

# Contemporary Social Theory: From Social Change to Social Reproduction

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Spring 2025 • Tuesdays and Thursdays, 14:00–15:30 pm • Dwinelle 145

## Professor Dylan Riley

[riley@berkeley.edu](mailto:riley@berkeley.edu)

(510) 642-5225

## Office Hours

490 Social Sciences Building

Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:00–13:00

## Graduate Student Instructors

Tiffany Hamidjaja

[tiffanyhamidjaja@berkeley.edu](mailto:tiffanyhamidjaja@berkeley.edu)

Jessica Law

[jessicalaw@berkeley.edu](mailto:jessicalaw@berkeley.edu)

Nikki Lee

[nikkollette\\_lee@berkeley.edu](mailto:nikkollette_lee@berkeley.edu)

Anthony Palafox

[anthony.palafox@berkeley.edu](mailto:anthony.palafox@berkeley.edu)

William Welsh

[wwelsh@berkeley.edu](mailto:wwelsh@berkeley.edu)

## Grading

Your grade will be based on 4 pieces of work.

No incompletes will be given.

- Quiz: 3\*5%= 15% (multiple choice)
- Participation: 20% (see handout)
- Midterm: 25%
- Final: 40%

## Overview

Classical social theory primarily discusses social change, whether that be Marx's modes of production, Durkheim's forms of social solidarity, or Weber's focus on rationalization. Contemporary social theory, in contrast, focuses on the opposite issue. Namely, "Why, in the face of massive and persistent injustice, inequality and oppression, has modern society proved so basically stable?"

Theorists have focused mostly on five crucial mechanisms in answering this question:

- Imperialism
- Patriarchy
- Hegemony
- Reification
- Race

In working on these topics, theorists dramatically reconfigured the classical "canon" and its styles of reasoning. In this class, we will explore this exciting intellectual terrain together.

## Reader

All the readings are available in the course reader that can be purchased from Copy Central at 2411, Telegraph Avenue; Berkeley 94704. (510) 848–8649.

The readings are very difficult and should be treated with the same level of seriousness that you'd give a physics textbook—you'll need to go over and over the words and we'll spend a lot of time in class working out how to do these readings. So be attentive, be prepared, and be ready to learn.

## Course Schedule

Introduction	
January 21	Theories of social change and social reproduction: the meaning of “contemporary” social theory
Mechanism I: Imperialism	
January 23	Luxemburg, Rosa. 1921. The Rosa Luxemburg Reader, Pp. 32–70.
January 28	Lenin, Vladimir Il'ich. 1975. The Lenin Anthology, Pp. 204–274.
January 30	Rodney, Walter. 2018. How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, Pp. 106–174.
February 4	Fanon, Franz. 1963. The Wretched of the Earth, Pp. 35–106.
February 6	QUIZ #1
February 11	Film: Concerning Violence. This is available on Kanopy.
Mechanism II: Patriarchy	
February 18	Mackinnon, Catharine. 1989. Toward a Feminist Theory of the State. Pp. 1–80.
February 20	Mackinnon, Catharine. 1989. Toward a Feminist Theory of the State. 157–170.
February 25	Fraser, Nancy. 2020. Fortunes of Feminism: From State Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis. Pp. 71–111.
February 27	Fraser, Nancy. 2020. Fortunes of Feminism: From State Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis. Pp. 151–185; 283–307.
March 4	Butler, Judith. 2006. Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. Pp.vii–xxvii; 175–193.
March 6	Butler, Judith. 2006. Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. Pp. 175–193.
March 11	Review
March 13	Midterm
Mechanism III: Hegemony	
March 18	Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. Selections from the Prison Notebooks. New York: International Publishers. Pp. 210–278.

March 20	Anderson, Perry. 1965. "Problems of Socialist Strategy." (Pp. 221–290) in <i>Towards Socialism</i> . Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
April 1	Brenner, Robert. 1985. "The Paradox of Social Democracy", Pp. 32–86 in <i>The Year Left</i> . London: Verso.
April 3	Przeworski, Adam. 1986. <i>Capitalism and Social Democracy</i> . Pp. 7–46.  Wood, Ellen Meiksins. 2016. <i>Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism</i> . Pp. 204–237.
April 8	Quiz #2
<b>Mechanism IV: The Reification of Consciousness</b>	
April 10	Lukács, Georg. 1971. "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat." Pp. 83–110 in <i>History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics</i> . Cambridge: MIT Press.
April 15	Lukács, Georg. 1971. "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat." Pp. 110–222 in <i>History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics</i> . Cambridge: MIT Press. 110–222
April 17	Marcuse, Herbert. 1964. <i>One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society</i> . Pp. 123–199.
April 22	Quiz #3
<b>Mechanism V: Race</b>	
April 24	Dubois, William Edward Burghardt. 1998. <i>Black Reconstruction in America: 1860–1880</i> . Pp. 3–31; 237–324.  Fields, Barbara Jeanne. 1990. "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America." <i>New Left Review</i> . 181:95–118.  Fields, Barbara Jeanne. 2001. "'Origins of the New South' and the Negro Question." <i>The Journal of Southern History</i> . 67(4):811–826.
April 29	Arendt, Hannah. 1956. <i>The Origins of Totalitarianism</i> . Pp. 13–114.
May 1	Unit Review
May 6	Course Review
May 12	11:30–14:30