

University of Cambridge

Faculty of Human, Social, and Political Science

HSPS Tripos Part IIA, Soc 2, for the academic year 2021-2022

Social Theory

Paper Contacts

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Outline of the Course

Aims and Objectives

- To provide students with a comprehensive introduction to the major traditions and key contributions to contemporary social theory.
- To enable students to read the work of major authors in some depth.
- To develop analytical skills and intellectual understanding so that students can engage in an analysis of theoretical debates in an informed and rigorous manner.
- To explain the relevance of contemporary social theory for substantive problems of social and political analysis.

Course content

This paper introduces students to a range of well-defined topics, from the Frankfurt School to the most recent work on risk, identity, difference, sexuality and feminist theory. Students should acquire a firm grasp of key theoretical approaches enabling them to read the work of contemporary social theorists in some depth. The period covered runs from 1920 to the present day, but the emphasis is on recent (post-1960) developments. The traditions and orientations are situated in their social and intellectual context, and the writings of key thinkers are examined textually in detail. The strengths and limitations of different perspectives are discussed and, where appropriate, their relevance to social research explored. Among the perspectives and authors covered are the following: pragmatism, Mead and symbolic interactionism; Goffman; existentialism, structuralism, post-structuralism; Bourdieu; Latour; Foucault; theories of sexuality; Arendt; the Frankfurt School and critical theory; Habermas; Bauman; the development of Marxist thought in the twentieth century; the cultural turn; the post-human; feminist theory; decolonial, postcolonial and subaltern studies.

Modes of teaching and assessment

The paper is taught by lectures, supervisions and revision classes around themes and texts. Lectures will provide an overview of issues and debates and detailed discussions of key texts. Supervision is essential for this paper and should be arranged in consultation with a Director of Studies. Supervisions will be directly concerned with the general concepts, texts and theories that have been covered in the lectures. It is essential for students to have 6 supervisions (plus revision sessions) and to write a minimum of four essays over the course of the year.

There are classes and lectures in the Easter term, both for revision, and to make connections between the different components of the paper. The exam paper is undivided and covers the lecture programme. Students will be required to pick three questions in the exam.

Supervision

Supervisions will be organised by the course organiser in the first lecture.

How this Paper/Course Relates to Others?

This paper builds further on the first-year sociology paper (Soc1) as it elaborates on the contemporary relevance of the sociological classics, in particular Marx, Du Bois, Weber and Durkheim. For example, this paper discusses Marx's and Weber's influence on Sartre and the Frankfurt School, Du Bois's influence on contemporary 'Black social theory', or Durkheim's impact on structuralist thought. It also discusses recent reappropriations of Marx and Durkheim in the humanities and social sciences. The paper is particularly useful for understanding some of the theoretical debates in the other sociology papers. It provides an ideal basis for the advanced social theory paper (Soc6). This paper also goes well with history of political theory papers.

Outline of Lectures

Michaelmas 2021

Lectures

Lecture 1. Introduction (PB)

The American tradition of micro-sociology

Lectures 1-2. American pragmatism, G.H. Mead and symbolic interactionism (PB)

Lecture 3. Erving Goffman and the sociology of everyday life (PB)

The French connection

Lecture 4. Existentialism and existentialist feminism: Sartre, de Beauvoir (PB)

Lecture 5. Existentialism and anti-colonial movements: Fanon, Biko (PB)

Lecture 6. Structuralism: Claude Lévi-Strauss (PB)

Lecture 7-8. Practice theory: Pierre Bourdieu (PB)

Lecture 9. Actor network theory: Bruno Latour (PB)

Lecture 10. Falsificationism and the rediscovery of *homo economicus* (PB)

Lecture 11-12. Michel Foucault: Archaeology, Genealogy, Ethics (FCS)

Race, ethnicity and gender

Lectures 13-4. Pragmatism, 'Black social theory' and the sociology of knowledge (AM)

Lecture 15-16. Gender and sexuality (SP)

Readings

1. Introduction: What social theory is, and its relevance to sociology, politics and psychology

Baert, P. and F.C. Silva 2010. *Social Theory in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*. Cambridge: Polity.

*Benzecry, C., M. Krause and I. Reed (eds.) 2017. *Social Theory Now*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dillon, Michele (2020) *Introduction to Sociological Theory*. Oxford: Wiley.

