Course Description and Objectives

This is an advanced social theory course that presupposes familiarity, if not solid knowledge, of the key works of classical (and sometimes contemporary) social science. An advanced course on sociological theory of this sort can be approached from two different angles—as intellectual history or as theoretical tradition. In the first approach, the classics are examined in relation to their political, social, economic and particularly their cultural context. In the second approach, the classics are systematically compared to one another to show both similarities and differences but also to place them in some developmental sequence. In this course we shall primarily follow the second approach although it will be essential to situate the ideas of any given writer in his/her historical milieu. I begin the course by providing some historical and philosophical background to social theory and then we study Marx with particular focus on historical materialism. We’ll thereafter use G. A. Cohen’s contemporary reconstruction of Marx’s theory of history as a demonstration to show how the analytical techniques of contemporary philosophy can be utilized to expound on and elucidate Marx’s theory of history and satisfy the highest standards of lucidity,
clarity, and rigor. We’ll in turn study various critical responses to Marxism, beginning with Weber and Durkheim, and then moving on to contemporary theorists. We begin with the classics because all contemporary social theory is a response to classical sociology, thus the theme of this course, the classical foundation and contemporary contestation. And one important implication of revisiting and reclaiming classical sociological theory is that sociological theory thrives and survives best when it is engaged with empirical and/or public issues. Classical theorists wanted to use their understanding of modernity to suggest meaningful social change. These issues still remain fundamental today.

Sociology is the development of systematic knowledge about social life, the way it is organized, how it changes, its creation in social action, and its disruption and renewal in social conflict. Sociological theory is thus both a guide to sociological inquiry and an attempt to bring order to its results. Sociological theory is not simply a collection of answers to questions about what society is like. It offers many answers, but it also offers help in posing better questions and developing inquiries that can answer them. Like all of science, thus, it is a process. It is always under development, responding to changes in our social lives and to improvements in our sociological knowledge.

To lend some focus to the discussion and to provide a criterion of selection from the voluminous works of classical theory we shall take a theme that concerned each one of them and threads through their works. That theme is the rise of modernity. Originally, sociology was founded as a self-conscious attempt to understand the changes that swept across western Europe and eventually the rest of the world from 1500 onward. Modernity was understood in three ways. It concerned the development of a capitalist economy based on the use of science to develop new technology, the emergency of states with bureaucracies allied with military organizations, and the decline of religious authority as the main arbiter of moral values accompanied by the rise of the model of the self-interested purposive actor.

In most colleges and universities, sociology students who study social theory read texts by Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. These three nineteenth-century European social theorists are considered to have formulated many of the fundamental themes of sociology. They achieved several of sociology’s most distinct approaches and central concepts. Each of these thinkers was contributing to a common intellectual enterprise, what can be termed as the discovery of society. They responded in divergent ways to a shared historical context, which included the rise and transformation of Western
society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The aftermath of the French Revolution, the industrial revolution, the emergence of the market, and European colonialism opened up social, economic, and cultural opportunities and problems previously unimaginable, from the possibilities of more complex types of social organization (capitalism and socialism) to a novel type of culture based on rationality, social participation, and individualism rather than tradition.

These theorists recognized that these new societies differed in dramatic ways from those that preceded them. They were all involved in explaining modernity. In order to have better grasp of the classical foundation of their thoughts, this course begins with Johan Heilbron’s brilliant account of the origin’s of social theory and sociology in his book *The Rise of Social Theory*, which provides a vivid portrayal of intellectual culture between the Enlightenment and the age of Romanticism. And then this course takes the sociological founders’ works as the point of departure by engaging and summarizing the major themes of the classical sociological theory of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. Moreover, it also interprets their thought through the lens of new theoretical concerns that opened up new perspective on the issues in ways that not adequately addressed by them. In doing so, this course is designed to familiar the students with classical sociological theory by focusing on the selected works of the “founding fathers”—Marx, Weber, and Durkheim—which are indispensable tools for us to grapple with fundamental questions about the rise of capitalism and the formations of modernity.

In addition, classical sociological theory emerged during the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries as a critical commentary on the major socio-economic and political processes shaping the modern world. The classical theorists were all involved in the big social and political issues of their time. Their analyses started with trying to understand more deeply the nature of society and use their understanding to come to an account of modernity. In historical sense, classical sociological theory occupies an intermediate position between the pioneering but somewhat diffuse eighteenth century phase of social science development, on the one hand, and contemporary postwar social theory, on the other. The classical period was really the formative period for contemporary social theory. It is the period when previous disparate concerns of post-Renaissance theorists became consolidated into an increasingly interlocking agenda of generic theoretical questions, such as structure and agency, the problem of order, the place of meaning, and the nature of self. These questions continue to dominate the agenda of contemporary social theory. Similarly, the key substantive institution of market, private capital, the democratic state, and
race and ethnicity continue to be the focus of many less generic social theories of the middle range.

