

Contemporary Theory

Sociology 520

Fall 2009

Wednesdays, 1:10-4:00

Celia Winkler, Ph.D., J.D.

243-5843; SS 323; Home 549-6285

celia.winkler@umontana.edu

Office Hours: T,Th 1:10-2; W 11:00-11:50
and by appointment

This course introduces graduate students and upper-level undergraduates to the study of the theories currently in use in U.S. sociology. The goal of this course is to enable students to become theorists. As a survey of theoretical perspectives, it is necessarily a little fragmented because the state of theory is fragmented and often marked by deep rifts between camps. Furthermore, there is no neat chronological mapping of theoretical development, as theorists often reach back in time to bring old theories into the present and offer reinterpretations of the "classics." Thus, to examine theory by simply following a timeline is to misunderstand the use and nature of theory.

My take on theory is that each tradition has something to offer, and the best theory is often a blend of traditions. In order to understand and make theory, however, you must first learn to distinguish among the various perspectives. Due to the short time we have together, it is unreasonable to try to cover all aspects of contemporary theory. We will try to introduce you to the basics of several theories, with application to substantive areas of interest to you.

As advanced undergraduates and graduate students, it is expected that you will take responsibility for your own learning. One doesn't really learn until one tries to teach. Furthermore, theory is something that one learns best by doing. Like any new skill, mastering it requires exercise. This course will require considerable reading, considerable outside work, and a lot of initiative.

To summarize, we expect to achieve the following goals:

1. Learn the basic outlines of several of the theories currently used by sociologists;
2. Distinguish between different theorists in similar perspectives;
3. Understand differences and similarities among divergent perspectives;
4. Begin to see the application of theory to concrete social situations;
5. Move toward becoming a theorist.

In aid of these goals, you will be required to:

- a) Obtain an email account and regularly check it;
- b) Read all the assignments, preferably at least a few days before class so that you have time to think and write about it in your journal;
- c) Attend all class sessions unless illness or emergency makes this impossible) and participate in class discussion;
- d) Organize and lead one class session;
- e) Write four short essays (3 to 5 pages) addressing the question posed;
- f) Write a longish paper (approximately 8-10 pages for undergraduates, 15-20 pages for graduate students) comparing critiquing at least two of the theoretical approaches we address in class.
- g) Record your intellectual journey in your journal.

I agree to:

- α. Hold regular office hours;
- β. Read and promptly (within 24 hours) respond to emails where response is reasonably expected;
- χ. Organize the course and the class sessions where there are no student facilitators;
- δ. Thoughtfully read, comment on, and grade the written assignments.

Required Reading:

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1967. *Social Construction of Reality*. New York: Anchor Press.
Foucault, Michel. 1995. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Press.
Goffman, Erving. 1986. *Stigma*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
Habermas, Jurgen. 1989. *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
Smith, Dorothy. 1989. *Everyday World as Problematic*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

And articles on reserve.

About Class Facilitation: Each student will facilitate one class session. You may choose to do this with a partner. This is the part of the course you will always remember (if you remember anything at all). You may be as creative as you wish. It's up to you. Please feel free to consult with me in advance if you have problems with the assignment. You are graded on how seriously you take your task (but this is not to exclude humor; humor is always nice).

About the Essays: These should be 3 to 5 pages in length. A score of twenty will be exceedingly difficult to attain. You will be required to address a general topic using at least two of the original source readings from different weeks.

About the Paper: You will pose a question and discuss it at length in your paper, centering on a critique of two or more of the theories we examined in class. In fact, you might expand on your short essays. A paper proposal will be due the sixth week of class, to be read critically by a peer. The revised version will be due to me the eighth week of class.

The paper **MUST** show that you have read and analyzed original material from each of your theorists. Secondary works are permissible, but the original is required. An annotated bibliography is due the tenth week of class

You may submit a rough draft, for which you will be given a provisional grade (that is, the grade you would get if you did no more work). If you want comments on your final paper, you must submit a self-addressed manila envelope with the paper. It may be a good idea to form a writing support group.

About the Journal: This could simply be your notes with reflections on the readings. The purpose of this is to ensure that you are closely attending to the reading and the class discussions. Do not worry about format, etc. The point here is to engage with the material. You may ask for feedback on occasion during the semester to ensure that you are "doing it right."

About the Presentation: Please do not see the presentation as a horrendous, terribly scary task, but as an opportunity to present your work to the class for discussion, comments, and so forth. Others may have suggestions on how to improve your paper.

Timeliness: ...is of the essence. Assignments will lose a full grade for each day they are late. Only in the most dire of circumstances will I accept late work without assigning a penalty. Last-minute computer/printer failure will not be an acceptable excuse. If you need to turn a paper in late, check with me.