Jones, P. and L. Bradbury. 2017. *Introducing Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity. (3rd edition)

Inglis, D. & C. Thorpe. 2018. *An Invitation to Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity. (2nd edition)

Seidman, S. 2016. *Contested Knowledge: Social Theory Today*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. (6th edition)

Stones, R. (ed.) 2017. *Key Sociological Thinkers*, 3rd ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Turner, B.S. (ed.) 2016. *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. (new edition)

Alatas, S.F., and Vineeta S. 2016. *Sociological Theory Beyond the Canon*. London: Palgrave.

1-2. American pragmatism, G.H. Mead and symbolic interactionism

Blumer, H. 1969. *Symbolic Interactionism; Perspectives and Method*. New York: Prentice Hall.

Joas, H. 1995. *G.H. Mead*. Cambridge: Polity.

*Mead, G.H. 1934. *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

*Mead, G.H. 2011. *Mead. A Reader*. London/New York: Routledge. (Especially Chapters 1-6)

Plummer, K. 1991. *Symbolic Interactionism* (volumes 1 & 2). Aldershot: Edward Elgar.

- Rock, P. 1979. *The Making of Symbolic Interactionism*. London: MacMillan.
- Silva, F.C. 2007. *G.H. Mead; A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Silva, F.C. 2008. *Mead and Modernity; Science, Selfhood, and Democratic Politics*. Lanham, Md: Lexington Books. (Especially Chapters 1, 9-12)

Essay questions:

What's distinctive about G.H. Mead's account of the self?
For G.H. Mead, in what sense is the self a social self?

3. Erving Goffman and the sociology of everyday life

- Burns, T. 1992. *Erving Goffman*. London: Routledge.
- Giddens, A. 1987. *Social Theory and Modern Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity. (Especially Chapter 5)
- *Goffman, E. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- *Goffman, E. 1961. *Asylums*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- *Goffman, E. 1964. *Stigma*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Goffman, E. 1979. *Gender Advertisements*. Boston, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Goffman, E. 1972. *Encounters; Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction*. London: Penguin.
- Goffman, E. 1983. 'The Interaction Order'. *American Sociological Review*, 48(1), 1-17.
- Hogan, B. 2010. 'The presentation of self in the age of social media: distinguishing performances and exhibitions online'. *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society* 30(6), 377-386.
- *Manning, P. 1992. *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Shulman, D. 2016. *The Presentation of Self in Contemporary Social Life*. London: Sage.
- Jenkins, R. 2008. 'Erving Goffman: A Major Theorist of Power?' *Journal of Power* 1 (2): 157-68.
- Tyler, I., and T. Slater. 2018. 'Rethinking the Sociology of Stigma'. *The Sociological Review* 66 (4): 721-43.

Essay questions:

Critically assess Goffman's views on the role of stigma in modern society.
How can Goffman's analysis be used to understand power dynamics in society?

4. Existentialism and existentialist feminism: Sartre, de Beauvoir

- *Baert, P. 2015. *The Existentialist Moment; The Rise of Sartre as a Public Intellectual*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Baert, P., M. Morgan and R. Ushiyama (2021) Existence theory; Outline of a Theory of Social Behaviour. *Journal of Classical Sociology*.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1468795X21998247>
- *de Beauvoir, S. 1972. *The Second Sex*. London: Penguin. (originally: 1949) (Especially Book Two, Parts IV-VII)
- *Sartre, J-P. 1973. *Existentialism and Humanism*. London: Methuen. (originally: 1946)
- *Sartre, J-P. 1976. *Anti-Semite and Jew*. New York: Schocken. (originally: 1948)
- Sartre, J-P. 1963. *The Problem of Method*. London: Methuen. (originally: 1960)
- Sartre, J-P. 1983. *Between Existentialism and Marxism*. London: Verso. (originally: 1962)
- Judt, T. 1992. *Past Imperfect; French Intellectuals, 1944-1956*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Boschetti, A. 1988. *The Intellectual Enterprise: Sartre and 'Les Temps Modernes'*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Essay questions:

Is feminism compatible with existentialism?

What is the sociological significance of existentialism?

5. Existentialism and anti-colonial movements: Fanon, Biko

Biko, S. 1979. *I Write What I like*. London: Heinemann.