However, in the wake of the new social movements of the 1960s, 1970s and 1990s, which centered around issues of civil rights, gender, sexual orientation, the environment, and the de-colonization of the European nineteenth- and twentieth-century empires, many new emerging issues challenge the viability of classical sociological traditions to understand contemporary issues and events. And much criticism has been directed at the sociological canon, especially the triumvirate of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. Some contemporary theorists have viewed modernity as a “control” process project where social science wittingly and unwittingly aids this process. Therefore, this course will explore the classical sociological theorists through the lens of these contemporary issues and theoretical concerns by reviewing the accomplishments of the classics while pointing to their theoretical limitations. We will see how the major historical divide is not, as it was for Marxism, between a communist future and a pre-communist past, but between “modern”, “rational-legal”, “industrial” and “disciplinary” society on the one hand and “traditional”, “patrimonial”, “feudal”, and “repressive” society on the other.

Thus, the theorists to be covered in this course will extend from classical period to modern period and finally to the postmodern period to investigate how contemporary theorists respond to new emerging historical situation. In this sense, this course is in the spirit of a critical reading of classical social theory and concerns with what should be retained and what should be jettisoned from each theorist in order to make sense of today’s world in light of a growing awareness of cultural identities and social differences. This leads to a discussion of how the sociological tradition can be understood in new ways, and includes the contributions of other thinkers such as Giddens, Bourdieu, Foucault and Lyotard. Encapsulating the current debate on the concepts of modernity and postmodernity, this course attempts to move beyond speculative discussions to explore the idea of postmodernism at two levels: first, by relating the debate over postmodernity back to traditional social theory, and secondly, by demonstrating the application of postmodernity to the nature of modern societies and contemporary politics.

Postmodernism is a difficult term to clearly define, having taken on a variety of meanings depending on who is using the concept. For the purpose of this course, I distinguish modernism from postmodernism as follows:
1) The modern search for a stable community has been replaced by the postmodern
attention to social differences.

2) The Enlightenment contention that rationality leads to a discovery of a timeless, placeless truth is criticized by postmodernists, who celebrate a diversity of truths.

3) Modernists argue that the social and natural worlds can be clearly represented by language. Postmodernists contend that language is always metaphorical; it structures our very sense of “reality”, and language itself is always changing.

4) Modernists argue for a coherent, stable self. Postmodernists deconstruct this notion of the individual. They contend that individuality is shaped by class, gender, and racial factors, which are continually in flux.

Overall, combing both theorist-centered and issue-oriented blend of approaches to reclaiming sociology’s rich intellectual past, this course attempts to do several things at once: 1) to give an advanced introduction to classical sociological theory (Marx, Weber, and Durkheim); 2) to sharpen your analytical skills and increase your conceptual prowess and agility; 3) to probe and trace out some of the core issues, recurrent dilemmas, and recent mutations of social theory (subject and object, structure and agent, the material and the symbolic, thought and action, power and resistance, universality and relativism, science and critique), as they manifest themselves in various theorists studied in this course; 4) to give students experience in systematic theoretical analysis (separating assumption from theoretical claims, teasing out levels of abstraction from units of analysis, etc.); and to explore some directions in contemporary theory.

Class Format/Citizenship

The class will mostly run as a discussion. This advanced course is designed for Ph.D graduate student to engage sociological theory in a serious manner. The readings are copious and dense and you should budget your time well to ingest and digest them as we proceed; they must imperatively be covered and ruminated prior to the weekly meetings so that participants can fully contribute to, as well as benefit, from it. The amount of weekly assigned readings will be ranged from 100 to 150 pages (including the weeks that the class will not meet due to holidays). Learning how to read intelligently and to read a lot is an indispensable component of the training for an intellectual craft; you should use this course to acquire, expand or sharpen your reading abilities. Debating and evaluating other people’s viewpoints is another critical skill a researcher must continuously develop and hone. This seminar is an occasion for “learning by doing”. Each class period I expect you to show up prepared
to discuss the text. You should come to the class with an interpretation of the text and some questions or disagreements with the texts. I do not intend to lecture the class. In order to facilitate class discussion, we will begin each class right after the students’ presentation with a collective attempt to establish what the central arguments of the readings are. I have selected readings that I hope will show how various theorists define society, suggest how to study it, and offer their view of modernity. in order to provide grist for intensive discussion.

