

HISTORY OF SOCIAL THEORY

A course on the history of social theory (ST) can be presented with two different emphases -- 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 still be essential to situate the ideas of any given writer in his or her historical milieu.

It is the hypothesis of this course that within our field there are essentially three theoretical traditions: a **marxist tradition**, a **sociological tradition** and an emergent **third tradition** that transcends both Marxism and sociology. In this view of theoretical traditions, sociology developed out of a critical dialogue with the writings of Marx and Engels and the Marxists that followed them, while the third tradition, often referred to as postmodernism, seeks to go beyond the optimistic accounts of history and the future shared by marxism and sociology. Accordingly, in the first semester we shall examine the Marxist tradition, beginning with Marx and Engels, passing rapidly through German Marxism (Kautsky, Bernstein, Luxemburg), stopping at Russian Marxism to study Lenin's treatise on the transition from capitalism to communism, moving on to Antonio Gramsci as the foremost "Western Marxist" and from there dealing with Third World Marxism as represented by Frantz Fanon. Next semester we will work through key representatives of the sociological tradition, Durkheim and Weber, followed by Foucault, our "postmodern" thinker, before ending with the feminism of Simone de Beauvoir, and two US feminists who have worked in the tradition Beauvoir inaugurated – Catherine MacKinnon and Patricia Hill Collins.

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 that threads through their works. That theme is the division of labor. This semester we begin with the formulations of Adam Smith and proceed to show how Marx and Engels moved both against and beyond Smith and how their theories in turn were advanced by Lenin, Gramsci and Fanon. Next semester we examine different criticisms of Smith, namely how Durkheim, Weber and Foucault as well as Beauvoir incorporate culture, ideology and politics within an expanded notion of the division of labor. In following this sequence in the study of the division of labor, we end up placing theorists themselves *within* and not outside the division of labor, thereby, questioning the foundations and assumptions of social theory.

While all our theorists agree that the division of labor has increased with the rise of industrialism, they do not agree on the forms it assumes or on the origins, conditions, growth, future and implications of increased specialization. What have been the responses of the above writers to one another's formulations? Taking each theorist in turn, do they contradict or elaborate the views of others? Can we say that there have been advances in our understanding of the division of labor since Adam Smith?

We shall start by asking Smith, Marx and Engels the following four sets of questions:

1. What are the forms of the division of labor? What are the specific arenas of activity that each theorist refers to when writing about the division of labor? What are the categories of people who engage in the same type of activity (e.g. genders, races, status groups, classes)? Are the different levels of division of labor quantitatively or qualitatively different?

2. What are the origins, mechanisms of development and future of the division of labor? For example does the division of labor appear spontaneously or by design? Does it result from competition among individuals? From struggle between classes? Is its development continuous or discontinuous? What do the writers consider to be the destiny of the division of labor?

3. What are the conditions of existence of the division of labor? For example is it necessary that it be regulated by force? Is a common set of values necessary? Is some overarching body required to organize the division of labor?

4. What are the consequences of the division of labor (a) for individuals and (b) for society as a whole? Are the consequences beneficial? Does the division of labor affect the distribution of wealth, the distribution of satisfying work, conflict and disorganization in society, etc?

A Reader containing extracts from Smith, Lenin, Gramsci and Fanon is available at Copy Central, 2576 Bancroft Way for \$27.75. *The Marx-Engels Reader* edited by Robert Tucker is available in the ASUC bookstore. We will also be making ample use of bcourses and I'll be tweeting on a regular basis.

There will be one mid-semester take-home examination and a final which will be will be an optional in-class or take-home examination based on questions distributed two weeks before. Each examination will count for 40% of the final grade and participation in sections for 20%.

Your Graduate Student Instructors are: Alex Barnard, Jesus Camacho, Allison Logan, Sarah Payne, William Welsh. My office hours are Tuesdays, 4-6 p.m. in Barrows 454. Please sign up ahead of time. I will also hold a special extra seminar, "Anything Goes," open to all students. It meets Thursdays, 4-6p.m. in Barrows 475, starting August 31st. Come along, speak your mind, ask your questions, join in the discussion or just listen.

