SOCIAL THEORY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE
Syllabus

HTS 3102 Amanda K. Damarin
Spring 2007 DM Smith 318; 404-894-7445
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207 DM Smith Office hours: Tues. 1-2 or by appt.

Course Overview
Social theory was born amidst industrial and political revolution; it aimed at analyzing,
interpreting, promoting, and criticizing the new modern social order. Much of this course is
devoted to understanding how three founding theorists—Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max
Weber—addressed issues of their day and, arguably, ours: the efficacy of individual acts in the
face of powerful and complex social forces, the social implications of technological and
economic progress, the role of faith and meaning in a rationalized and increasingly secular
world, the persistence and transformation of dramatic inequalities. In the latter part of the term
we will examine contemporary theorists. Some develop new ways of addressing questions these
same issues; others take up new questions or address the experiences of groups that were
marginal to classical theory. Classes and assignments are designed to deepen your understanding
of the theorists, but also to strengthen your ability to think critically, read closely, and construct
sophisticated written and oral arguments about their ideas and yours.

Requirements
This course involves intensive reading, thinking, discussion, and writing about social theory.
Requirements include:

Participation (10%)
Active engagement in discussions is essential to your success in this course. To participate
effectively, read the assigned materials and think about the questions in the study guide handout
and on the last page of the syllabus prior to class, and then arrive prepared to share your
thoughts. (It goes without saying that you must attend class in order to participate; nonetheless,
regular but silent attendance will not be considered “A” participation.)

Written Responses (15%)
Responses are one-page mini-essays on the week’s readings. They are due at the beginning of
the class for which the readings are assigned. You must complete 10 responses throughout the
semester, leaving three “free” weeks. Further instructions and specific questions to address will
be provided in class.

Short Papers (Lowest grade 15%, others 20% each; total 75%)
Four papers of approximately 5 pages each will be assigned throughout the term; due dates are
listed in the schedule below. The first three will focus on the classical theorists, Marx, Weber,
and Durkheim; the last will focus on the contemporary theorists. More detailed topics and
instructions will be provided as due-dates approach.
Policies

Late Policy
Late written responses will be given only partial credit. Late papers will be docked by the equivalent of one letter grade per week. Absolutely all late work—and any last-minute questions, pleas, excuses, etc.—must be submitted by 4:30 pm on Wednesday May 2, after which my in-box will be officially closed.

Grading:
Written responses will be graded using a check, check-plus check-minus system, where a check is considered satisfactory and equivalent to a low B. Grades will be based mostly on effort, i.e. whether your response shows evidence that you read thoroughly and made some attempt to synthesize, analyze, or critique the reading.
Papers will be assigned letter grades, including pluses and minuses. An “A” paper is one which meets the following criteria:
- Discussion of texts is thorough, relevant, and shows good understanding of authors’ ideas.
- Texts are quoted, paraphrased, and cited appropriately.
- Central thesis or question and subsequent discussion and conclusions contain in-depth analysis, comparison, criticism, and/or consideration of implications.
- Argument is logical, well-organized, clear, readable. (Papers will not be graded on grammar and spelling *per se*, but keep in mind that I can’t grade what I don’t understand.)

Honor Code
You are expected to adhere to the Georgia Tech Honor Code; please see me if you have any questions about how the code applies to the assignments in this course. The honor code can be found at: http://www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/integrity/policies/honor_code.php

ADAPTS
I am happy to work with the ADAPTS office to accommodate students requiring consideration due to disability. The adapts URL is http://www.adapts.gatech.edu.

Readings
Readings marked “WebCT” are available either to download from the course WebCT site; those marked “Purchase” can be found at Engineer’s bookstore.
Books for purchase include:

Notes:
(1) Read each week’s selections in the order listed on the syllabus; some build on others.
(2) Look out for **starred** page lengths so you can plan ahead for these unusually long reading assignments.
(3) You should be able to succeed in this course without reading any materials beyond those listed on the syllabus. I do not recommend consulting secondary sources, though you may if you wish. Beware: not all secondary sources are equally accurate or useful. In writing papers you must cite all sources consulted.
Schedule of Readings and Assignments

T 1/9   **Introduction**

Th 1/11  **Individuals and Social Order: Pre-Sociological Views**

T 1/16  **Durkheim I: Social (Dis)Integration**
Durkheim, *Suicide* *WebCT* (find two separate excerpts labeled Suicide 1 & 2), 33 pp.

Th 1/18  **Durkheim II: Varieties of Solidarity**

T 1/23  **Durkheim III: Beliefs and Rituals in Society**

Th 1/25  **Durkheim IV: Functionalism**
Finish *Elementary Forms* if necessary.

T 1/30  **Durkheim in Action: The Case of the Puritan Colonists**
Erikson, *Wayward Puritans*, Ch. 3. *WebCT*, **93 pp.**

Th 2/1   **No Reading. Catch-Up Day.**

F 2/2   **PAPER ONE DUE** in my mailbox, 110 Smith, by 4:30 pm.

T 2/6   **Marx I: Capitalist Exploitation 101**
From *The Marx-Engels Reader* (*Purchase*):
Capital Vol. One, Ch. X, Secs. 3-5 (pp. 367-376), 10 pp.;
“Wage Labour and Capital” (pp. 203-217), 15 pp.