In a seminar course of this sort, it is my wish that I want the sessions and discussions to be as stimulating and exciting as possible, with a collegial and supportive atmosphere. Pedagogically, this seminar is dedicated to the proposition that knowledge is a collective product. This intellectual journey is intended to be collective; each participant (including me) is expected to contribute to our discussions and debates. Good seminars depend to a great extent on the seriousness of preparation by students. Active, effective contribution to seminar discussion is the most important requirement of participation in the course. Active, effective contribution does not necessarily mean talking a lot in class. It does mean being attentive enough to the drift of the day’s discussion to be able to distinguish an apt intervention in an ongoing argument from an attempt to redirect the discussion to a new topic. Let us all be good and responsible class citizens to make contributions as much as possible.

Requirements and Grading:

The requirements for this course are fourfold. You must fulfill all four of them; do not take this course if for whatever reason you cannot do so. All participants will be expected to: 1). take an active part in discussions (20%); 2) make at least two presentations on the readings to the seminar during the semester (20%); 3) prepare ten memos on the week’s required readings (20%); 4) a final term paper (40%).

1) Active participation in discussion remember and apply this aphorism of Wittgenstein: “Even to have expressed a false thought boldly and clearly is already to have gained a great deal. So speak up and speak out! What each of you will get out of the course depends in good measure on how much you collectively put in. So, play a constructive role in discussion: offer your own ideas in small chunks instead of long monologues; draw out and ask for clarification of the opinions of others; pose issues and questions you may not know the answer to; learn to permit someone to disagree with you without feeling attacked; learn to express disagreement in ways that promote constructive discussion instead of
polarization.

2) **Seminar Presentations**: Each week a pair of students will present that week’s readings and lead discussions. These presentations should be 20-25 minutes long for each and should try to establish a focused agenda for the discussion that follows. The point of the presentation is not to comprehensively summarize the readings, but to provide a critical evaluation, focusing on the strengths and weakness of the arguments/analyses, comparing different perspectives, and highlighting the most important issues and questions they raise as a way of launching the day’s discussion.

3) **Weekly Issue Memo**: to facilitate collective learning and avoid a situation of “pluralistic ignorance”, every week participants will submit issue-memo to the class as a whole by e-mail. I believe strongly that it is important for students to engage the week’s readings in **written form** prior to the seminar sessions. These weekly memos are intended to prepare the ground for good discussions by requiring participants to set out their initial responses to the readings which will improve the quality of the class discussion since students come to the sessions with an already thought out agenda.

   I refer to these short written comments as “issue memos”. They are **not** meant to be mini-papers on the readings; nor need they summarize the readings as such. Rather, they are meant to be a think-piece, reflecting your own intellectual engagement with the material: specifying what is obscure or confusing in the reading; taking up issue with some core idea or argument; exploring some interesting ramification of an idea in the reading. These memos do not have to deal with the most profound, abstract or grandiose arguments in the readings; the point is that they should reflect what you find most engaging, exciting or puzzling.

   We will arrange to share these memos through e-mail, and the week’s presenters, if s/he likes, can use other students’ comments to prepare an agenda for discussion. In order for everyone to have time to read over other’s comments, these will be imperatively due on e-mail by 10:00 pm on Monday evening (the day before the seminar meets). You are encouraged to read and to respond to each other’s issue memos both before and after the week’s meeting. **These memos are a real requirement**, and failing to hand in memos will affect your grade. I will read through the memos to see if they are “serious”, but not grade them for “quality”. Since the point of this exercise is to enhance discussions, late memos will **not** be accepted. If you have to
miss a seminar session for some reason, you are still required to prepare an issue memo for that session. Since I may not total the number of memos each student writes until the end of the semester, please keep copies to be sure of fulfilling the requirements.

4) Term Paper: The central assignment of this course is a crispy written, analytically rigorous term paper of no more than 15 pages (this limit is expressly designed to compel you to write with economy, precision and clarity). The paper can contrast and critique two or more of the theorists studied, survey the career of a major concept or theory put forth by them, or deploy their ideas in the course of an empirical investigation. Topics are to be submitted for approval by the instructor on or before November 23. I would prefer you to select at least two theorists we read (compare and contrast is a good way to think about this paper). I ask that one of them be someone other than Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. Take a quick example, you can compare what the “division of labor” means for different theorists. Where Marxism examined the consequences of the division of labor for “class”, Durkheim is interested in the relationship of the division of labor to “solidarity”, Weber its relations to “rationalization”, Foucault, its relation to “power”, and feminism its relation to “gender”. In addition, although the critique of Marx and Marxism has loomed large in sociological theory, you can also consider to construct a dialogue among Durkheim, Weber, Foucault and feminism. In this way, you will see how Weber can be interpreted as a response to Durkheim, how Foucault combines and moves beyond both of these and how feminism, assimilates, rejects and moves beyond the entire sociological canon. Just one more example: compare Durkheim and Foucault with respect to (a) punishment, (b) restitutive law and discipline, and (c) occupational associations/workplace and the microphysics of power? Papers connected to dissertation research are strongly recommended.

