

Seminar in Sociological Theory

Professor Leslie Irvine
Spring 2017



*What is this painting--or **any** painting--doing on a sociology syllabus?*

Francisco Goya's "Third of May 1808" depicts the massacre of Spanish citizens by Napoleon's army during the French occupation of Madrid. It has been called the first modern painting. In depicting political tyranny, institutional and local power, and resistance, it embodies many of the themes we will explore in this seminar. Throughout the semester, we will consider contemporaneous works of art and music to envision social theory as part of culture, rather than an isolated intellectual activity.

In this seminar, we'll examine theoretical approaches to core issues and problems in sociology, including the nature of society, the relationship between society and the individual, the sources of power, and the structure of sociological knowledge. When you finish the course, you should be able to use the major concepts and frameworks of social theory in your research and writing, and pursue further reading on your own, as your work requires. In addition, by examining how contemporary scholars use theory, you will have acquired an intellectually pluralistic perspective that allows you to engage with various theories rather than just a "favorite."

We'll accomplish these goals through close reading and extended discussion of classic and contemporary texts, and by sharing our own sociological knowledge, perspectives on the reading, and extant research interests and projects with one another. Theory is of necessity a collective project.

Contact info

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I hold office hours by appointment.

Click here to schedule (link also on D2L)

Requirements

Attend class. You can miss one class without penalty. Missing two will lower your grade by one letter. I will make exceptions if extenuating circumstances such as serious illness or a death in the immediate family cause you to miss class. If you find yourself in such a situation, please inform me as early as possible.

Obtain the following books. With the exception of Pampel, for which you must have the 2006 edition, any editions are okay.

- Du Bois, W.E.B. 2007. *The Souls of Black Folk*.
- Lengermann, Patricia Madoo, and Gillian Niebrugge. 1998. *The Women Founders: Sociology and Social Theory 1830-1930*.
- Mead, George Herbert. 1934. *Mind, Self, and Society*.
- Pampel, Fred C. 2006. *Sociological Lives and Ideas*.
- Tucker, Robert C. (ed.). 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*.
- Durkheim, Émile. 1986. *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.
- _____. 1982. *Rules of the Sociological Method*.
- _____. 1951. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*.
- Foucault, Michel. 1975. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.
- _____. 1976. *A History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*.
- Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*.
- Weber, Max. 2003. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

I am sensitive to both the cost of books and student budgets. Because we will read only excerpts of the texts in blue, I have posted the relevant excerpts on D2L (marked on schedule with *). I recommend reading all of these books in their entirety, however. If your budget allows, you may want to purchase them.

Obviously, we cannot read everything sociological theory has to offer. Moreover, we will read excerpts of some important works. My apologies to those of you who will be disappointed that we have omitted works you consider important. I will gladly recommend readings to anyone wishing to follow theoretical roads not taken in this seminar.

Keep current with the reading. In addition to the books, I have posted other required readings (i.e., journal articles) on D2L (also indicated on schedule with *). I have tried not to overload you; with only a few exceptions, I have kept the average weekly page numbers assigned at around 150. I have posted brief guides and questions on D2L to direct your attention to essential themes in each week's material. Please bring each week's texts to class and reference them during discussion, as needed.

Participate in the seminar. By this, I mean the following:

- Make informed contributions to the discussion. This will occasionally involve working in pairs or groups to do brief online research related to the topic.
- Ask questions about the material.
- Each week, be prepared to give a three-minute “mini lecture” about some aspect of the material you found thought provoking. I will choose students randomly (without replacement) until all have presented. Two students might present during the same seminar. All students will give two presentations.

As a group, I want us to construct and maintain the seminar as a safe place to try out ideas, make mistakes, and learn without fearing the consequences of looking foolish.

Write four short papers (4-5 pp.) responding to prompts posted on D2L. I offer several dates for submitting these papers; you choose those that work best for you. You'll upload your papers to the D2L dropbox using the originality checker. I will grade these papers on a Pass/Progressing/No Pass basis. You will have the opportunity to redo one paper that receives a No Pass. If you receive more than one mark of No Pass, you must meet with me to discuss your status in the course.

Final Grades

I will assign your grade for the course based on the above requirements, using the Department of Sociology's scale for graduate seminars:

- A:** Consistently performed well above expectations for the course (e.g., 4 Passing papers and regular participation indicating consistent preparation)
- A-:** Performed above expectations for the course (4 Passing papers and competent participation)
- B+:** Met expectations for the course (4 Passing/Progressing papers and occasional participation)
- B:** Occasionally performed below expectations for the course (3 Passing papers, contributes little to discussion)
- B-:** Consistently performed below expectations for the course (3 Passing papers; does not participate)
- C:** Unsatisfactory work for a PhD student (Incomplete or late work; missed classes)

Schedule

- Subject to change. I will announce changes in class and over email and on D2L.
- Asterisk (*) indicates readings posted on D2L.

Week 1 (Jan 18)

Topics: introductions, requirements, and mutual expectations

Week 2 (Jan 25)

Topics: Historical context and scope of classical sociological theory; the creation of a canon

Reading:

*Connell, R. W. 1997. "Why Is Classical Theory Classical?" *American Journal of Sociology* 102: 1511-1557.

*Hadden, Richard W. 1997. "The Enlightenment, Conservative Reaction, Comte, and Spencer" (Chapter 1). Pp. 15-38 in *Sociological Theory: An Introduction to the Classical Tradition*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview.

