

## **Sociology 304: Modernity and Social Change** **Wellesley College, Fall 2014**

**Tuesday evenings, 6:00-8:30**

**Professor Thomas Cushman,**

**Office PNE 334; Office hours, Tuesday 4-6 and by appt.**

This seminar focuses on important theories of modernity and what some have called postmodernity. Sociology was founded on the effort to understand the rapid social changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution, and therefore, the central focus of modernity theory is the phenomenon of *social change*.

Almost every major sociological theorist today has written about some aspect of modernity and we will explore some of the more interesting of these writings. Our seminar will focus on a number of substantive themes, examining how identity and individuality intersect with major social-structural changes. Among the topics we cover are: sincerity and authenticity; the rise of “other-directedness”; the paradox of freedom; new risks posed by the rise of new technologies and media; the emergence of a new underclass of stateless refugees; the transformation of emotions in modernity; and the changing nature of love in the modern world.

### **Required Texts:**

We will read some books in their entirety, and rely as on a core of reserve readings. All of the latter can be found in Sakai, under the “Resources” tab. Most of the seminar is based on readings from the books listed below:

David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, Yale University Press, 2001

Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Harvard University Press, 1991

Andrew Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax: How We Get Lost Finding Ourselves*, Harper Collins, 2010

Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts* (Wiley, 2013)

Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*

Eva Illouz, *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism*, Polity, 2007

### **Course Requirements:**

Attendance at all seminars is required and counts for 30% of the final grade. Each week, students will come prepared with two questions or commentaries on the readings. There will be two essays on course themes, each worth 20% of the final grade. The other 30% of the grade will be based on a final paper that is the product of an independent research project. More details of this assignment will be provided in class.

## **January 26: Background on Modernity Theory and Theories of Social Change**

Read, Edward Tiryakian, "The Dialectics of Modernity" and Craig Calhoun, "The Infrastructure of Modernity", both found online at: <http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft6000078s&chunk.id=d0e2372&toc.depth=1&toc.id=d0e2372&brand=ucpress>

## **February 2: Classical Foundations: Georg Simmel**

Read: Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (on reserve); excerpts on cynicism and the blasé attitude from *The Philosophy of Money* (on reserve); David Frisby, "Modernity as Eternal Present", in *Fragments of Modernity* (on reserve)

## **February 9: Classical Foundations: David Riesman**

Read: David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, Part One, "Character" and Part Two, "Politics"

## **February 16: David Riesman, Continued**

Read: David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, Part Three, "Autonomy"

## **February 23: Modernity and the Crisis of Meaning**

Read: Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, in entirety

## **March 1 : Modernity and Authenticity**

Read: Andrew Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax*, in entirety

## **Paper #1 due on March 8**

## **March 8 : Modernity and the Self: Anthony Giddens**

Read: Anthony Giddens, Chapters One, Two and Three

## **March 15 : Anthony Giddens' Theory (continued)**

Read: Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Chapters Four, Five and Six

## **Spring Break : March 21-25**

## **March 29 : Modernity and Its Outcasts: Zygmunt Bauman**

Read: Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts*

**April 5 : Student Presentations on empirical cases based on Bauman's theories  
Emotional Capitalism: Eva Illouz's Theory**

**April 12: Emotional Capitalism: Eva Illouz's Theory**

Read: Eva Illouz, *Cold Intimacies*, in entirety

**April 19: No class, Monday Schedule**

**April 26: Student Presentations on Empirical Illustrations of Illouz's theory Love and  
Modernity**

**May 3: Love and Modernity**

Read: Excerpts from Ulrich and Elizabeth Beck, *The Normal Chaos of Love on reserve*