Th 2/8  **Marx II: Alienation and Commodity Fetishism**
From *The Marx-Engels Reader* (*Purchase*):
“Estranged Labour,” in Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (pp. 70-81), 12 pp.
Capital Vol. One, Ch. I, Sec. 4 (pp. 319-329), 11 pp.

T 2/13  **Marx III: Materialist History**
From *The Marx-Engels Reader* (*Purchase*):
“German Ideology,” 149 bottom-165 middle, 172 top-174 bottom, 193-200, 18 pp.
Capital Vol. One, Chs. 31 & 32 (pp. 435-438), 4 pp.
Th 2/15  Marx IV: Workers of the World Unite
From The Marx-Engels Reader (Purchase):
“The Coming Upheaval” (pp. 218-219), 2 pp.
“Manifesto of the Communist Party” (pp. 473-491), 20 pp.

T 2/20  Marx in Action: Consent on the Shop Floor
Burawoy, “The Essence of the Capitalist Labor Process” and “Obscuring and

Th 2/22  Weber I: Social Action and Order; Bureaucracy
Weber, Economy and Society (excerpts), WebCT, **35 pp.**
Weber, “Bureaucracy” (excerpts), WebCT, **31 pp.**

T 2/27  PAPER TWO DUE. No Reading. Catch-Up Day.

Th 3/1  Weber II: Social Change and Modern Capitalism
The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (Purchase),
pp. xxviii-xlii (Author’s intro), 13-80, 102-125; total **107 pp.**
Try to read the whole things, but go at least through p. 80 for today.

T 3/6  Weber III: Social Change and Modern Capitalism, cont.
Finish the Protestant Ethic reading from last time.

Th 3/8  Social Interaction I: George Herbert Mead
Mead, “Self” (excerpts), WebCT, 43 pp.

T 3/13  Social Interaction II: Erving Goffman

Th 3/15  Weber and Interactionism in Action: Corporate Managers
Jackall, Moral Mazes (Purchase), Chs. 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, **108 pp.**
Try to read the whole thing, but go at least through Ch. 3 (p. 74) for today.

T 3/20 & Th 3/22 Spring Break

Finish up Moral Mazes from last time.

Th 3/29  Sociology’s Others: Race & Colonialism

T 4/3  PAPER THREE DUE. No Readings. Catch-Up Day
Th 4/5  Sociology’s Others: Women & Gender
De Beauvoir, The Second Sex (Introduction and Conclusion), WebCT, 34 pp.
Gilman, Excerpts from Women and Economics, WebCT, 9 pp.

T 4/10  Bourdieu: Complicating Class and Culture
Bourdieu, “Classes and Classifications” from Distinction, E-Reserves 18 pp.

Th 4/12  Bourdieu in Action: Respect in the Barrio and the Office
Bourgois, In Search of Respect (excerpt), WebCT, 22 pp.

T 4/17  Foucault and (Post)Modernity I

Th 4/19  Foucault and (Post)Modernity II

T 4/24  The Uses of Social Theory: A Modernist Perspective

Th 4/26  The Uses of Social Theory: Critical and Postmodern Perspectives
Hill-Collins, Black Feminist Thought, Chs. 2 (pp. 19-33), Ch. 10, WebCT, 33 pp.
Foucault, “Truth and Power” (excerpts), WebCT, 14 pp.

M 4/30  PAPER FOUR DUE in my mailbox in 110 Smith by 4:30 pm.
Central Questions in Social Theory

Use the following questions to orient yourself to the readings throughout the semester.

**Agency and Structure:** Are individual and collective actions driven by will, purpose, or some other form of human agency, or are they shaped by larger social structures such as class divisions, group relations, or cultural formations? Is action voluntary or determined?

**Structure and Culture:** Are our activities and ideas shaped mostly by the larger beliefs and values of our surrounding cultural environment, or do they reflect social structure and our positions within it? How are cultural and structural forces related? Is culture or structure more important in shaping individual action, social organization, and history?

**Order and Change:** What is the glue that keeps people living and working together in groups and societies rather than splintering apart? How are social stability and order created and maintained? Is social order voluntary or imposed, formal or informal, hierarchical or egalitarian, rational or irrational? How do social orders change over time? Do they generally progress, growing more complex, rational, just, or liberating—or not?

**Human Nature, Difference, and Inequality:** Is there any single, universal human nature that transcends all differences of class, status, gender, race, nation, etc.? Which are the most important differences among individuals or groups in our own society and in others? Are these differences natural or social in origin? How are differences related to distributions of wealth, prestige, power, and other social “goods,” and hence to inequality?

**Knowledge:** What is knowledge? How does it differ from faith or opinion? What makes knowledge valid or true—and what does “true” mean? What are the origins of knowledge? How is it acquired and distributed? What role does knowledge play in everyday life? What role should knowledge—especially scientific knowledge—play in politics and social policy?

**Theorizing:** What is the purpose of social theory? What constitutes valid theory? Should social theory be value-neutral, and can it be? What role should social theory play in social research? In social life?