About Incompletes: Taking an incomplete is like going into debt with a loan shark. The day the deadline is past, interest starts accruing and the quality of paper you think you need to write grows exponentially. Most of the students I have given incompletes to in the past have taken much longer time and difficulties getting them done, and I have decided I must change my formerly lax policy. You are far better off doing the paper you can do now than trying to do the paper you wish you could do later. I am willing to negotiate a deadline with you that accommodates your other obligations (e.g. grading responsibilities as a TA), but you must meet the deadline. If you realize you have defined your paper more broadly than you can execute, speak to me about narrowing the bounds of the paper, not about taking longer to do it.
Reading the Text
The texts are extremely difficult to read. The weekly assigned readings are often long and we are going to cover an enormous amount of materials in a very short period of time (13 weekly substantive meetings only for this semester). Unfortunately, there is not much to be done about this and this is why I send you the tentative syllabus to you before summer recess such that you can read ahead. As such, I suggest you get a head start and keep ahead of the readings. Come to class with questions about the text. If you did not understand something, ask about it. If the text was opaque or does not make sense, point it out.

In our classroom discussions, I would like you to think about four issues:
1) What is the author’s argument?
2) How does it fit in with their general theory?
3) Does it make sense?
4) What phenomenon could you use it to analyze?

Finally, to engage a theory of society requires figuring out lots of things. Consider the following questions as you read the text:
1) With whom is the author arguing?
2) What is the position the author is arguing?
3) What role does the piece you are reading play in the author’s theory?
4) What are the core concepts and how they link with each other?
5) What is the conception of human nature for the author?
6) What is the nature of society? How do we Study it?
7) What is modernity? What makes it happen and how is it different from what came before?
8) What is the theory of action (ie. What motivates actors, their positions in social structure, norms, interests, ideas, ideologies, meanings, self-esteem)?
9) What is the author’s conception of social structure?
10) What is the role of power in social life? What are the sources of social power?
11) What is the role of economy, the state, and ideas in the constitution of society?
    Which dominate and why?
12) What are the main dynamics of modern society?
13) How would we use a particular theory to understand a contemporary phenomena?

Textbooks:

COURSE AGENDA AND WEEKLY THEMES

PART I. CLASSICAL FOUNDATION

Week 1. (9/21) Course Introduction
Week 2. (9/28) Teacher’s Day (No Class, Start Reading The Rise of Social Theory)
Week 3 (10/5) The Rise of Social Theory (I)
Week 4. (10/12) The Rise of Social Theory (II)
Week 5 (10/19) Marx’s Materialist Conception of History
Week 6 (10/26) Cohen’s Reconstruction of Historical Materialism (I)
Week 7 (11/2) School Celebration Day (No Class, keep Reading Cohen)
Week 8 (11/9) Cohen’s Reconstruction of Historical Materialism (II)
Week 9 (11/16) Mid-term exam (No Class)
Week 10 (11/23) Durkheim (I): The Division of Labor in Society
Week 11 (11/30) Durkheim (II): The Division of Labor in Society
Week 12 (12/7) Weber (I): The Ideas of Economic Sociology
Week 13 (12/14) Weber (II): The Ideas of Economic Sociology

PART II. CONTEMPORARY CONTESTATION

Week 14 (12/21) Giddens: Consequences of Modernity
Week 16 (1/4)   Foucault: History of Sexuality
Week 17 (1/11)  Lyotard: The Postmodern Condition
Week 18 (1/18)  Final Exam (No Class)

SEMINAR SESSIONS & READING ASSIGNMENTS

PART I. CLASSICAL FOUNDATION

Week 1. (9/21)   Course Introduction
How I Define and Design This Course
Dilemma: Breadth or Depth? (Brain-storming and Any Suggestions Welcome!)
Language Issues
Theory as Tool and Theory as End-Product
The Rise and Fall of Classical Social Theory
Conceptual Pragmatism
Learning about vs. Learning from Social Theory
Theoretical Understanding vs. Theorization
Consuming vs. Constructing Theory
Text vs. Context of Social Theory: History of Ideas or Sociology of Knowledge?