Dini, R. 2017. *An Analysis of Frantz Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Routledge.

*Fanon, F. 2017. *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto. (originally: 1952)

*Fanon, F. 2004. *The Wretched of the Earth*. London: Grove. (originally: 1961)

Fanon, F. 1965. *A Dying Colonialism*. New York: Grove. (originally: 1959)

Gibson, N. 2003. *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination*. Cambridge: Polity.

Gibson, N. 2011. *Fanonian Practices in South Africa*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Macey, D. 2000. *Frantz Fanon: A Life*. London: Granta.

Quinn, R. 2017. *An Analysis of Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth*. London: Routledge.

Essay questions:

According to Fanon, how precisely does colonialism affect the colonized? Do you agree?

Explain Fanon's choice of book title in *Black Skin, White Masks*.

6. Structuralism: Claude Lévi-Strauss

Benoist, J-M. 1978. *The Structural Revolution*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Lévi-Strauss, C. 2021. *Structural Anthropology Zero*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

*Lévi-Strauss, C. 1993. *Structural Anthropology, Part 1*. London: Penguin. (originally: 1963)

*Lévi-Strauss, C. 1994. *Structural Anthropology, Part 2*. London: Penguin. (originally: 1973)

Lévi-Strauss, C. 1985. *The View from Afar*. London: Penguin. (originally: 1983)

Leach, E. 1970. *Levi-Strauss*. London: Fontana/Collins.

Loyer, E. 2018. *Levi-Strauss: A Biography*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Clark, S. 1981. *The Foundations of Structuralism: A Critique of Lévi-Strauss and the Structuralist Movement*. London: Branch Line.

Sturrock, J. (ed.) 1979. *Structuralism and Since; From Levi-Strauss to Derrida*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Especially Introduction, Chapter 1)

Essay questions:

Critically assess Lévi-Strauss' structuralist analysis of myths.

Does Lévi-Strauss's account of social phenomena deny agency?

7-8. Practice theory : Pierre Bourdieu

*Bourdieu, P. and L. Wacquant. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

*Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (originally, 1972)

*Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction; A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (originally, 1980)

- Bourdieu, P. 1999. *The Weight of the World. Social suffering in contemporary society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Calhoun, C., LiPuma, E. and M. Postone (Eds.) 1993. *Bourdieu; Critical Perspectives*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Jenkins, R. 1992. *Pierre Bourdieu*. London: Routledge.
- Harker, R., Mahar, C. and C. Wilkes (Eds.) 1990. *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu*. London: MacMillan. (Especially Introduction, Chapters 1-2)
- Krais, B. 2006. 'Gender, Sociological Theory and Bourdieu's Sociology of Practice'. *Theory, Culture and Society* 23 6, pp. 119-134.
- Lamont, M. and A. Lareau. 1988. 'Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments'. *Sociological Theory* 6 (2): 153–68.
- Wacquant, L., and A. Akçaoğlu. 2017. 'Practice and Symbolic Power in Bourdieu: The View from Berkeley'. *Journal of Classical Sociology* 17 (1): 55–69.

Essay questions:

How does Bourdieu explain the role of culture in the reproduction of inequality? Do you agree? How convincing is Bourdieu's attempt to transcend the opposition between subjectivism and objectivism?

9. Actor Network Theory: Bruno Latour

- De Vries, G. 2016. *Bruno Latour*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hassard, J. and J. Law (eds.) 1999. *Actor Network Theory and After*. Oxford: Blackwell. (Especially Chapters 1, 2 and 10)
- Latour, B. and S. Woolgar. 1986. *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Especially Chapters 1-3 and postscript)
- *Latour, B. 1993. *The Pasteurization of France*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. (Especially Introduction)
- *Latour, B. 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B. 2001. *Pandora's Hope; Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- *Latour, B. 2005. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- *Lezavum, J. 2017. Actor network theory. In: *Social Theory Now*, eds. C. Benzecry, M. Krause, I. Reed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 305-336.
- McKenzie, D. et al. 2007. *Do Economists Make Markets? On the Performativity of Economics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (Especially Chapters 1, 2 and 11)

Essay questions:

In what sense does Latour want to redefine the nature of the social? Do you agree? What do actor network theorists mean by 'network' and why is the concept significant?

