

University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill

Soci250-001 Sociological Theory

Summer I 2009

Professor François Nielsen

1 Times, Places & Contacts

Your Presence Is Required on This Date:

- TBA (Midterm)
- Tue 16 Jun 3:00–6:00 PM (Final)

No Exception – You must drop the course if you cannot be present on this date.

Classes Meet

- Mon, Tue, Thu 3:15–5:50 PM in Hanes 107

Instructor

- Professor François Nielsen – Email: francois_nielsen@unc.edu Office: Hamilton 163
Hours: by appointment Phone: 962-5064 Fax: 962-7568
- Web site <http://www.unc.edu/~nielsen>

Teaching Assistant

- There is no TA for this course

2 Course Description & Goals

I use the terms *sociological theory* and *social theory* interchangeably to mean the set of theories and approaches developed by sociologists and others for understanding society.¹ As members of a society we all use theories in order to make sense of our lives and the institutions, organizations, and groups around us. The authors we will study in this class have created complex explanations of the social world. Many of the theorists we are studying are no longer living. We continue to read their work because their ideas transcend space and time and still contribute to an understanding of our contemporary world. We will read both classical theorists (such as Marx, Pareto, Weber and Durkheim) as well as more contemporary authors. It is important to realize that these varied approaches to understanding social life are not presented here as the truth. We will see that these social thinkers quite often do not study the same social phenomena, and even when they do chances are they

¹This section is adapted from the syllabus of the course *Social Theory* taught by Indermohan Virk at Indiana University at Bloomington.

will disagree on the proper way to understand them. I do not expect you to agree, or even be interested in all these “dead Germans (or French, or Italians)”. In fact I disbelieve quite a bit of this myself, as will quickly become obvious. This course will have met its main goal if you come out of it able to comfortably assert that “the King is naked!”, while also empathizing with the thought processes of the thinkers who have produced these sometimes grand and inspiring ideas about the social world.

3 Readings

3.1 Books

Most readings are from the following books, available at the bookstore:

Calhoun, Craig, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk, eds. Forthcoming 2007. *Classical Sociological Theory*. 2nd edition. Blackwell.

Calhoun, Craig, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk, eds. Forthcoming 2007. *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. 2nd edition. Blackwell.

In addition, the following two books are *recommended* for background reading:

Aron, Raymond. 2004. *Main Currents in Sociological Thought, Vol. 1: Montesquieu, Comte, Marx, de Tocqueville, & Sociologists and the Revolution of 1848*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Aron, Raymond. 2004. *Main Currents in Sociological Thought, Vol. 2: Durkheim, Pareto, Weber*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

3.2 Additional Readings

Additional readings are available as pdf files from the course site. A password is needed to access some of these documents.

3.3 Class Notes and Presentations

Lecture slides and student presentations and other documents will be linked to this syllabus for each class. See course schedule. You can download or print these documents as you wish. I must reserve the right to revise/update the slides, presentations and other documents at any time during the session.

4 Exams & Requirements

4.1 Honor Code

The Honor Code will be in force for all examinations and assignments

For more information on student duties under the Honor Code please see

<http://honor.unc.edu/students/rights.html>

Please note in particular the following section:

[It is the responsibility of students] To maintain the confidentiality of examinations by divulging no information concerning an examination, directly or indirectly, to another student yet to write that same examination.

However in preparing team presentations collaboration among members of a team as well as with students outside the team is allowed and encouraged. All sources (material or non-material) are to be acknowledged in the presentation (just as one does in a scientific or scholarly paper).

4.2 Requirements

Your overall grade in the class will be based on three requirements.

(1) Student presentations (60% of course grade)

Each student will prepare and present individually 2 or 3 presentations of readings, typically at different class periods. (At the time of writing there are 15 students registered with 41 presentation topics, so most students will have 3 topics and a few student only 2.)

Presentation topics are numbered R1 to R41 on the course outline. A typical presentation focuses on one of the readings and consists of:

1. Summary of the reading (2 or 3 pages, no more). You should bring enough photocopies to class for everyone present. (Alternatively, send the electronic copy of the document to me in sufficient time that I can make copies at the Sociology department.)
2. Include in your presentation two or three questions for class discussion. These can refer to passages of the reading that you feel need clarification, or articulations of the argument that you think have interesting implications, etc.
3. *Due at the next class period (or the next day for the last class):* 3 multiple-choice questions about the reading or the class discussion. The final exam will be based in large part on the questions provided by students. I will maintain a cumulative file of the questions linked to the syllabus.
4. At the next class period (or the next day for the last class) also email me an electronic version of your reading summary, discussion questions and multiple-choice questions.

