

The University of Calgary
Department of Sociology

COURSE OUTLINE

Sociology 631 (Fall 2009) **Seminar in Sociological Theory**

Instructor: Dr. Leslie Miller
Classroom: SS 921
Time: Mondays 1-3:50
Office hours: TBA

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This seminar emphasizes classical sociological thought. A majority of the classes will be concerned with the works of the founders -- Marx and Engels, Weber, and Durkheim. The other authors (Comte, Elias, Simmel) represent the instructor's preference, but all are part of the classical tradition insofar as they too share an overriding interest in the waning of traditional society and the birth of the modern. Students are encouraged to consider these narratives of modernization from a comparative perspective, with respect to both substantive and methodological issues.

In addition to the basic works, I have included a number of well-known contemporary papers which develop, comment on or apply the insights of the classical theorists; you may have encountered some of these writers -- Foucault, for example -- in your courses in contemporary theory. These selections do not purport to cover the range of contemporary thinking on classical issues; instead, they represent a (very small and selective) sampling of what I think is important or intriguing in contemporary debates about the classics.

The course will be conducted as a seminar in order to maximize student participation and to minimize lecturing by the instructor. Students are assumed to have a basic familiarity with the thought of Marx, Weber and Durkheim (at least), and those who feel in need of a review might consult Anthony Giddens' Capitalism and Modern Social Theory.

Requirements and Assignments

1. **CLASS PRESENTATION** (starting Week 2). Each student will choose one topic, on a major theorist, for oral presentation (and in the case of a large class you may double up on certain topics). Each student will also present briefly (perhaps 10 minutes) on one or more of the secondary papers associated with the major theorists. I will present on weeks 1, 4, 10 and 13. Class presentations on the major theorists should be about 60- 90 minutes long, and presenters should distribute a brief written outline to the seminar participants at the outset of the class. These presentations should address the most important issues in that week's readings -- that is, what is the gist of theorist's argument? -- and presenters are encouraged to incorporate comparative issues into their presentations as the course progresses. In addition to a focus on content, presentations (and especially finished papers) should also consider methodological issues (e.g. the relationship between social structure and agency; what counts as "bedrock" social reality for each theorist), and the theorist's understanding of the nature of the sociological project (i.e., what the theorist takes the task of sociology to be and how sociological analysis should be conducted).
2. **PAPER**. A finished paper based on the seminar presentation is due two weeks after your presentation, or two weeks after the last seminar on that author. Students should meet with me after their presentation and before the paper gets underway.
3. **EXAM**. In addition to the seminar presentation and paper, there will be a take-home final essay-type exam. This exam will be comparative in nature and will require detailed knowledge of at least two theorists.

A NOTE ON PARTICIPATION: While the structure of this seminar necessarily places a disproportionate burden on the presenter each week, all students are expected to prepare weekly reading material and to contribute to weekly discussion. Participation based on the assigned readings will be taken into consideration as I come to determine your final grade.

SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS

1. CLASS PRESENTATION AND FINISHED PAPER 50%

2. FINAL TAKE-HOME EXAM 50% (Distributed in class Monday, Dec. 7 (last class) and due on Monday, Dec. 14 (except for the Elias presenter, who will have one week more). Papers should be in my mailbox by 4:p.m.

Please note: Papers/exams submitted late (without prior clearance from me) will have marks deducted.

WEEKLY TOPICS AND READINGS

| <u>WEEK NO.</u> | <u>TOPIC</u> | <u>READINGS</u> |
|---|--|--|
| 1 (Sept. 14) L. Miller presenter | The origins of sociology - in French positivism and the Enlightenment tradition - or as a programme of social control? Grand theorizing: narratives of historical development | - excerpt from A. Comte, <i>The Positive Philosophy</i> M. Foucault, "The Politics of Health in the 18 th Century" R. Collins, "Evolutionism" |
| 2 (Sept. 21) | Emile Durkheim - the division of labor | - excerpt from H. Spencer <i>The Principles of Sociology</i> - <i>The Division of Labor in Society</i> , Book 1 |
| 3 (Sept. 28) | Emile Durkheim - the div. of labor, cont'd. - on suicide and anomie - on ritual | - <i>The Division of Labor</i> Books 2 & 3 - excerpt from <i>Le Suicide</i> - excerpt from <i>The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i> |
| 4 (Oct. 5) L. Miller presenter | Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels - historical materialism the structure of society | - <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> - N. Smelser (ed.), <i>Karl Marx</i> Intro., and Section I (The Structure of Society) |

5 (Oct. 12) Thanksgiving NO CLASS

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| 6 (Oct. 19) | - social class; ideology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marx, "Social Classes and Class Conflict" - R. Darnton, "A Bourgeois Puts his World in Order" - Abercrombie and Turner, "The Dominant Ideology Thesis" |
| 7 (Oct. 26) | <p>Marx and Engels, cont'd.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the emergence of capitalist society social change and its mechanisms; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> - N. Smelser (ed.), <i>Karl Marx</i> Intro. and Sections II & III |
| 8 (Nov. 2) | <p>Max Weber</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the development of capitalist society | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weber, <i>The Protestant Ethic & the Spirit of Capitalism</i> - Weber on premodern & modern capitalism, excerpt from Eisenstadt (ed.) - excerpt from B. Turner, <i>The Body and Society</i> |
| 9 (Nov. 9) | <p>Max Weber, cont'd.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the process of rationalization; the forms of domination; bureaucracy and charisma; the dilemmas of modernity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The Prot. Ethic</i>, (esp. Giddens' introduction) - Weber on authority, charisma, routinization and bureaucracy in Eisenstadt (ed.) - E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline & Industrial Capitalism" - L. Coser, "The Political Eunuch" |
| 10 (Nov. 16) L.Miller presenter | <p>Max Weber, cont'd.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - methodological issues: social action; explanation and understanding; values in social science | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weber on the fundamental concepts of sociology, in Parsons, (ed.) - Weber, " 'Objectivity' in |

Social Science";
"Science as a Vocation"

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| 11 (Nov. 23) | Georg Simmel | Simmel, <i>On Individuality and Social Forms</i> , Ch. 3, 6, 9, 10, 19, 20, 24. |
| 12 (Nov. 30) | Norbert Elias | N. Elias, <i>The History of Manners</i> (Vol. 1 of <i>The Civilizing Process</i>) |
| 13 (Dec. 7) L. Miller presenter | voices from the margins: the postmodern challenge to the classical "canon" | S. Seidman, "The End of Sociological Theory" (to be distributed in class; additional readings TBA) |

Note: the take-home final will be distributed in this class (Dec. 7)
Due: Monday Dec. 14 (except for Elias presenter, whose final will be due Dec. 21)

BOOKS AND READINGS

1. Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*. The Free Press
2. *Karl Marx: On Society and Social Change*, N. Smelser (ed.). University of Chicago Press
3. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*.
4. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Harper Collins
5. *Georg Simmel: On Individuality and Social Forms*. D. Levine (ed.) U. of Chicago.
6. Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners*.
7. Package of readings, available also in bookstore

PLEASE NOTE:

1. Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., the departmental office or a box in the hall. Term assignments will therefore be returned to students individually in class or during office hours. If a student is unable to pick up the assignment from the instructor, s/he may provide the instructor with a self-addressed, stamped envelope and the assignment will be returned through the post.

2. Academic Accommodation. Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, telephone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. It is the student's responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.