

Dartmouth College
Department of Sociology
Fall 2008

Course: Constructing Social Theory (Sociology 16)

Time: MWF 11:15-12:20
Tuesday 12:00-12:50

Instructor: John Campbell
123 Silsby Hall
Office phone: 646-2542

Office Hours: Monday 1:00-3:00 (or by appointment)

Email: I will try to answer email queries as soon as I can. However, given the rather large amount of email that I receive, I can make no guarantees how fast that will be. For the same reason, my responses may be rather short. Please do not take offense.

Course Description: This is a course in social theory and theory construction. It fulfills the theory requirement for majors in the Department of Sociology. It examines how sociologists and other social scientists theorize how human societies are fundamentally put together and operate. A variety of social theories are available. Some scholars argue that conflicts and struggles among groups of people determine how societies are organized, so social change is often abrupt and even explosive. In contrast, others maintain that societies evolve slowly in response to the functional needs of the people that live in them. Still others claim that the dogged pursuit of individual self-interest is the driving force. Some theorists suggest that societies are organized more according to how people develop cultural, cognitive and symbolic interpretations of their world. Students will learn how to compare, contrast and evaluate these and other social theories in light of several book-length empirical studies that have tried to explain the genesis and dynamics of groups, formal organizations, social classes, markets, nation states and global systems. In other words, in addition to familiarizing students with the basic theoretical perspectives in sociology, the course is designed to teach them how to think clearly, critically and analytically about other people's arguments.

Required Texts: Listed below are the required books for the course. They are available at Wheelock Books, the Dartmouth Bookstore, and on reserve in the library. Note that a few additional articles are required. They are listed in the syllabus below and are posted on the course's Blackboard site.

Randall Collins, editor. 1994. Four Sociological Traditions: Selected Readings. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ernest Gellner. 1983. Nations and Nationalism. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Mark Granovetter. 1995. Getting a Job. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Michael Hechter. 1987. Principles of Group Solidarity. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Jay MacLeod. 1987. Ain't No Makin' It. Boulder: Westview Press.

Eleanor Westney. 1987. Imitation and Innovation: The Transfer of Western Organizational Patterns in Meiji Japan. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Reading Assignments: The reading assignments for the course are listed below in the course outline. It is expected that you will have done the reading by the time class meets on the date for which the assignment is due. The reading is difficult and there is a lot of it. Do not fall behind or you will pay the price! For the research monographs in order to read most efficiently you should read the introductory chapter(s) and concluding chapter(s) first, and then read the rest. Authors almost always summarize their theoretical arguments in both places to make sure the reader understands it and doesn't get lost in the empirical details during the middle chapters.

General Course Requirements: All students are expected to attend lectures, participate in discussions and take three take-home essay exams, including the final exam. You are encouraged to participate in class raising questions and/or comments. Note that discussion is an important part of the course. Note also that **EXAMS MUST BE TURNED IN AS HARD COPY**; email enclosures are not acceptable! Exams turned in late will be penalized according to how late they are.

Attendance Policy: Class attendance will not be taken. Beware, however, that all of the short answer questions on each exam will be based on lecture material. Furthermore, you will benefit in writing the essay questions on each exam from having attended the class discussions.

Class Discussions: An important part of this course is weekly class discussions of the reading. Note that 10 percent of your grade is based on your participation in these discussions (see below). This is a time for you to grapple with and try to understand the reading. It is also a time for you to debate with your fellow students how to interpret the reading and whether it constitutes good social theory. You will not be able to participate thoughtfully in the discussions unless you have finished the reading for the week. The reading is challenging and discussions are a time for us to make sense of it. You should not hesitate to contribute to these discussions and ask questions about it even if you had difficulty with the reading. If you find the reading difficult, do not feel alone! Most of your fellow students will find it difficult too. It is entirely appropriate to admit that you don't exactly understand all of the reading.