A few of the presentation topics such as R33, R40 and R41 are not based on a reading. These special topics will be discussed in class.

(2) Final (30% of course grade)

The final will take place on

- Tue 16 Jun 3:00–6:00 PM

The final will consist of multiple-choice questions. The final is cumulative and based in large part on edited versions of questions provided by student presenters.

As the final is a multiple-choice exam you need to bring

- a “bubble sheet” for electronic scanning, used to be available free of charge at Student Stores, now a small price
- a pencil (#2 preferred) with an *effective* eraser (soft, pink, ..., *not* hard and all dried up!) so you can erase your answer completely if you change your mind

For examples of multiple-choice questions of the type used in the exams click on

- A sampler of multiple-choice questions

(3) Class Participation (10% of course grade)

Class participation consists of attendance (5%) and participation proper (5%).

1. Attendance will be taken beginning with the second class. You can miss 2 out of the 12 scheduled classes without giving a reason. After that each unexcused absence will be penalized 1/2 point up to a maximum of 5 points. You *must* be present for the final, and it is considered extremely bad form to be absent without a valid excuse on a day you are scheduled to present.
2. Your participation score will be based on your contribution to class discussions. Many intelligent contributions to class discussions bring higher score. A range of contributions will be deemed adequate, so you need not worry if you are just the quiet sort.

4.3 Grading

Presentations and final are both scored on a percent scale from 0 to 100; class participation is scored on a scale from 0 to 10. The grade for the course is calculated as the weighted sum of scores

$$CG = 0.60 \times PRES + 0.30 \times FINA + PART$$

where PRES is your combined presentations score (on 100), FINA is “adjusted” final score (on 100), and PART is your participation score (on 10). (For the meaning of “adjusted” see below.)

Conversion to a letter grade is done *only once* at the end of the semester to determine the final grade. *In principle*, the correspondence with letter grades is as follows:

A	=	90–100
B	=	80–89
C	=	70–79
D	=	60–69
F	=	less than 60

Pluses or minuses are added for scores near the cutoff points.

4.4 Posting of Grades

Exam scores and final grades will be made available through the course site.

4.5 Make-Up Exams (Lack Thereof)

- A make-up exam will be arranged only for true emergencies. The instructor must be notified before the exam takes place (if at all possible). A desire to leave early before the end of the semester, vacation rentals, plane reservations, marriage plans, marriage plans of relatives or friends, other appointments interfering with the exam schedule (including job interviews and routine doctor appointments), *or other exams scheduled on the same day* are emphatically *not* valid reasons for requesting a make-up.
- *All make-up exams are oral exams.* Although a few students do well on oral exams, my experience from other classes is that make-up grades tend to be lower than grades on the regular multiple choice exams.
- There is *absolutely* no make-up for the final exam. Students who anticipate that they will not be able to take the final on the announced date must drop the class at this time.

The following is a useful short version of the Exam Make-Up Policy:

There Are No Make-Up Exams In This Course

5 FAQs

Frequent questions and their answers will be added later on here.

6 Outline & Readings Schedule

Key to Readings:

ClST refers to Calhoun et al. *Classical Sociological Theory*

CoST refers to Calhoun et al. *Contemporary Sociological Theory*

Important Dates:

1. Assigned Presentations (click to see list)
2. Tue 16 Jun 3:00–6:00 Final (presence required)

Class 1 – Tue 12 Jun Introduction – Nature of Sociological Theory

Required readings:

- No readings this week

Activities:

- First contact & introductions
- Overview of syllabus
- Lecture on the roots of sociological theory
- Preliminary assignment of two presentation topics per student. Volunteers to present topics R1 to R4 on Thu 14 May are welcome. Remaining topics to be assigned later in the session.

- Lloyd Kramer. “Scientific Origins of the Enlightenment.” Lecture 2 in *European Thought & Culture in the 19th Century* (Part I, Tape 1, Lecture 2) [videorecording 65-V9165, 40 min.]. If time permits: “Emergence of the Modern Intellectual.” Lecture 3.