Participation/Attendance: Attendance will be taken. For each class you miss, without good cause submitted by email or in writing, you will lose ten points.

Essays 4 @ 20 points each	80
Paper Problem	10
Bibliography	10
Final Paper	50
Journal	20
Facilitation of class session	10
Participation	20
Total	200

+/- Grading will be used

Contemporary Theory

Sociology 520 * Fall 2009 Calendar

Prof. Celia Winkler

Version 1

Week 1: September 2

Topic: Introductions. What is theory? The Canon

Recommended Reading:

ERES: Connell, R.W., "Why is classical theory classical?"

Weber, *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Week 2: September 9

Choosing class facilitators

Topic: Sociology as Science or Service?

Required Reading:

(ERES) Weber: Science as a Vocation

(ERES) Addams: A Function of the Social Settlement.

Week 3: September 16

Guest: Prof. J. Burfeind

Topic: Functionalism: Parsons & Merton

Required Reading:

(ERES) Parsons: Toward a General Theory of Action

(ERES) Merton

On Sociological Theories of the Middle Range

Paradigms: The Codification of Sociological Analysis

Paradigm for Functional Analysis in Sociology

Manifest and Latent Functions

The Role-Set

Social Structure and Anomie

Opportunity Structure

Week 4: September 23

Guest: Prof. K. Kuipers

Topic: Exchange Theory: Homans & Blau

Required Reading:

ERES: Homans: Social Behavior as Exchange

ERES: Blau: The Structure of Social Associations

Assignment:

Essay 1, due 9/23: Compare and contrast Structural Functionalism and Exchange Theory. How are each appropriate to the era in which they were published? What questions do they address? What concepts are used? What is the level of analysis? Despite their obvious differences, are there any similarities?

Week 5: September 30

Topic: Conflict, Neomarxism and Critical Theory—Dahrendorf; Lukacs and Horkheimer

Required Reading:

(ERES) Dahrendorf: Toward a Theory of Social Conflict

(ERES) Arato: Introduction

(ERES) Lukacs: History of Class Consciousness

(ERES) Horkheimer: End of Reason

(ERES) Horkheimer: Tasks of an Institute for Social Research

(ERES) Kirchheimer: Political Compromise

Week 6: October 7

Topic: Critical Theory--Adorno and Marcuse

Required Reading:

(ERES) Adorno: Fetish Character in Music

(ERES) Adorno: Authoritarian Personality

(ERES) Marcuse: Affluent Society

(ERES) Marcuse: One-Dimensional Man

Assignment:
Paper Problem

Week 7: October 14

Facilitators:

Topic: Habermas

Habermas: *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*

Assignments: Journal

Essay 2, due 10/21: Why might neomarxism and critical theory have been appealing to the student radicals of the 1960s and 1970s? Which of the theorists studied in this subsection would student radicals appreciate, and which would they not? Why?

Peer review paper problem

Week 8: October 21

Facilitators:

Topic: Symbolic Interaction: Blumer, Goffman, Hochschild

Required Reading:

Goffman: *Stigma*

ERES: Blumer: What is Wrong with Social Theory?

ERES: Blumer: Sociological Analysis and the 'Variable'

Assignment:

Paper problem to instructor

Week 9: October 28

Facilitators:

Topic: Phenomenology & Ethnomethodology: Berger & Luckmann; Garfinkel

Required Reading:

Berger & Luckmann: *Social Construction of Reality*

Garfinkel, Chap 1

Garfinkel, Chap 2

Assignment:

Essay 3, due 11/4: Compare and contrast symbolic interaction and phenomenology. What do they add to sociology that might have been missing in the theoretical perspectives we've studied to date?

Week 10: November 4

Facilitators:

Topic: Poststructuralism and Postmodernism: Foucault

Required Reading:

Foucault: *Discipline and Punish*

Week 11: November 11

Facilitators:

Topic: Standpoint; Smith, Hartsock, Harding, Collins

Required Reading:

Smith: *Everyday World as Problematic*

Assignment:

Essay 4, due November 18: On which social theories do Foucault and Smith draw in constructing their approach to understanding the social world? Do they add anything to our ways of knowing? How might society be "post-structural" and what might that have to do with Foucault and Feminism?

Week 12: November 18

Facilitators:

Syntheses: Bourdieu; Giddens

Reading TBA

Week 13: November 25

No class Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 14: December 2

Presentations

Week 15: December 9

Presentations

Finals week: Paper and Journal due Wednesday, December 16, 5 p.m., my office. You may submit them earlier than this, either by giving it to me in person, or placing in my mailbox.