

Professor: Dylan Riley
Course: 102 Contemporary Social Theory
Semester: Fall 2012
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Contemporary Social Theory: From Social Change to Social Reproduction

Marx, Durkheim, Weber and Mosca offered contrasting theories of social change. Yet each thinker understood modern society as dynamic, and transitional. In contrast to this classical tradition focusing on change, most contemporary social theories explain the reproduction of modern society: i.e. the reasons for its remarkable stability. In accounting for social stability contemporary theorists have creatively used the classical tradition. In this course we will review four main traditions of contemporary social theory: Western Marxism, Neo-Durkheimian Theory, Critical Theory, and Postmodernism/Post Structuralism.

Reader:

All the readings are available in the course reader that can be purchased from Copy Central at 2560 Bancroft Way. Copy Central's phone number is: 848-8649.

Your grade is based on four pieces of work.

Quiz (Multiple Choice): 10%
Section Participation: 20% (see handout)
Mid Term: 30%
Mini-Research Project: 20%
Final: 20%

Reading: The reading is very difficult. You should treat the readings with the same level of seriousness that you would say a physics textbook. You need to go over and over the

Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers. (Pp. 3-14; Pp. 229-238) What is civil society and what is the state?

September 11

Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. (Pp. 55-90) What is hegemony?

September 13

Anderson, Perry. 1965. "Problems of Socialist Strategy." (Pp. 221-290) in *Towards Socialism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. What are the two tactics of Social Democracy and how does Gramsci seek to transcend them?

September 18

Wrap up on Western Marxism.

September 20

Mid-Term

Neo-Durkheimian Theory

Talcott Parsons (1902-1979)

September 25

Parsons, Talcott. 1967. "Chapter 4. Some Comments on the Sociology of Karl Marx." Pp. 102-135 in *Sociological Theory and Modern Society*. New York: Free Press. What is Parson's critique of Marx?

September 27

Parsons, Talcott. 1942. "Some Sociological Aspects of Fascist Movements." Pp. 124-141 in *Essays in Sociological Theory*. Glencoe: Free Press. How does Parson's explain Fascism?

Ernest Gellner (1925-1995)

October 2

Gellner, Ernest. 1981. "Nationalism." *Theory and Society*. 10 (6): 753-776. What is the connection between industrialization, class and nation formation according to Gellner?

William Kornhauser (1925-2004)

October 4

November 1
Research Break

Post-Modernism/Post-Structuralism

Daniel Bell (1919-Present)

November 6
Mini Research Project Due. Wrap up on critical theory.

November 8
Bell, Daniel. 1976. "The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism." (Pp. 33-54) in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. London: Heinmann. What is the connection between capitalism and culture?

November 13
Bell, Daniel. 1976. "The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism." (Pp. 54-84) in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. London: Heinmann. How does the market influence the culture of capitalism?

Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007)

November 15
Baudrillard, Jean. 1981. "Chapter One. Sign-Function and Class Logic." Pp. 29-62 in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. Telos Press. What is Baudrillard's critique of the ideology of use value?

Michel Foucault (1926-1984)

November 20
Foucault, Michel. 1979. *Discipline and Punish*. New York: Vintage. Pp. 3-31; 170-194. What are the two modes of punishment that Foucault identifies? What is discipline?

November 27
Foucault, Michel. 1979. *Discipline and Punish*. Pp. 195-215; 216-228. How is discipline instituted? What is 'disciplinary society'?

November 29
Course wrap up

December 3-7