Over the years I have discovered that one of the most fruitful ways of learning ST is from study groups that supplement the excellent work of your GSIs. These groups are usually spontaneously self-formed, becoming a stimulating way to become adept with social theory, and to help you prepare for the mid-term and final papers. As Marx and Engels say of communism, people develop their rich and varied abilities in *community with others*. These groups have formed the basis of life-time friendships. They become a way of living ST and making ST live. We encourage you to create your own groups but you can also contact your GSIs to help put you in touch with others similarly looking for companionship. Learning theory is like learning a foreign language, often best accomplished by practicing it collectively. When it comes to the writing of assignments and examinations, however, you must author your own work.

COURSE SCHEDULE

8/24 Introduction. What is social theory? What is the division of labor?

ADAM SMITH (1723-1790)

8/29 **What are the Meaning, Forms, Origins, Conditions of the Division of Labor?**
(Selected Readings from *The Wealth of Nations* in Reader)

8/31 **What are the Consequences of Division of Labor for Individual and Society?**
(Reader)

KARL MARX (1818-1883) AND FREDERICK ENGELS (1820-1895)

9/5 **Background:** *The Marx-Engels Reader*, pp.512-9; 577-8; 579-85; 681-2

9/7 **What are the Premises of All History?** (*The German Ideology*, pp.146-163)

9/12 **What are the two components of the Division of Labor? In the family? What are Classes?** (*The German Ideology*, pp.158-64; *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, pp.738-40).

9/14 **What are the Natural and Voluntary Divisions of Labor?** (*The German Ideology*, pp.160-1).
What is Communism? (*The German Ideology*, pp.160-5, 191-3, 197-200; *Capital, Vol.III*, p.441)

9/19 **History as succession of Modes of Production.** (*The German Ideology*, pp.151-5; 163-175). **What is the Feudal Mode of Production?** (*The German Ideology*, pp.151-5)

9/21 **What is the Capitalist Mode of Production? What is the Source of Profit?** (*Wage Labour and Capital*, pp.203-18)

9/26 **What are the Origins, Dynamics and Future of capitalism?** (*The German Ideology*, pp.176-86; *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, pp.700-717; and pp.718-724).

9/28 Continued.

10/3 **What are the dynamics of Class Struggle under capitalism?** (*The Communist Manifesto*, pp.469-83)

- 10/5 **What is the State? What is its relation to classes?** (*The German Ideology*, pp.186-8; *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, pp.711, 713; *The Communist Manifesto*, p.475).
- 10/10 **What are the seven postulates of Historical Materialism?** (*Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, pp.3-6).
- 10/12 **German Marxism: Orthodoxy, Revisionism, and Revolution** (Kautsky, Bernstein, Luxemburg. For context see, Engels, *The Tactics of Social Democracy*, pp.556-573.)
- 10/16 MID-SEMESTER TAKE HOME EXAMINATION DUE**

LENIN (Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov) (1870-1924)

There are 45 thick volumes of Lenin's Collected Works, but we shall be reading only one treatise, his most famous *State and Revolution* which elaborates Marx's theory of the transition from capitalism to communism. But first we have to place Lenin in the context of German Marxism.

- 10/17 **Film: Introduction to Lenin**
- 10/19 **What is the State, the Capitalist State, and Capitalist Democracy?** (*State and Revolution*, pp.311-325; 342-3; 360; 382).
- 10/24 **What is The Dictatorship of the Proletariat? What is its purpose?** (*State and Revolution*, pp.335-346; 367-384).
- 10/25 **FILM: SALT OF THE EARTH** (6.30-8.30p.m.)
- 10/26 **What is Communism? How will it appear?** (*State and Revolution*, pp.371-384).