*  Critical Issues in Social Theory

    Holism vs. Methodological Individualism
    Structure vs. Agency
    Level of Abstraction vs. Unit of Analysis
    Positivism vs. Anti-Positivism: The Philosophy of Science Debate
    Explanation vs. Interpretation
    Forms of Explanation: Causal, Functional, Intentional
    Meta-theoretical vs. Substantive
    Conceptualization vs. Labeling (or Renaming)
The Types of Sociological Theorizing

Nature of Constitutive Elements

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<tr>
<th>Terms of Explanation</th>
<th>Subjective</th>
<th>Objective</th>
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<tr>
<td>Individualistic</td>
<td>Constructionism</td>
<td>Utilitarianism</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Weber</td>
<td>Marshall, Pareto</td>
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<td>Holistic</td>
<td>Functionalism</td>
<td>Critical Structuralism</td>
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<td>Durkheim</td>
<td>Marx</td>
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A Mapping of Some Sociological Theories in a Two-Dimensional Space

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Structure</th>
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<tr>
<td>Subjectivism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symbolic Interactionalism</td>
<td>Phenomenology</td>
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<td>Ethnomethodology</td>
<td>Giddens</td>
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* The Core Concepts That Sociological Theory Must Address and Attempt to Reconcile:

Agency – Meaning and Motives in Social Arrangements
Rationality – The Maximization of Individual Interest
Structure – Secret Patterns Which Determine Experience
System – An Overarching Order

* The Main Phenomenon That Sociological Theory Seeks to Explain:

Culture and Ideology
Power and the State
Differentiation and Stratification

Week 2. (9/28) Teacher’s Day (No Class, Start Reading The Rise of Social Theory)

Week 3 (10/5) The Rise of Social Theory (I)
Core Readings:

Week 4. (10/12) The Rise of Social Theory (II)
Core Readings:

KARL MARX: THE PRIMACY OF PRODUCTION

Driving Impulses
Key Issues:
A Materialist Social Ontology
Historical Materialism
Critique of Capitalism
Class as a Social Relation
The State and Politics

Seeing Things Differently
Legacies and Unfinished Business

Background Readings:

**General Analyses of Marx’s Works**

**Philosophical Aspects of Marx’s Thought**

**Marxist Economics**
Mandel, Ernest. 1971. The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx, 1843 to
Week 5 (10/19) Marx’s Materialist Conception of History

The heart of Marxist social science has been traditionally been a theory of history, usually called “historical materialism”. While many Marxists today are highly critical of Marx’s formulations of this theory of history, and some even deny the usefulness of any theory of history, historical materialism nevertheless remains in many ways the central point of reference for much general theoretical debate, both among Marxists and between Marxists and non-Marxists.

In the following four sections, we will engage Marx’s original writings on history and then examine carefully the central theses of historical materialism as they have been elaborated and defended by G. A. Cohen. Cohen’s defense of Marx’s theory is the most systematic and coherent of any that has been offered. While there is considerable debate over the adequacy of Cohen’s reconstruction of historical materialism, it is, however, widely acknowledged that it is faithful to the underlying logic of Mar’s argument, and that it has the considerable merit of making that logic much more explicit and accessible than in Marx’s own work. Some students will find the idiom of Cohen’s exposition—analytical philosophy—difficult and awkward.
Cohen is preoccupied with making rigorous distinctions in the nuances of the theory, making every assumption explicit and laying out all of the steps in the argument. The first time one reads this kind of analysis, it is easy to become overwhelmed with the fine points and to lose track of the overall thrust of the argument. Still, the book provides a much firmer basis for assessing the merits and limitations of historical materialism than any other discussion I know of, and therefore it is worth the effort to mastering it.

BACKGROUND READING:

CORE READING:

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Week 6 (10/26) Cohen’s Reconstruction of Historical Materialism (I)

CORE READING:

SUGGESTED READINGS:
Week 7 (11/2) School Celebration Day (No Class, Keep Reading Cohen)

Week 8 (11/9) Cohen’s Reconstruction of Historical Materialism (II)
CORE READING:
Pp.115-325

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Week 9 (11/16) Mid-term exam (No Class)

EMILE DURKHEIM (1858-1917): THE DISCOVERY OF SOCIAL FACTS

Driving Impulses
Key Issues:
Legitimating the Discipline: Sociology, Science, and Emergence
The Relationship between the Individual and Society: Images of Society
Three Studies of Social Solidarity
The Division of Labor in Society
Suicide
The Elementary Form of the Religious Life

Seeing Things Differently
Legacies and Unfinished Business

Background Readings:
*This book remains the most complete study of Durkheim.