10. Falsificationism and the rediscovery of homo economicus

a. Falsificationism

- Baert, P. 2005. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences: Towards Pragmatism*. Cambridge: Polity, chapter 3.

- *Kuhn, T. 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakatos, I. and A. Musgrave (eds.) 1970. *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Feyerabend, P. 1975. *Against Method; Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*. London: Humanities Press.
- * Popper, K. 1991. *The Poverty of Historicism*. London: Routledge.
- * Popper, K. 1991. *Conjectures and Refutations*. London: Routledge, chapters 15-20.

Essay questions:

Do theories need to be falsifiable?

Does Kuhn's history of science undermine falsificationism as a philosophy of science?

b. Rational choice theory

- Coleman, J. 1990. *Foundations of Social Theory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Coleman, J. & Fararo, T. (ed.) 1992. *Rational Choice Theory; Advocacy and Critique*. London: Sage
- Elster, J. 1979. *Ulysses and the Sirens; Studies in Rationality and Irrationality*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Elster, J. 1983. *Sour Grapes; Studies in the Subversion of Rationality*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Elster, J. (ed.) 1986. *Rational Choice*. New York: New York University Press.
- Elster, J. 2007. *Explaining Social Behaviour; More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- *Ermakoff, I. 2017. On the frontiers of rational choice. In: *Social Theory Now*, eds. C. Benzecry, M. Krause, I. Reed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 162-200.
- Friedman, J. (ed.) 1996. *The Rational Choice Controversy; Economic Models of Politics Considered*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Green, D. and Shapiro, I. 1994. *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- *Hedström, P. 2005. *Dissecting the Social; On the Principles of Analytical Sociology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Essay questions:

What type of rational choice theory is most effective for the social sciences?

What are the strengths and limitations of game theory for analyzing social and political phenomena?

11-12. Michel Foucault: Archaeology, Genealogy, Ethics

Foucault, M. 2008. *The Birth of Biopolitics. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. (originally: 1979).

*Foucault, M. 2006. *Madness and Civilization*. London: Vintage Books. (originally: 1961)

Foucault, M. 2003. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. London: Routledge. (originally: 1963)

*Foucault, M. 2001. *The Order of Things: Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Routledge. (originally: 1966)

*Foucault, M. 2002. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge. (originally: 1969)

*Foucault, M. 1991. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin. (originally: 1975)

*Foucault, M. 1998. *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1. London: Penguin. (originally: 1976)

Foucault, M. 1980. *Knowledge/Power: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Ed. C. Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books.

- Foucault, M. 1988. *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984*. Ed. L. Kritzman. New York: Routledge.
- *Dreyfus, H. and P. Rabinow, 1982. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Brown, B. and M. Cousins, 1980. 'The linguistic fault: The case of Foucault's archaeology'. *Economy and Society*, 9(3): 251-278.
- Cousins, M. and A. Hussain, 1984. *Michel Foucault*. London: Macmillan.
- Gutting, G. 1989. *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- *Hoy, D. 1986. (ed.), *Foucault: A Critical Reader*. London: Blackwell.
- McNay, L. 2005. *Foucault: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- McNay, L. 2007. *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Taylor, D. (ed.) 2010. *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts*. New York: Routledge. (Especially Chapters 1-4, 9-12)
- Fraser, Nancy. 1985. 'Michel Foucault: A "Young Conservative"?' *Ethics* 96 (1): 165-84.

Essay questions:

Is Foucault's archaeology of knowledge an intellectually coherent enterprise?

Do we live in a 'society of surveillance'?

What can the history of sexuality tell us about the formation of the modern subject?