ANTONIO GRAMSCI (1891-1937)

Gramsci is difficult! The collection of writings from prison (1929-1935) is not easy to decipher not only because Gramsci had to write in code to escape his censors but because his physical condition made it difficult for him to write more than notes. The writings should be understood as his reflections on the failed revolution in Italy of which he was a leading participant and the mixed success of the Russian revolution. Revolution in the West cannot follow the Bolshevik path to power. Rather than follow "war of movement" the "party" (The Modern Prince) must first adopt a war of position. Throughout Gramsci uses military metaphors to analyze politics. We will read only a small portion of *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. The selected sections contain what I regard to be Gramsci's core ideas. Within each section I have indicated particular paragraphs you should concentrate on understanding.

- pp.3-21: "The Intellectuals"
 Pp.123-4: Introduction to "The Modern Prince"
 Pp.125-133: "Brief Notes on Machiavelli's Politics"
 Pp.175-185: "Analysis of Situations. Relations of Force"
 Pp.229-245: "Political Struggle and Military War", "Transition from War of Maneuver to War of Position," "Politics and Military Science", "Sociology and Political Science"
 Pp.257-66: "The State"

10/31 **Introduction to Gramsci.** "Revolution Against 'Capital'" in *Reader*.

11/2 **State and Civil Society**

What is the State? (p.161, first new paragraph; p.80, footnote 49; p.56 footnote 5; p.244, line 7-14).

What is Civil Society? (pp.179, first new paragraph; p.243, first paragraph; p.238, first new paragraph).

11/7 **War of Position and War of Movement**

(p.243, first paragraph; p.235, new paragraph beginning line 8; p.233, first two full paragraphs; pp.238-9, the entire section; p.265, first new paragraph.)

The Party (p.133; p.265).

The Regulated Society (pp.257-65).

11/8 **FILM: ROSA LUXEMBURG** (6.30-9.00p.m.)

11/9 **Class Formation, Ideology and Intellectuals**

What are the three stages of class formation? (Last paragraph on p.180 to section end on p.185, particularly pp.180-182)

What is Ideology? (p.125 last line - p.126 line 4; p.9 last line - p.10, line 13).

What is an Intellectual? What are the differences between Organic and Traditional Intellectuals? (pp.3-10; 14-16).

FRANTZ FANON (1925-1961)

Frantz Fanon was born in the Caribbean Island of Martinique, colonized by the French. He went to university in France, where he became a psychiatrist. His early essays, *Black Skin, Whites Masks*, relate the crippling psychology of racial oppression, how "black" men and women confront racial hegemony, being excluded from the white world they seek to enter. After a brief return to Martinique, Fanon leaves for Algeria where he practices psychiatry and joins the struggle against French colonialism. His book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, theorizes the liberation movement. It has been an inspiration for Third World struggles not only in Africa but in the US within civil rights organizations, especially the Black Panthers, and more recently its influence can be seen in the Zapatista Movement in Chiapas. Fanon's theory of anti-colonial struggle can be seen as the extension of Gramsci's analysis to the Third World. Fanon contrasts the ways African countries move into the post-colonial era -- either a war of position from above in which colonial powers select a "well-groomed" successor national bourgeoisie or a war of movement from below in which a violent liberation struggle overthrows the colonial power. These are strategies for overturning colonial orders in Africa and elsewhere with their weak civil societies, but what relevance do they have for advanced capitalist countries with their stronger civil societies?

11/14 **Film: Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Masks**

11/16 **What is Decolonization?**

Transfer of Power vs. National Liberation (*The Wretched of the Earth*, pp.35-48; 88-95)

11/21 **What is the balance of social forces (Gramsci) in the colonial context?**

Colonial Administration, Settlers, Working Class, Lumpenproletariat, Peasantry, Organic and Traditional Intellectuals (*The Wretched of the Earth*, pp.102-147)

11/23 Thanksgiving Holiday

11/28 **What is the future of The African Revolution?**

Bourgeois Dictatorship (*The Wretched of the Earth*, pp.152-157)
Socialist Hegemony (*The Wretched of the Earth*, pp.185-205)

11/29 **FILM: BATTLE OF ALGIERS (6.30p.m.-9p.m.)**

11/30 **REVIEW**

12/4 – 12/8 **READING AND REVIEW WEEK**

12/11 **FINAL EXAMINATION DUE AT 11.30a.m.**