Grading: Grades will be based on the exams and discussions as follows:

Exam 1	30% (60 points)
Exam 2	30% (60 points)
Exam 3	30% (60 points)
Discussion	10% (20 points)

Late Exam Policy: As a general rule exams that are turned in late will be penalized. In truly extraordinary circumstances an exam turned in late will not be penalized, but only if you can convince the instructor that you have a very good reason for turning it in late. You may turn in an exam late without penalty if you are taken seriously ill and have written confirmation from either a dean or physician that this prevented you from turning the exam in on time. Most other excuses are unacceptable. Notably, road trips for sports, other college related activities, job interviews, other exams in the same week, and the like are generally not acceptable reasons.

Honor Principle: Examinations will be conducted in accord with the principles of academic honor detailed in the Dartmouth Organization, Regulations and Courses.

Writing Assistance: Since all of the exams are take-home essays, you might want to seek peer tutorial

assistance by contacting RWIT, the Student Center for Research, Writing, and Information Technology. Make appointments online at www.dartmouth.edu/~rwit, or drop by the Center in Baker-Berry Library, Level One, from 4:00-6:00 pm and 7:00-10:00 pm, Sundays through Thursday.

Students with Disabilities: Students with learning, physical, or psychiatric disabilities enrolled in this course that may need disability-related classroom or other accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me before the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Disability Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested. I also ask that students who want to discuss this provide me with a copy of a disability registration form, which lists the accommodations recommended for them by the Student Disability Services within the Academic Skills Center. This will also verify that you are registered for disabilities services. If you do not have such a form, please see the Director of Student Disability Services to get one.

Course Outline:

Sep 24 Introduction to the Course

Part I. BASIC PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Sep 26 **NO CLASS**

(Begin the readings for this section of the course.)

Sep 29 The Conflict Tradition: Classes, Groups, and Struggles

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. "History as Class Struggle." Pp. 4-12 in Randall Collins, ed. Four Sociological Traditions. NY: Oxford University Press.

Max Weber. "The Origin of Modern Capitalism." Pp. 36-57 in Randall Collins, ed. Four Sociological Traditions. NY: Oxford University Press.

Ralf Dahrendorf. "Power Divisions as the Basis of Class Conflict." Pp. 58-80 in Randall Collins, ed. Four Sociological Traditions. NY: Oxford University Press.

Gerhard Lenski. "A Theory of Inequality." Pp. 81-108 in Randall Collins, ed. Four Sociological Traditions. NY: Oxford University Press.

Oct 1 The Rational Choice Tradition: Utilitarianism and Individual Interests

George Homans. "Social Exchange Among Equals and Unequals." Pp. 135-144 in Randall Collins, ed. Four Sociological Traditions. NY: Oxford University Press.

James March and Herbert Simon. "Bounded Rationality and Satisficing." Pp. 145-151 in Randall Collins, ed. Four Sociological Traditions. NY: Oxford University Press.

Mancur Olson. "Public Goods and the Free Rider Problem." Pp. 162-170 in Randall Collins, ed. Four Sociological Traditions. NY: Oxford University Press.

Oct 3 The Functionalist Tradition: Structural and Symbolic Supports of Society

Emile Durkheim. "Precontractual Solidarity." Pp. 193-205 in Randall Collins, ed. Four Sociological Traditions. NY: Oxford University Press.

Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss. "The Social Circulation of Sentiments, Magic, and Money." Pp. 219-226 in Randall Collins, ed. Four Sociological Traditions. NY: Oxford University Press.

Claude Levi-Strauss. "Kinship as Sexual Property Exchange." Pp. 227-243 in Randall Collins, ed. Four Sociological Traditions. NY: Oxford University Press.

Erving Goffman. "The Nature of Deference and Demeanor." Pp. 244-261 in Randall Collins, ed. Four Sociological Traditions. NY: Oxford University Press.

Oct 6 The Social Constructionist Tradition: Perception, Interpretation, and Social Psychology
Charles Horton Cooley. "Society is in the Mind." Pp. 283-289 in Randall Collins, ed. Four Sociological Traditions. NY: Oxford University Press.

George Herbert Mead. "Thought as Internalized Conversation." Pp. 290-303 in Randall Collins, ed. Four Sociological Traditions. NY: Oxford University Press.

