

“Social Theory in Comparative and International Perspective”

SIS-804-001

Spring 2017, Thursdays, 11:20 AM – 2:10 PM, Room SIS 348

Contact Information:

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Office Hours: Mondays, 5:30 to 7:00 PM; Wednesdays, 4:30 to 7:00 PM; or by appointment

Introduction

“Social Theory” is a sweeping body of arguments and research that transcends the social sciences and the humanities. International Relations is a field that is increasingly interdisciplinary in its research program and in its theoretical repertoire. The recent predominance of constructivist theories and methodologies in particular indicates that scholars of international relations are increasingly conversant and indeed, knowledgeable about the traditions of social theory that have developed largely outside the field of international relations. This course is not intended to provide a survey of international relations social theory but rather, review the larger scope of writings and debate about social theory – that ultimately informs research in international relations and will contribute to your ability to develop a research program as well as contribute to a wider community of scholarship.

Learning Outcomes

- Gain a basic understanding of the trajectory of social theory, including key thinkers, questions, and paradigmatic approaches to social science and humanistic inquiry.
- Be conversant in major theoretical traditions in social theory, so as to understand and learn from a range of research projects across disciplines.
- Be able to critically review and apply social theoretic perspectives to problems and questions in international relations and international relations theory.
- Be able to write an informed, critical argument that applies social theory to international relations or the student’s own research interests.

Required Texts

The following books are required:

- Lemert, Charles. (2016). *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*. Sixth Edition. Westview Press.

- Durkheim, E. *The Division of Labor in Society*.
- Weber, M. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism: and other writings*.
- Foucault, M. *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*.
- Bourdieu, P. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.
- Columba Peoples and Nick Vaughan-Williams. (2010). *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*. Routledge.

All other readings will be on Blackboard.

Assignments:

You will write three six-page papers during the semester, each worth 30% of your grade. Topics will be assigned closer to the due dates (February 16th, March 23rd, and April 20th).

A further 10% will be based on participation. For the first four weeks, two of you will be responsible for presenting the readings to the class. That means summarizing the main aspects of the approach, and also raising critical questions for discussion. I expect everyone to have done the readings and be prepared to discuss them.

In order to prepare you for orals, at the end of class each week each of you will be asked a question related to what we've studied so far, and will answer extemporaneously, speaking for no more than two minutes. This will give you practice thinking on your feet and speaking about theory in front of others.

Course Schedule:

Week One - 01/19/17: Introduction

What is "social theory"? Why do we study it? Goals for the course.

Week Two - 01/26/17: Marx

- Lemert, the introduction and the Marx and Engels readings (i.e. pp. 1-54)
- Introduction to the Grundrisse (the whole thing is online at https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Grundrisse.pdf and elsewhere, but just read the intro.)

Week Three – 02/02/17: Weber

- Lemert section on Weber. (pp. 82-101)
- All of *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Week Four: 02/09/17: Durkheim

- Lemert's Durkheim section (pp. 59-80)
- All of *The Division of Labor in Society*.

Week Five: 02/16/17: Gramsci and Frankfurt School

- Antonio Gramsci, selections from *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. (on Blackboard)
- Perry Anderson, *The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci*
- Lemert: Horkheimer and Adorno, Heidegger, Mannheim (pp. 173-181), Benjamin (pp. 205-207)

Paper One Due.

Week Six - 02/23/17: Structuralism

- Saussure reading from Lemert (pp. 118-124)
- Levi-Strauss reading from Lemert (pp. 245-249)
- Althusser reading from Lemert (pp. 251-254)

Week Seven – 03/02/17: Foucault

- All of *Discipline and Punish*
- “Society Must be Defended” Chapter 11 (on Blackboard)

Week Eight - 03/09/17: Governmentality. Structure/Agency.

- Foucault, M. “Governmentality.” Chapter 4 in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in governmentality*. University of Chicago Press. 1991. (On Blackboard).
- Giddens reading in Lemert. Pp. 375-380
- Habermas, “The Tasks of a Critical Theory of Society” (On Blackboard).
- “Poststructuralism and international political sociology,” Chapter 4 in *Critical Security Studies*.

Spring Break – 03/16/17

Week Nine - 03/23/17: Post-Colonial theory

- Fanon reading from Lemert (pp 283-286)
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. “Introduction” (pp. 1-28). (on Blackboard).
- Spivak, G. C. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. C. Nelson and AL Grossberg, 271-313. (on Blackboard).
- Achille Mbembe reading in Lemert. (pp. 485-488.)
- “Postcolonial perspectives,” Chapter 3 in *Critical Security Studies*

Paper Two Due.

Week Ten – 03/30/17: Development

- Escobar, Arturo. “The Making and Unmaking of the Third World through Development.” Chapter 8 in *The Post-Development Reader*. Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree, eds. Zed Books. Pp. 85-93. (On Blackboard).
- Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. Yale University Press. Chapters 1 and 2. (on Blackboard).
- “Human security and development,” Chapter 8 in *Critical Security Studies*.

Week Eleven – 04/06/17: Bourdieu

- Bourdieu reading in Lemert, pp. 336-340.
- All of *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.
- Pouliot, V., & Cornut, J. (2015). Practice theory and the study of diplomacy: A research agenda. *Cooperation and Conflict* Vol 50, Issue 3, pp. 297 - 315. (on Blackboard).

Week Twelve- 04/13/17: Feminism

- Audre Lorde reading in Lemert. Pp. 340-342
- Nancy Hartsock reading in Lemert. Pp. 380-384.
- Saskia Sassen reading in Lemert. Pp. 473-477.
- Patricia Hill Collins reading in Lemert. Pp 413-421.
- Enloe, C. (2014). *Bananas, beaches and bases: Making feminist sense of international politics*. Univ of California Press. Chapter 1, “Gender Makes the World Go Round.” Pp. 1-36. (on Blackboard)
- “Feminist and gender approaches to security,” Chapter 2 in *Critical Security Studies*.

Week Thirteen – 04/20/17: Globalization, Networks, bare life.

- Appadurai, A. (1996). “Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy.” Chapter 2 in *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization*. U of Minnesota Press. Pp. 27-47. (on Blackboard).
- David Harvey reading in Lemert. Pp. 469-470.
- Manuel Castells reading in Lemert. Pp. 471-473.
- Deleuze & Guattari reading in Lemert. Pp. 513-514.
- Agamben reading in Lemert. Pp. 514-517.
- Latour reading in Lemert. Pp. 518-521.
- Acuto, M., & Curtis, S. (2014). Assemblage thinking and international relations. In *Reassembling International Theory* (pp. 1-15). Palgrave Macmillan UK. (on Blackboard).

Paper Three Due.

Week Fourteen - 04/27/17: Summary. Social theory and IR.

- Cox, R. W. (1981). Social forces, states and world orders: beyond international relations theory. *Millennium*, 10(2), 126-155. (On Blackboard).

- “Critical Theory and security.” Chapter 1 in *Critical Security Studies*.

Final Exam – 05/04/2017. Written Qualifying Exams.