

SSP 401
PROSEMINAR: APPLIED SOCIAL THEORY

Fall 2004
Thursdays 4:10-7pm
Price Hall Room 3
Instructor: Ziad Munson
office: Price Hall 8G
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This course has two central goals. First, to expose seminar participants to some of the most influential theoretical ideas in sociology. We will focus on understanding the differences between these traditions, their strengths and weaknesses, and the implications of each when applied to contemporary research and problems. Second, the course gives seminar participants the opportunity to construct and evaluate their own social theories. We will use the different theoretical ideas that already exist in sociology as building blocks for creating new theories based on the individual interests of students in the class.

Course Requirements

Attendance and participation: The course is based around our weekly seminars. I do not give formal lectures during class time. Preparation and attendance are thus critical not only to your individual grade, but also to the success of the course as a whole. Seminar participants are expected to do all assigned reading and come to class prepared to actively and thoughtfully discuss the major themes and important issues raised by what they've read.

Papers: Each seminar participant will be expected to write two papers over the course of the semester--

(1) The first requires that you use sociological theory from the seminar to explain a current social phenomenon (which we discuss in class). Papers should be *no longer* than seven pages, double-spaced, in 11- or 12-point type with one inch margins all around. The paper must be turned in no later than 5pm on Monday, November 1st.

(2) The second paper requires you to use at least two different sociological theories to derive testable hypotheses about a social issue or problem of interest to you. We will talk more about the requirements for this paper in class, including the possibility that it be linked to your final assignment in SSP411. Students will present their final papers on the last day of class, December 2nd. They are due at that time.

Team projects: Everyone in the seminar will also be expected to participate in writing two "theory memos" as part of a group. These memos will be distributed to everyone in the seminar, and serve as a basis for our seminar discussions. Memos should highlight the key concepts of a theory, an example of how the theory might be applied to a contemporary social issue, weaknesses of the theory, and questions for further discussion. Memos should be *no longer* than eight pages, double-spaced, in 11- or 12-point type with one inch margins all around.

Course grades will be determined as follows:

- 20% seminar participation
- 20% individual midterm paper
- 30% team theory memos (15% each)
- 30% individual final paper

Any student who has a documented disability and is in need of academic accommodations should notify me and/or Cheryl Ashcroft, Director of the Office of Academic Support Services (610-758-4152). Accommodations will be individualized and in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992.

An important note about academic honesty: Plagiarism and cheating are both forbidden by University policy. Ideas as well as every word in your writing must be your own unless contained in quotation marks and properly cited. This includes text taken from the Web. Plagiarism or cheating will, *at minimum*, result in an F for the entire course along with other sanctions by the university. If you have questions or concerns about acceptable ways to use and cite outside material in your writing, please see me; I'm happy to help. So too is Susan Lantz in the Academic Support Services office (610-758-4159). Lehigh also has a special website devoted to academic integrity: <http://www.lehigh.edu/~indost/integrity.html>.

Class Schedule

08/26 Introduction to class: the role of theory in applied sociology

09/02 What is theory?

Stinchcombe, Arthur L. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-3 (pp.3-130)

09/09 Marx, power, and conflict

McIntosh, Ian. 1997. *Classical Sociological Theory*. New York: NYU Press. Section one

Stinchcombe, Arthur L. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Chapter 4 (pp.149-200)

09/16 The role of conflict in contemporary sociological research

Behrens, Angela, Christopher Uggen and Jeff Manza. 2003. "Ballot Manipulation and the 'Menace of Negro Domination'; Racial Threat and Felon Disenfranchisement in the United States, 1850-2002," *American Journal of Sociology* 109(3, November): 559-605.

Kent, Stephanie L., and David Jacobs. 2004. "Social Divisions and Coercive Control in Advanced Societies: Law Enforcement Strength in Eleven Nations from 1975 to 1994," *Social Problems* 51(3): 343-361.

09/23 Weber: Protestants, capitalists, and history

- McIntosh, Ian. 1997. *Classical Sociological Theory*. New York: NYU Press. Chapter 2.1 (pp.115-131)
- 09/30 Weber: organizations, authority, and status
 McIntosh, Ian. 1997. *Classical Sociological Theory*. New York: NYU Press. Chapters 2.2-2.6 (pp.132-174)
- 10/07 NO CLASS: PACING BREAK
- 10/14 Weberian theory in contemporary sociological research
 Barro, Robert J., and Rachel M. McCleary. 2003. "Religion and Economic Growth Across Countries," *American Sociological Review* 68(5, October): 760-781.
 Collins, Randall. 1997. "An Asian Route to Capitalism: Religious Economy and the Origins of Self-Transforming Growth in Japan," *American Sociological Review* 62(6, December): 843-866.
- 10/21 Durkheim, rituals, and the collective consciousness
 McIntosh, Ian. 1997. *Classical Sociological Theory*. New York: NYU Press. Section three
 Stinchcombe, Arthur L. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Chapter 5 (pp.201-232)
- 10/28 A Durkheimian tradition?
 Putnam, Robert. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster. Chapters 1, 15, and any 1 of chapters 17-21
 Yount, Kathryn M. 2004. "Symbolic Gender Politics, Religious Group Identity, and the Decline in Female Genital Cutting in Minya, Egypt," *Social Forces* 82(3, March): 1063-1091.
- 11/01 FIRST PAPER DUE BY 5PM!
- 11/04 Microinteractionism, dramaturgy, and the self
 Collins, Randall. 1994. *Four Sociological Traditions: Selected Readings*. New York: Oxford University Press. Selections from Cooley, Mead, Blumer, and Goffman (pp.283-321, 341-367)
- 11/11 The microinteractionist tradition today
 Zuckerman, Ezra W. 2004. "Structural Incoherence and Stock Market Activity," *American Sociological Review* 69(3, June): 405-432.
 McFarland, Daniel A. 2004. "Resistance as a Social Drama: A Study of Change-Oriented Encounters," *American Journal of Sociology* 109(6, May): 1249-1318.
- 11/18 Taking stock of applied social theory
 Collins, Patricia Hill. 1986. "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought," *Social Problems* 33(6): S14-S32.

11/25 NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING

12/02 Seminar presentations