Herbert Blumer. "Symbolic Interactionism." Pp. 304-321 in Randall Collins, ed. Four Sociological Traditions. NY: Oxford University Press.

Erving Goffman. "Frame Analysis." Pp. 341-357 in Randall Collins, ed. Four Sociological Traditions. NY: Oxford University Press.

Oct 8 Discussion

Part II. THEORY CONSTRUCTION

Oct 10 What Is Theory?

Arthur Stinchcombe. 1968. "Introduction" and "The Logic of Scientific Inference." Pp. 1-56 in Constructing Social Theories. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (On Blackboard)

Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. 1967. "The Discovery of Grounded Theory" and "Generating Theory." Pp. 1-44 in Discovering Grounded Theory. New York: Aldine. (On Blackboard)

NOTE: Exam #1 Distributed in Class.

Oct 13 How Do We Evaluate Theory?

Stinchcombe and Glaser and Strauss. (Continue reading.)

Oct 15 Discussion

Kristin Luker. 1984. "Motherhood and Morality in America." (On Blackboard)

Part III. ORGANIZING GROUPS

Oct 17 Conflict and Cooperation

Michael Hechter. Principles of Group Solidarity. (Begin reading.)

NOTE: Exam #1 Due in Class.

Oct 20 Functions and Frames

Michael Hechter. Principles of Group Solidarity. (Continue reading.)

Oct 22 Discussion

Michael Hechter. Principles of Group Solidarity. (Finish reading.)

Part IV. ORGANIZING FORMAL ORGANIZATIONS

Oct 24 **NO CLASS**

Eleanor Westney. Imitation and Innovation. (Begin Reading.)

Oct 27 Transaction-Costs and Power

Eleanor Westney. Imitation and Innovation. (Continue Reading.)

Oct 28 **X-HOUR** Organizational Legitimacy

Eleanor Westney. Imitation and Innovation. (Continue reading.)

Oct 29 Discussion

Eleanor Westney. Imitation and Innovation. (Finish reading.)

Part V. ORGANIZING SOCIAL CLASSES

Oct 31 Class as Objective Position

Jay MacLeod. Ain't No Makin' It. (Begin reading.)

Nov 3 Class as Subjective Experience

Jay MacLeod. Ain't No Makin' It. (Continue reading.)

Nov 5 Discussion

Jay MacLeod. Ain't No Makin' It. (Finish reading.)

NOTE: Exam #2 Distributed in Class.

Part VI. ORGANIZING MARKETS

Nov 7 Natural Markets

Mark Granovetter. Getting a Job. (Begin reading chapters 1-10, pp. 3-139 only.)

Nov 10 Markets as Social Constructions

Mark Granovetter. Getting a Job. (Continue reading.)

Nov 12 Discussion

Mark Granovetter. Getting a Job. (Finish reading.)

Part VII. ORGANIZING NATIONS

Nov 14 Routes to Political Modernization

Ernest Gellner. Nations and Nationalism. (Begin reading.)

NOTE: Exam #2 Due in Class.

Nov 17 More Routes to Political Modernization

Ernest Gellner. Nations and Nationalism. (Continue reading.)

Nov 19 Discussion

Ernest Gellner. Nations and Nationalism. (Finish reading.)

Part VIII. ORGANIZING GLOBAL SYSTEMS

Nov 21 World Systems and Hegemonic Power

Market Keck and Kathryn Sikkink. Activists Beyond Borders. (Begin reading.)

Nov 24 Modernization and Global Diffusion

Market Keck and Kathryn Sikkink. Activists Beyond Borders. (Continue reading.)

Nov 26 THANKSGIVING BREAK

Nov 28 THANKSGIVING BREAK

Dec 1 Discussion

Market Keck and Kathryn Sikkink. Activists Beyond Borders. (Finish reading.)

NOTE: Exam #3 Distributed in Class.

Dec 3 Wrap-up Session

Dec 7 **Exam #3 Due In My Office (123 Silsby Hall) Absolutely No Later Than 12:00 a.m.** You may turn your exam in earlier, if you like.