

SOC120T Special Topics in Culture, Language, and Social Interaction

MODERN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Fall 2023

Location: Ridge Walk Academic Complex (RWAC) 0121

Class hours: 9:30am – 10.50am

Instructor: Professor Charles Thorpe

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Office: SSB 464

Office hours: Wednesdays 11am – 1pm

Final exam: December 14, 8-11am.

Course description

Classical sociological theory was the theoretical consciousness of the onset of modernity. Classical sociological theory marked the historical peak, and the decline of, Enlightenment rationalism and individualism, a growing sense that a new —social— way of thinking was necessary for an increasingly complex and organized industrial capitalist order. *Modern Sociological Theory* examines the period in the mid-20th century that was the height of sociology's cultural influence in America and the period of the formation of the core theoretical frameworks that gave form to the discipline and that are the background to sociology today. In particular, the course examines functionalism, psychoanalytic sociology, symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, conflict theory, and the idea of mass society. Before postmodernism, this was a period of optimism about the potentialities of science and social reform. Modern sociology marks the peak of the social democratic, Keynesian, social reformist, regulationist, and technocratic impulses with which sociological theory was involved, as inspiration, advocate, and critic. Modern sociological theory saw the development of systems of thought that, in different ways, reflected the restabilization of capitalism after World War Two and the discontents submerged within this stability. Its end was marked by the student revolts of 1968 and the economic crisis of the 1970s. It was the golden age of sociology.

Assessment

Components of assessment and weighting of grade:

Annotations: 20%

Attendance: 10%

Final exam: 70%

Annotations

These must take up at least 2 full pages of 12 font per annotation (i.e. per day on which annotations are due no matter the length of the reading set). They may be double-spaced bullet-points, or double-spaced prose. You may write more if you wish.

These annotations are graded on a P/NP basis. They are meant to provide early preparation for your papers and assignments in the course and to self-prepare for lecture and discussion. In order to pass this assignment, you will need to turn in all individual reading outlines that meet the following criteria. You are welcome to use either bullet points or complete paragraphs.

- Two questions that came up for you in the reading and screenings.
 - Consider things you didn't understand or that struck you. You might also think about this portion as a way to start thinking about questions to frame your papers.
- Summarize the academic readings for the week or for the topic heading from the schedule: 1 paragraph/set of bullet points.
- Put the different readings for that week in conversation with one another.

When you turn in your annotations for the week, be sure to include your name and the Annotation #.

Please note that these are not commented on by Professor Thorpe or your TA, unless you specifically ask for feedback by going to office hours.

Grading criteria for annotations

Meeting the requirements = P (you get full points for the assignment)

Not meeting the requirements = NP (you get zero points for the assignment).

If you complete all the annotations satisfactorily, you will receive the full 15% for this portion of the course grade.

Submitting annotations. A Canvas portal will be created to turn in annotations.

The first annotations will be due Tuesday of Week 1, on the readings set for that day's class subsequently, annotations will be due each day on which there are readings set (see course schedule below). Therefore, there will be a total of 12 annotations due for the course.

You will not receive feedback on annotations except to confirm that you have completed the annotation to the requirements (in which case you get full marks for the annotation). If you do not get this confirmation, you should assume that you have not completed the annotation or not completed it satisfactorily.

You must turn in annotations by 11:59pm on the day for which they are due. Late annotations will not be accepted (only family emergency or illness excepted).

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory and an attendance list will be taken during each class.

Final exam

A three-hour in-class final exam will be held during the exam period. You will be expected to write essays in answer to prompts on the course reading. Prompts will be provided on Thursday of Week 10. No notes or electronic devices will be allowed during the exam.

You should bring two blue books to the final exam and more than one pen (not pencil).

If you have OSD accommodations, you should give Professor Thorpe the information at the start of the quarter.

Course schedule

Week 0

Thursday

Hand out syllabus and introduce course

Week 1

Tuesday

Lecture: Talcott Parsons' structural functionalism

Thursday

Parsons, *The Social System*, Chapters 1-2.

Week 2

Tuesday

Parsons, *The Social System*, Chapters 6-7

Thursday

Parsons, *The Social System*, Chapter 8

Week 3

Tuesday

Parsons, *The Social System*, Chapter 9

Thursday

Parsons, *The Social System*, Chapter 11.

Week 4

Tuesday

Lecture: Conflict Theory

Thursday

C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*, Chapter 1 and Chapters 5-10

Dennis H. Wrong, "The Oversocialized Conception of Man"

Week 5

Tuesday

Lecture: Mass Society

Thursday

C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*, Chapter 13

David Riesman with Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd*, Chapters 1-3, 6-7.

Week 6

Tuesday

Lecture: Symbolic interactionism

Thursday

Herbert Blumer, "Society as Symbolic Interaction"

Herbert Blumer, "Sociological Analysis and the 'Variable'"

Charles D. Bolton, "Is Sociology a Behavioral Science?"

Erving Goffman, "Presentation of Self to Others"

Week 7

Tuesday

Lecture: Symbolic interactionism and the sociology of deviance

Thursday

Howard Becker, "Outsiders" (extract)

Howard Becker, "Becoming a Marihuana User"

Erving Goffman, "The Moral Career of the Mental Patient" (extract)

Erving Goffman, "The Management of Spoiled Identity" (extract)

Martin S. Weinberg, "The Nudist Management of Respectability"

Harold Garfinkel, "Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies"

Week 8

Tuesday

Lecture: Ethnomethodology

Thursday

THANKSGIVING NO CLASS

Week 9

Tuesday

Hugh Mehan and Houston Wood, *The Reality of Ethnomethodology*, Chapters 1-2

Thursday

Hugh Mehan and Houston Wood, *The Reality of Ethnomethodology*, Chapters 3-8

Week 10

Tuesday

Lecture: Alvin Gouldner, Reflexivity and the Crisis of Sociology

Thursday

Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*, Chapters 9-10, 13.