

**UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO**

**Department of Sociology  
Fall 2006**

**Seminar in Modern Sociological Theory**

SOCY 5011-001  
Tuesday 3:30-6:20  
HUMN 190

<http://sobek.colorado.edu/~irvinel/moderntheory06.htm>

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Office Hours: Tuesday 2-2:45; Thursday 12:30-1

**Aim of the course**

The modern period in sociological theory comprises works produced between the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and (roughly) the 1960s. In this seminar, we will examine a selection of modern theory under the guiding theme of “continuities and connections.” This theme manifests itself in two ways. One is by challenging the illusory distinction between “theory” and “methods” in favor of continuity across the acts of selecting topics, framing research questions, and making methodological decisions. The second manner in which this theme appears is through an emphasis on the connections between the conversations begun in modern theory and those engaged in by theorists today. The course does not attempt to cover all theories and theorists of the period. We will omit a great deal that you must read on your own in preparation for a career in sociology as well as for the comprehensive exam.

Students have the opportunity to choose theoretical areas of study for the last two weeks of class.

**Course Materials**

*Books to obtain*

Blumer, Herbert. 1969. *Symbolic Interactionism*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Any edition is OK)

Du Bois, W.E.B. [1903] 1996. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Penguin Books. (Any edition is OK)

Gay, Peter (ed.). 1995. *The Freud Reader*. New York: Vintage (Any edition is OK)

Mead, George Herbert (Charles Morris, ed.) 1934. *Mind, Self & Society from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist* (Works of Mead, vol. 1). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Any edition is OK)

Mills, C.Wright. [1959] 2000. *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Any edition is OK)  
Sears, Alan. 2005. *A Good Book, In Theory: A Guide to Theoretical Thinking*. Peterborough Ontario CA: Broadview Press.

*Additional required readings available on WebCT:*

Blumer, Herbert. "Sociological Theory in Industrial Relations"  
Cooper, Anna Julia. "The Colored Woman's Office"  
Coser, Lewis. "Georg Simmel's Style of Work: A Contribution to the Sociology of the Sociologist;" "Sociological Theory from Chicago Dominance to 1965"  
Fanon, Frantz. "Decolonizing, National Culture, and the Negro Intellectual"  
Frazier, E. Franklin. "Sociological Theory and Race Relations"  
Garfinkel, Harold. "Ethnomethodology's Program;" "Reflexive Properties of Practical Sociology"  
Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. Excerpt from "Women and Economics"  
Homans, George. "Social Behavior as Exchange"  
James, William. "The Self and Its Selves"  
Merton, Robert. "Manifest and Latent Functions;" "Social Structure and Anomie;" "Sociological Theory;" "The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action"  
Parsons, Talcott. "Sex Roles in the American Kinship System;" "The Prospects of Sociological Theory;" "The Position of Sociological Theory;" "The Role of Theory;" "The Sick Role and the Role of the Physician Reconsidered;" "Action Systems and Social Systems" (from *The System of Modern Societies*)  
----- *The System of Modern Societies*. (Intro and Chapter 2)  
Simmel, George. "A Contribution to the Sociology of Religion;" "The Metropolis and Mental Life;" "Money in Modern Culture"

### **Course requirements**

You must attend class regularly, complete all assignments, and keep up with the reading. If you miss two classes, your grade will drop by one letter. If you miss a third class, you must withdraw from the course. I will not offer any Incompletes in this class except for the most extenuating circumstances, such as serious illness or injury, or a death in the family.

If you miss a class, you must arrange to see any films shown during your absence. All films will be available at Norlin Library's Media Center.

In this seminar, your participation is valuable. You are expected to take an active role in the discussion. The seminar format does not work if you do not participate. Plan to come to the seminar each week prepared with at least one question in mind. Quietly taking notes not only dilutes your experience of the seminar, it also deprives other seminar members of your insights. If you have difficulty participating for any reason (e.g., your own shyness, the brashness of others), please arrange to meet with me so that we can discuss strategies for correcting such situations.

## Grading

I will base grades on four requirements: seminar leadership (40%), an essay (20%), and a final paper (40%). If your grade is on the cusp, a history of informed class participation can raise you into the higher grade.