Additional sources:

- Class 1 notes

Class 2 – Thu 14 May Roots of Sociological Theory

Required readings:

- R1** Jean-Jacques Rousseau “Of the Social Contract” CIIST pp. 28–38
- R2** Immanuel Kant “What Is the Enlightenment?” CIIST pp. 39–43
- R3** Adam Smith “Of the Division of Labor” CIIST pp. 44–54
- R4** Alexis de Tocqueville “Democracy in America” CIIST pp. 55–71

Additional sources:

- Class 2 notes
- “Introduction to Part I” Clst pp. 19–27 (See Rousseau reading.)
- Raymond Aron “Alexis de Tocqueville” Aron I pp. 237–302
- “Enlightenment” (Wikipedia article)

Class 3 – Mon 18 May Marx I – Old Marx

Required readings:

- R5** Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels. “Manifesto of the Communist Party” CIIST pp. 96–111
- R6 (a)** Karl Marx. “Wage-Labour and Capital” CIIST pp. 122–129
- R6 (b)** Karl Marx. “Classes” CIIST p. 130

Activity:

- *Last Years of the Tsar* [video 65-V2632, 19 min.] & *Lenin Prepares for Revolution* [video 65-V2630, 21 min.]

Additional sources:

- Class 3 notes
- “Introduction to Part II” CIIST pp. 73–81 (See “German Ideology” reading)
- Raymond Aron “Karl Marx” Aron I pp. 145–236. See especially excerpt from the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* pp. 154–156.
- “Karl Marx” (Wikipedia article)
- *Karl Marx and marxism* [video 65-V6933, 52 min.]

Class 4 – Tue 19 May Marx II – Young Marx & Legacy

Required readings:

- R7** Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels. “The German Ideology” CIIST pp. 82–85
- R8** Karl Marx. “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844” CIIST pp. 86–95

R9 Karl Marx. “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte” CIST pp. 112–121

R10 Lenski, Gerhard. 2001. “New Light on Old Issues: The Relevance of ‘Really Existing Socialist Societies’ for Stratification Theory.” Pp. 77–84 in *Social Stratification*, edited by David B. Grusky. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Activity:

- *Red Flag, 1917* [video 65-V6977, 56 min.]

Additional sources:

- Class 4 notes
- See also Class 3

Class 5 – Thu 21 May Pareto

Required readings:

R11 Pareto, Vilfredo. [1927] 1971. *Manual of Political Economy*. (Translated by Ann S. Schwier.) New York: Augustus M. Kelley. (Chapter VII Paragraphs 11–31 [pp. 284–293])

R12 Pareto, Vilfredo. “Elites and Their Circulation.” Pp. 34–39 in Heller, C. 1987. *Structured Social Inequality*. 2nd ed. New York: MacMillan.

Additional sources:

- Class 5 notes
- Raymond Aron “Vilfredo Pareto.” Aron II pp. 119–217
- François Nielsen. 2007. “Inequality, Pareto, & Sociology: The Route Not Taken.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 50 (5): 619–638
- “Vilfredo Pareto” (Wikipedia article)

Class 6 – Tue 26 May Durkheim

Required readings:

R13 “The Rules of Sociological Method” CIST pp. 139–157

R14 “The Division of Labor in Society” CIST pp. 158–180

R15 “The Elementary Forms of Religious Life” CIST pp. 181–192

R16 “Suicide” CIST pp. 193–202

Additional sources:

- Class 6 notes (Spring 2007 Team 1)
- Raymond Aron “Emile Durkheim” Aron II pp. 11–117
- Introduction to Part III – Emile Durkheim (see “Rules of Sociological Method” reading) CIST pp. 131–138.