**General Analyses of Durkheim’s Works**

**The Philosophical Dimensions of Durkheim’s Thought**

**Durkheim and Religion**

**Durkheim and the Law**

**Suggested Readings:**
Week 10 (11/23) Durkheim (I): The Division of Labor in Society

The center of attention in The Division of Labor in Society is on the evolutionary change in society from one form of social cohesion to another and in particular the role of individualism in modern societies. Durkheim argued that, despite the apparent collapse of traditional communities and the growth of individualism, modern society was not falling apart. It was being held together not by shared beliefs, as were traditional societies, but by the division of labor, our economic dependence on each other. Durkheim, like Marx, recognizes that the market economy has unprecedented importance in the modern world. The Division of Labor in Society addresses the relationship between the economy and society. Durkheim is influenced by the widespread distinctions between traditional and modern societies prevalent in his time. He develops two different types of solidarity corresponding to these distinct types of social organization. The first type of solidarity, characteristic of premodern societies, he designated as mechanical solidarity. In this type of solidarity the common consciousness is strong and individuals are similar to one another, sharing the same beliefs and ideas. The individual is directly linked with society. Indeed, it is a misnomer to even speak of individualism, in the sense of autonomy, as we understand it now. These premodern societies are clan-based, each clan performing political and economic functions as well as familial ones. Rules are often repressive, imposing uniform, strict punishments on all members of society. This punishment reinforces shared beliefs and values. The type of consciousness characterizing this society is traditional and often very religious, in a fundamentalist way.

As the division of labor emerges, a new type of organic solidarity arises. In organic solidarity the collective conscience becomes diffuse and there is more room for individual and personal differences. The division of labor becomes the source of this new solidarity, as it binds people together, each having her own task or special function. The individual depends upon the different parts of society, as each person has a specific sphere of activity. There is a high degree of interdependence among distinct institutions and persons. Societies become more complex; legal rules are based on restitution rather than strict punishment, for they must regulate new roles and occupations. Societies are rational secular, as science becomes a more important method of understanding society and nature. These societies still need a sense of
shared morality and sacredness. Individualism provides such a shared consciousness, as the rights and dignity of the individual achieve an almost sacred status in modern societies. Ideals tied to the republic and the nation also become powerful moral forces binding people together.

**CORE READING:**

*Mr. Sui generis, Durkheim is the founder of the modern social science of society: it is he who establishes the specificity of social facts (as the duet of “morphology” and “collective” representation”) and of the sociological method (treated social facts as things”). His project is to rethink the mechanisms of solidarity (“the division of labor”—as distinct from the social division of labor) under condition of individualism, anomie, and class inequality so as to diagnose and resolve the crisis of European modernity. In so doing, he discovers the social foundations of reason and dissects the intimate bonds between moral, logical, and social (dis)integration. While reading this text, pay attention to the following questions:

1) Is the division of labor a pathology or normal?
2) The functions of the division of labor?
3) What are Durkheim’s notions of solidarity? How to measure solidarity? What is the relation between division of labor and solidarity? How to explain conflict and disorganization?
4) What is a crime? What is the function of punishment? What is the form of punishment? Mechanical solidarity and the state.
6) What happens to the collective consciousness under organic solidarity? What are the origins and impetus behind the development of the division of labor?
7) Normal and abnormal division of labor. Anomic, forced and discontinuous division of labor.

**Week 11 (11/30) Durkheim (II): The Division of Labor in Society**

**CORE READING:**
MAX WEBER (1864-1920): THE PRIMACY OF SOCIAL ACTION

Driving Impulses: Life and Orientation

Key issues:
- On the Relationship between Religion and Economics
- The Disenchantment of the World and the Rationalization of Life
- Method and the Philosophy of Science
- Authority or “Legitimate Domination”

Seeing Things Differently

Weberian Legacies

Background Readings:


General Analyses of Weber’s Works
Scaff, Lawrence. 1989. Fleeing the Iron Cage: Culture, Politics and Modernity in the
California Press.
Cambridge University Press.

Weber on Politics
Polity Press.
Press.
University of Chicago Press.

Weber on Methodology
Ringer, Fritz. 2000. Max Weber’s Methodology: The Unification of the Cultural and

Weber on Economics

Weber on Religion

Suggested Readings:
Berkeley: University of California Press.
University Press.
Lehman, Hartmunt, and Guenther Roth, eds. 1987. Weber’s Protestant Ethic: Origins,
Evidence, Contexts. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Week 12 (12/7)  Weber (I): The Ideas of Economic Sociology
Economic sociology as a distinguishable intellectual entity was created independently about the same time in Germany and France. The most important figure in Germany was Max Weber, though there are major works by other scholars such as Georg Simmel and Werner Sombart. The influences on Weber were many. Among them was the historical School of economics, whose teachings Weber absorbed as a young student at Heidelberg. The theoretical groundwork for the analysis of the economy itself is laid out in Chapter 2 of Economy and Society, “Sociological Categories of Economic Action.” It is a kind of founding document in economic sociology. It parallels the first chapter in which Weber developed the basic categories of his general sociology—categories such as “social action”, “social relationships”, “organizations”, and “associations”. His economic sociology begins with “economic action”, “economic organizations”, and so on. What distinguishes the concept of “economic action” in his economic sociology from that used in economics is three ingredients: it conceives economic action as social; it always involves meanings; and it takes power into account. In the following two sections, we’ll revisit Weber’s economic sociology and I’ll also provide the recent developments in New Economic Sociology since 1980s as a reference point.

