paper II: 20%
Final Exam: 25%

Course Outline and Reading Assignments:

February 2: Introduction to the Course: What is Theory?

February 5- February 12: 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.

Note: Professor Simon Cottee, University of Wales, will offer a seminar on his theory of "neutralization" of dissent on February 12 at 4:30 in PNE 349, dinner to follow. Attendance is required and the content of Professor Cottee's lecture is considered part of the course material.

No class February 16, President's Day

February 19: The Social Construction of Reality, I

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

February 23-26: The Social Construction of Reality, II

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

March 2: The Interaction Order: Dramaturgical Analysis I

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, March 2

March 5: The Interaction Order: Dramaturgical Analysis II

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

March 9: Structural-Functionalist Theory I

Read: Talcott Parsons, *The School as a Social System*, e-reserve; Talcott Parsons, "Hobbes and the Problem of Order"

March 12: Structural-Functionalist Theory II

Read: Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore, "Some Principles of Stratification", e-reserve; Robert Merton, "The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Action," e-reserve

March 16: Structural-Functionalist Theory III

Read: "Manifest and Latent Functions", e-reserve

March 19: Mid-Term Examination in class

Spring Break March 21-29

March 30: Social Conflict, I

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

April 2: Social Conflict, II

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

April 6: Social Conflict, III

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

April 9 : Social Conflict, IV

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

April 13: Modernity Theories, I

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

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

April 16: 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 21: Modernity Theories , III (Tuesday schedule)

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

Second Paper Due, April 23

April 23: Special Guest, Eviatar Zerubavel, will come to class to talk about his path-breaking work in cognitive sociology, which we will be reading in class. He will also

give a special seminar on the cognitive sociology of ancestry and lineage later in the day at 4:30, place T.B.A. That seminar is a Sociology Department social event, but is required for class members.

April 27: Modernity Theories, IV

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

April 30: Cognitive Sociology, I

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

May 4: Cognitive Sociology, II

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

May 7: Cognitive Sociology, III

Read: Cushman, "Thinking about Human Rights During the Iraq War:
Toward a Cartography of the Cognition of Western
"Thought Communities",
e-reserve

May 11: Wrap up, catch-up, review