Class 7 – Thu 28 May Weber I

Required readings:

R17 “‘Objectivity’ in Social Science” CIST pp. 211–217

R18 “Basic Sociological Terms” CIST pp. 218–227

R19 “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism” CIST pp. 228–246

Activity:

- Leni Riefenstahl. *Triumph of the Will* [DVD 65-DVD1038, 120 min; only part of film will be shown]

Additional sources:

- Class 7 notes (Spring 2007 Team 2)
- Introduction to Part IV – Max Weber (see “Objectivity’ in Social Science” reading) ClST pp. 205–210.
- Raymond Aron “Max Weber” Aron II pp. 219–317
- “Max Weber” (Wikipedia article)

Class 8 – Mon 1 Jun Weber II

Required readings:

- R20** “The Distribution of Power Within the Political Community: Class, Status, Party” ClST pp. 247–255
- R21** “The Types of Legitimate Domination” ClST pp. 256–263
- R22** “Bureaucracy” ClST pp. 264–273

Additional sources:

- Class 8 notes (Spring 2007 Team 3)

Class 9 – Tue 2 Jun Functionalism: Merton

Required readings:

- R23** Robert Merton. “Manifest and Latent Functions” ClST pp. 441–447
- R24** Robert Merton. “On Sociological Theories of the Middle Range” ClST pp. 448–459
- R25** Robert Merton. “Social Structure and Anomie” ClST pp. 460–470

Additional sources:

- Class 9 notes (Spring 2007 Team 4)
- “Introduction to Structural Functionalism” (ClST pp. 399–406. See first Parsons reading above.)
- Talcott Parsons. “Sex Roles in the American Kinship System” Pp. 300–303 in Lemert, Charles *Social Theory* (3d edition)
- “Talcott Parsons” Wikipedia article.
- “Robert K. Merton” Wikipedia article.

Class 10 – Thu 4 Jun Structuralism

Required readings:

- R26** de Saussure, Ferdinand. “Arbitrary Social Values & the Linguistic Sign” Pp. 148–156 in Lemert, Charles *Social Theory* (3d edition)
- R27** Lévi-Strauss, Claude. “The Structural Study of Myth” Pp. 309–314 in Lemert, Charles *Social Theory* (3d edition)
- R28** Lacan, Jacques. “The Mirror Stage” Pp. 336–338 in Lemert, Charles *Social Theory* (3d edition)

Activity:

- *Jacques Lacan parle/Jacques Lacan Speaks* [DVD 65-DVD3667, 60 min.; Check missing?]

Additional sources:

- Class 10 notes (Nielsen)
- “Ferdinand de Saussure” Wikipedia article.
- “Structuralism” Wikipedia article (March 2007; broader & vaguer definition of *structuralism*)
- “Structuralisme” French Wikipedia article (March 2007; more focused, in French)
- “Claude Lévi-Strauss” Wikipedia article.
- “Jacques Lacan” Wikipedia article.

Class 11 – Mon 8 Jun Micro-Sociological Analysis

Required readings:

- R29** Alfred Schutz. “The Phenomenology of the Social World” CoST pp. 32–42.
- R30** Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckmann. “The Social Construction of Reality” CoST pp. 43–51.
- R31** Erving Goffman. “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life” CoST pp. 52–66.
- R32** Herbert Blumer. “Symbolic Interactionism” CoST pp. 67–78.

Additional sources:

- Class 11 notes (Kolb)
- “Introduction to Micro-Sociological Analysis” CoST pp. 23–31.

Class 12 – Tue 9 Jun Rational Model (Spring 2007 Team 5)

Required readings:

- R33** Summary of Microeconomics. (Use own sources to create a very short summary of microeconomic theory covering principle of maximization of utility up to mechanism of supply and demand.)
- R34** George C. Homans. “Social Behavior as Exchange.” CoST pp. 81–98.
- R35** Mancur Olson. “The Logic of Collective Action.” CoST pp. 111–115.
- R36** James S. Coleman. “Rights to Act.” CoST pp. 116–124.

Additional sources:

- Class 12 notes (Spring 2007 Team 5)
- “Introduction to Exchange & Rationality.” CoST pp. 79–87.

Class 13 – Thu 11 Jun Pierre Bourdieu

Required readings:

- R37** Pierre Bourdieu. “Social Space & Symbolic Space.” CoST pp. 267–276.
- R38** Pierre Bourdieu. “Structures, *Habitus*, Practices.” CoST pp. 277–289.
- R39** Pierre Bourdieu. “The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed.” CoST pp. 290–306.

Activity:

R40, R41 Project *Gala Monet*

Additional sources:

- Class 13 notes (Spring 2007 Team 7)
- “The Sociological Theory of Pierre Bourdieu.” CoST pp. 257–266.

Tue 16 Jun 3:00–6:00 PM Final Exam

Last modified 9 May Feb 2009