Week 3 (Feb 1)

Topics: Early Marx, ideology and philosophy

Reading:

Pampel: Marx chapter

The Marx-Engels Reader (note that page numbers might differ, depending on the edition)

Introduction

"Marx on the History of His Opinions" (3-6)

"On the Jewish Question" (26-52)

"Theses on Feuerbach" (143- 145)

"German Ideology: Part I" (146-65 and 172-175 and 190-193).

Week 4 (Feb 8)

Topics: The structure of capitalism; the fetishism of commodities; reification; alienation

Reading:

The Marx-Engels Reader

"Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" (70-105)

"Capital Vol. 1" (351- 361 and 407-415 and 436-38)

"Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*," pp. 3-6;

"*Manifesto to the Communist Party*" (437-500).

*Shawn, Wallace. 1991. "The Fever." New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. (p. 19)

Week 5 (Feb 15)

Topics: Legitimate Authority, the State, and Rationalization; charisma; person and position; bureaucracy; routinization; standardization; objectivity; ideal type

Reading:

Pampel: Weber chapter

*"Class, Status, Party" and *"Politics as a Vocation" (first 7 pp: up to "...yields a sufficient income.")

*"The Types of Legitimate Domination" and *"Bureaucracy"

*"Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy"

*"Definitions of Sociology and Social Action" (pp. 4-24) and *"Types of Social Action" (pp. 24-26) (note that these two are in the same document)

Week 6 (Feb 22)

Topics: Using classical theory; applying, building on, and adapting works by Marx and Weber

Reading:

The Marx-Engels Reader, re-read/review pp. 66-93 (selections from the 1844 Manuscripts)

*Snyder, Benjamin H. 2013. "From Vigilance to Busyness A Neo-Weberian Approach to Clock Time." *Sociological Theory* 31: 243-266.

Excerpts:

*Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, pp. 8-36, 69-87, 98-122.

Week 7 (Mar 1)

Topics: Collective emotions

Reading:

Pampel: Durkheim chapter

Excerpts

**The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*

Week 8 (Mar 8)

Topics: The nature of human society and how to study it

Reading:

Excerpts:

**The Rules of The Sociological Method*

**Suicide*

Week 9 (Mar 15)

Topics: Urbanism, anonymity; intimacy; secrecy and privacy

Reading:

Pampel: Simmel chapter

*"Money in Modern Culture"

*"The Metropolis and Mental Life"

*"The Stranger"

*"The Secret and the Secret Society"

Week 10 (Mar 22)

• **Topics:** Pragmatism; the micro-macro link

Reading:

Pampel: Mead chapter

Mind, Self, and Society, pp. 135-164 (Part III: The Self, 18: "The Self and the Organism," 19: "The Background of the Genesis of the Self," and 20: "Play, the Game, and the Generalized Other") pp. 173-175 (Part III: The Self, 22: "The 'I' and the 'Me'")

*Irvine, Leslie. 2003. "George's Bulldog: What Mead's Canine Companion could have Told Him about the Self." *Sociological Origins* 3:46-49.

Excerpt:

*Cooley, Charles Horton. 1902. "The Looking-Glass Self." Pp. 179-185 in *Human Nature and the Social Order*. New York: Scribner's.

Week 11 (Mar 29) SPRING BREAK

Week 12 (Apr 5)

Topics: Race in America; discrimination

Reading:

Pampel: DuBois chapter

The Souls of Black Folk, Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company.

The Forethought

I. Of Our Spiritual Strivings

II. Of the Dawn of Freedom

III. Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and

Others

IV. Of the Meaning of Progress

V. Of the Wings of Atalanta

VI. Of the Training of Black Men

XI. Of the Passing of the First-Born

*Young, Alford A., Jr., and Donald R. Deskins, Jr. 2001. "Early Traditions of African-American Sociological Thought." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27: 445-477.

Week 13 (Apr 12)

Topics: gender and the politics of erasure; the founding generation of women

Reading:

The Women Founders of Sociology, Chapters 1-4

Week 14 (Apr 19)

Topics: significance of the recovery of the women founders for contemporary sociology

Reading:

The Women Founders of Sociology, Chapters 5-8

Week 15 (Apr 26)

Topics: Conflicts over theory; developing a distinctly American (male) sociological theory

Reading:

*Blumer, Herbert, pp. 1-61 (Chapter 1) in *Symbolic Interactionism* (1969), Berkeley: University of California Press.

*Merton, Robert K. 1938. "Social Structure and Anomie." *American Sociological Review* 3: 672-682.

*Mills, C. Wright. "Grand Theory" (Chapter 2) and "Abstract Empiricism" (Chapter 3) pp. 25-75 from *The Sociological Imagination* (1959). New York: Oxford University Press.

*Parsons, Talcott. 1951. "Illness and the Role of the Physician: A Sociological Perspective." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 21: 452-460.

Week 16 (May 3)

Topics: The making of the subject; knowledge/power; sexuality

Reading:

*Foucault, "The Subject and Power"

Excerpts:

Discipline and Punish; *The History of Sexuality

Power, "Foucault and Sociology" (I know...perfect last name, right?)

Relevant CU Policies

Disabilities

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter from Disability Services within the first two weeks of class so that I can address your needs. Disability Services determines accommodations based on *documented* disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and <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. <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and 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; 303-725-2273). Students found 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>!

<http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>

Religious Observances

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please notify me early in the semester if religious observance will cause you to miss a class. <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/facrelig.html>

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>