CORE READING:

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Week 13 (12/14)  Weber (II): The Ideas of Economic Sociology
CORE READING:
PART II. CONTEMPORARY CONTESTATION

ANTHONY GIDDENS (1938-): THEORIST OF MODERNITY AND STRUCTURATION

Driving Impulses

Key Issues
- What is a Collectivity?
- The Consciousness of the Acting Subject
- Modernity and Social Change
- Empowerment and Risk in Post-traditional Society
- The Politics of Modernity
- Structuration
- Duality of Structure
- Reflexivity

Seeing Things Differently

Legacies and Unfinished Business

Gidden’s Major Works:
Week 14 (12/21)  Giddens
To understand our contemporary society’s special character is one of sociology’s most important goals. Gidden’s sociological project must be seen as a continued attempt to comprehend the uniqueness of the modern. Gidden’s draws the contours of an analysis of Modernity at the conclusion of The Nation-State and Violence. However, it is not until the 1990s that he presents a genuinely coherent diagnosis of contemporary society which incorporates an analysis both of the uniqueness of the institutions of modern society and of specific characteristics of the modern individual, our self-identity, and our mutual relations Giddens claims that the modes of social organization which evolved in Europe from the beginning of the 1600s, and which have since become globalized, are unique compared to the modes of life of earlier eras. According to Giddens, these organizational forms, and thereby modernity, evolve through the interaction among a number of institutional dimensions, these being capitalism, industrialism, surveillance, and control of information by the nation-state, and finally the development of military power, including the successful monopoly of the means of violence and the industrialization of war. For Giddens, in order to understand and conceptualize our contemporary society, we need a new sociological theory capable of grasping the complexity of this interaction. In this section, we’ll engage Giddens’s Consequences of Modernity to examine how he theorize modernity.

BACKGROUND READING:

CORE READING:

SUGGESTED READINGS:
BOURDIEU (1930-2002): THEORIST OF THE CULTURAL AND SYMBOLIC CAPITAL

Driving Impulses

Key Ideas:
- A Science of Practice and A Critique of Domination
- Constructing the Sociological Object
- Overcoming the Antinomy of Objectivism and Subjectivism: Habitus, Capital, and Field.
- Taste, Classes, and Classification
- The Imperative of Reflexivity

Legacies and Unfinished Project

Bourdieu’s Major Works:

Further Readings:

Culture is unthinkable without language. The one presupposes the other. This is the conventional sociological and anthropological view, to which Bourdieu subscribes in the strongest possible terms. He insists that language cannot be analyzed or understood in isolation from its cultural context and the social conditions of its production and reception. So the first thing to note in Language and Symbolic Power is that they are a critique of pure, formalist linguistics, most obviously the work of Saussure and Chomsky. In particular, he objects to Saussure’s distinction between langue (language) and parole (speech), and Chomsky’s differentiation between “competence” and “performance”. Each depends on the methodological constitution of an abstract domain of language—simultaneously “real” and “ideal”—which is drawn upon in the production of mundane written or spoken language in all of its variety.

He argues that uniform, linguistic communities of the kind which these linguistic models imply do not exist. “Standard language”, such as they are, are the product of complex social processes, generally bound up with a history of state formation., and are simply one version of a language—and a socially highly specific one at that. They are not the language. Moreover this kind of linguistic analysis “freezes” language, creates it as “structure”.

In the second place, Bourdieu’s writings on language are an extension to a new empirical topic of the theoretical approach which he has developed in his anthropological work and in his studies of education and cultural consumption. He thinks “that the division between linguistics and sociology is unfortunate and deleterious to both disciplines”. Since language in intrinsically a social and practical phenomenon it is fair game for sociologists. More than that, the analysis of
communication and discourse should constitute one of the foundation stones of the sociological enterprise. Nor does Bourdieu see his analyses of language, education and cultural consumption as separate enterprises: they are all concerned with the manner in which domination is achieved by the manipulation of symbolic and cultural resources and with the collusion of the dominated.

Please be noted: Bourdieu is a difficult writer: often writing in language which has been described as “truly remarkably obscure and abstract which undermines its readability. In Bourdieus work, one is forced too often to query the communicative necessity of much of the jargon. Moreover, his writing has become increasingly dense, elliptical and long winded as his career has progressed. These being said, he is still an original theorists worth engaging seriously.