### *Seminar Leadership*

You and a partner of your choice will take responsibility for leading the second half of the seminar on a given day. I will circulate a sign-up sheet early in the semester. You have creative freedom to conduct the seminar in any way that meets your educational goals (except by dismissing it). You will work with a partner, but you will receive individual grades. Your grade will be based on the following criteria:

Effectiveness: How well does the seminar advance students' knowledge?

Organization: How well organized is the discussion/presentation?

Originality: How original or creative is the mode of seminar leadership?

### *Guidelines for essays*

Essays are due by 1:00 p.m. on 9/21. Put hard copies in my hand or in my mailbox. In *no more than two pages* (12 point font, double-spaced, one-inch margins all around), answer the question "what is sociological theory?" Take a position, develop it, and offer a rational defense. Follow the classic format of the essay and provide an introduction, which introduces your thesis. Then, in the body of the essay, develop your argument. Offer counterarguments and provide evidence for and against them. Finally, restate (by rephrasing) your thesis and draw the essay to a close in the conclusion. If you need to brush up on the elements of essay-writing, see *Thinking on Paper*, by V.A. Howard and J.H. Barton (1986, New York: Quill/William Morrow).

Put your name in the upper right-hand corner of the first page. Staple both pages together. *Do not* make a cover page or use a plastic binder.

### *Guidelines for final papers*

All members of the seminar must write a final paper that uses one or more of the works of modern theory to examine an aspect of his or her individual research topic. You must limit yourself to the theorists considered in this course, but you are not limited to the works we read. In other words, you may choose to examine Du Bois's work, *The Philadelphia Negro*, rather than *The Souls of Black Folk*. Alternatively, you may wish to examine the full versions of excerpts we read in class. I strongly encourage students to meet with me at least once during the semester to discuss paper topics.

The following steps should be completed toward the final paper:

- Proposal: explain your topic in one or two paragraphs (due 10/5)\*
- Bibliography: prepare a list of relevant references (due 10/26)\*
- Outline: create an overview of your argument (due 11/16)\*
- Final paper (due 12/15)

Papers should be no more than 15 double-spaced pages in length (12 point font, one inch margins), including references and any tables or illustrations. Use ASA citation style. Final papers are due 12/15 by 4:30 p.m. No extensions. Put hard copies in my mailbox. \*First three steps of the assignment can be submitted via email attachment or hard copy.

### **Tentative Schedule**

*(Subject to change. I will announce any changes in class and post them online.)*

8/29 Introduction to the course

#### *What is Theory?*

9/5 Coser (“Sociological Theory”); Parsons (“Prospects of Sociological Theory”); Merton (“Sociological theory”); Sears (Intro and Chapter One)

#### *What is theory?*

9/5 Finish Sears

9/12 Read Mills; Parsons “The Role of Theory”

9/19 Read Blumer

9/21 Essays due

#### *The individual and society*

9/26 Read Freud (selections given in class)

10/3 Read James; Mead (selections given in class)

10/5 Paper proposals due

10/10 Read Goffman

10/17 Read Coser (“Georg Simmel’s Style...”); Simmel

#### *Macro- and Microsociology*

10/24 Read Blau; Homans; Garfinkel

10/26 Bibliographies due

#### *Functional analysis*

10/31 Read Parsons (all except “Prospects” and “The Role of Theory”)

11/7 Read Merton (all except “Sociological Theory”)

#### *Race and Gender*

11/14 Read Blumer (“Sociological Theory in Industrial Relations”); Frazier; DuBois

11/16 Paper outlines due

11/21 No class today

11/28 Fanon; Cooper; Gilman

*Students’ Choice* (topics to be decided by 11/7)

12/5

12/12  
12/15 Final papers due

## **Relevant Policies**

### Disability Accommodations

Students with *documented* disabilities, including non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injury, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, or psychiatric disabilities should see me during the first two weeks of class to discuss possible reasonable accommodations. For more information, consult The Office of Disability Services, Willard 322 (303-492-8671) [www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices](http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices)

### Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty members have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity, and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and [http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student\\_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code)

### Academic Integrity

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). For other information on the Honor Code, see <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>

### Discrimination and Harassment

The University of Colorado at Boulder policies on Discrimination and Harassment (<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/discrimination.html>) Sexual Harassment, and Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student who

believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. For information about the ODH and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment, see <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>