**CORE READING:**

**SUGGESTED READINGS:**

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**MICHEL FOUCAULT (1926-84):**

**Driving Impulses: The Enthusiasm for Experiment**

**Key Issues: Critiques of the Subject**

Knowledge as power
Governmentality
Surveillance
Bio-power
Discourse
Discipline
Sexuality
The Dangerous Individual
Ethics
The Genealogy of the Present

**Seeing Things Differently**

**Legacies and Unfinished Business: Governmentality and Conflict**

**Foucault’s Major Writings:**
Further Readings:
Dreyfus, Hubert and Paul Rabinow. 1982. Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and
Cambridge: MIT Press.
Martin, Luther, H. Gutman, and Patrick Hutton. 1988. Technologies of Self: A
Seminar with Michel Foucault.
York: Basil Blackwell.
Cambridge University Press.

Week 16 (1/4) Foucault
What strikes one most immediately about the work of Michel Foucault is its intellectual breadth. The broad sweep of his work interests the sociological audiences first because of the persistence with which it crosses the themes, both central and minor, of sociological teaching. In the main Foucault’s works may be grouped under three headings: (1) analyses of branches of knowledge and discourse; (2) genealogies of institutions of internment—asylums, hospitals, and prisons; (3) investigations of power relations and sexuality.

Under the first heading fall above all The Order of Things and The Archaeology of Knowledge. Under the headings of genealogies of institutions of internment one can group Madness and Civilization, The Birth of the Clinic and Discipline and Punish. Relations of power, which can be seen in retrospect as the subject of Madness and Civilization and The Birth of the Clinic, become the explicit focus of Foucault’s later writings, beginning with Discipline and Punish. The History of Sexuality, published in French in 1976, was to be the introductory volume in a six-volume history of power and sexuality. Three substantial volumes have appeared after Foucault’s death; all three seem more exploratory than well finished. But, in combination with Discipline and Punish and his later interviews and earlier case studies, these texts exhibit Foucault’s political as well as intellectual magnetism for the critical contemporary reader.

In spite of the vastness of the topic, there are three important themes which can be distilled from The History of Sexuality and we’ll engage these themes seriously which reading/discussing the book. First, we can learns that relations of power have affected even what we take to be our innermost experience of ourselves, our “secret” desires. However, contrary to the repressive hypothesis, the character of this effect is not that of a prohibition, but that of a mobilization, an incitement, and an organization of our sexual experience. As a second theme, Foucault traces the multitudinous practices of confession by which we have been obliged to render our desires in speech and subject ourselves to interpretation. Beginning with the early Christian monastery, and progressively dispersed throughout law, psychiatry, medicine, pedagogy, family relationships, and so on, “it is in the confession that truth and sex are joined, through the obligatory and exhaustive expression of an individual secret.” (p.61) Our twentieth-century calls for self-expression, liberation, or fulfillment are no doubt variations on the imperative to subject ourselves to the disclosure of our inner truths. However, this endless interpretation of ourselves as subjects of desire, as though our individual truth originated in this inner nature, occludes the extent to which the very practices of self-interpretation and self-disclosure have a political history.

Finally, then, it is through a certain political history that Foucault accounts for the highly charged network of relations which enlivens and orders the Western sexual
Beginning in the eighteenth century, governments perceived that they were not dealing simply with subjects, or even with a “people”, but with a “populations”, with its specific phenomena and its peculiar variables: birth and death rates, life expectancy, fertility, and so on (p.25). In this way one may understand the importance sex has assumed in Western culture over the last three centuries, for it was at the pivot of the two axes along which developed the entire political technology of life, namely, the disciplines of body, and the regulation of populations (p.145).

**CORE READING:**


**LYOTARD (1924-1998):**

**Driving Impulses:**

**Key Issues:**
- Libidinal Economy
- Postmodern Condition
- Differend
- Sublime
- Inhuman

**Legacy and Unfinished Project**

**Lyotard’s Major Works:**


**Further Readings:**


**Week 17 (1/11) Lyotard**

The most important theoretical claim in The Postmodern Condition is Lyotard’s disbelief in metanarratives. He argues against the possibility of justifying the narratives that bring together disparate disciplines and social practices (for example, science, history, and culture) into a single account associated with progress and the elimination of conflicts and differences. Instead, the language games whose rules
determine correct moves for given pursuits are heterogeneous and the various genres of discourse that determine the stakes of these pursuits are incommensurable. There are no overarching rules or laws in the postmodern condition and there are no final stakes. So the narratives that we tell to justify a single set of laws and stakes are inherently unjust. Lyotard does not limit this disbelief to a given “postmodern” epoch. For him, all times are postmodern and metanarratives have never been justified. It is the task and capacity of postmodern works, in all times, to trigger our disbelief in given metanarratives.

CORE READING:

Week 18 (1/18) Final Exam (No Class)