13-14. Pragmatism, 'Black social theory' and the sociology of knowledge

- *Bhambra, G.K. 2014. 'A sociological dilemma: race, segregation and US sociology'. *Current Sociology*, 62(4), 472-492.
- *Collins, P.H. 1998. *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Especially Introduction, Chapter 2).
- *Du Bois, W.E.B. 1898. 'The Study of the Negro Problems'. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 11: 1-23.
- Armstrong, E.G. 1979. 'Black Sociology and Phenomenological Sociology'. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 20(3), 387-397.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2019. *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Christian, B. 1987. 'The Race for Theory'. *Cultural Critique*, (6), 51-63.
- Collins, P.H. 1986. 'Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought'. *Social Problems*, 33(6), 14-32.
- Collins, P.H. 2011. 'Piecing Together a Genealogical Puzzle: Intersectionality and American Pragmatism'. *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 3: 88-112.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. 2007. *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Especially Chapters 5 and 6).
- Du Bois, W.E.B. 1990. 'My Evolving Program for Negro Freedom'. *Clinical Sociology Review*, 8(1), 27-57. (originally: 1944)
- Frazier, E.F.. 1947. 'Sociological Theory and Race Relations'. *American Sociological Review* 12 (3): 265.
- Ladner, Joyce A. 1973. *The Death of White Sociology: Essays on Race and Culture*. Black Classic Press. [Part 3: Black Sociology: Toward a definition of a theory].
- Meghji, A. 2019. 'White power, racialized regimes of truth, and (in)validity'. *Sentio*, 1(1).
- Morris, A. 2015. *The Scholar Denied: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology*. (Especially Introduction, Chapter 5)

- Staples, Robert. 1973. "Race and Ideology: An Essay in Black Sociology." *Journal of Black Studies* 3:395-422. Watson, Wilbur. 1976. "The Idea of Black Sociology: Its Cultural and Political Significance." *American Sociologist* 11:115-123.
- Wright II, E., & Calhoun, T. C. 2006. 'Jim Crow Sociology: Toward an Understanding of the Origin and Principles of Black Sociology via the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory'. *Sociological Focus*, 39(1), 1–18.
- Wright II, Earl. 2010. "Beyond W. E. B. Du Bois: A Note on Some of the Lesser Known Members of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory," *Sociological Spectrum* 29(6): 700-717.

Essay questions:

Critically assess the Black sociological tradition's contributions to social theory.

'Social theory can be used to support hierarchical power relations [and] social theory can also challenge unjust ideas and practices' (Collins). Discuss.

Critically assess Collins' argument that we need to separate questions of 'what counts as knowledge from questions of who decides what knowledge is'.

15-16. Gender and sexuality

*Butler, J., 2011. *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*, Routledge, (Introduction).

*Tamale, S., 2011. 'Researching and theorising sexualities in Africa' in *African Sexualities: A reader*, Pambazuka Press, pp. 11-36.

*Connell, R.W., 2005. *Masculinities*, Polity, (Introduction).

Collins, P.H., 2002. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, Routledge.

Lukose, R., 2005. 'Consuming globalization: Youth and gender in Kerala, India' in *Journal of Social History*, 38(4), pp.915-935.

McDowell, L., 2011. *Capital culture: Gender at work in the city* (Vol. 65). John Wiley & Sons.

Kabeer, N., 1994. *Reversed realities: Gender hierarchies in development thought*. Verso.

Srivastava, S., 2001. 'Non-gandhian sexuality, commodity cultures, and a 'happy married life': The cultures of masculinity and heterosexuality in India' in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 24(s1), pp.225-249.

Cornwall, A 2014., 'Taking Off International Development's "Straightjacket of Gender"' in *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 21.

Oyěwùmí, O., 1997. *The invention of women: Making an African sense of western gender discourses*, U of Minnesota Press.

Lugones, M., 2007. 'Heterosexualism and the colonial/modern gender system' in *Hypatia*, 22(1), pp. 186-219

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. How important are bodies and spaces for a sociological analysis of gender and sexuality?
2. How does heteronormativity straitjacket gender?

Lent 2022

Development of Social Theory (II)

Lectures

Modernity and its critics: The German tradition of critical theory

Lecture 1-2. Hannah Arendt and the humanist critique of modernity (PB)

Lecture 3-4. The Frankfurt School, the critique of Enlightenment and the notion of critical theory (PB)

Lecture 5-6. Habermas and critical theory (I) (FCS)

Lecture 7. Habermas and critical theory (II) (FCS)

Lecture 8. Critical theory today: Honneth and Fraser (FCS)

Modernity, postmodernity and the posthuman

Lecture 9-10. The postmodern turn: Modernity and postmodernity (FCS)

Lecture 11-12. The cultural turn: Rediscovering Marx and Durkheim (FCS)

Lecture 13-14. The ontological turn: New materialisms (FCS)

Provincializing modernity: A view from the margins

Lecture 15-16. Postcolonial and decolonial theory: Sociology, Eurocentricism, and the imperial episteme, Southern theory (AM)

Readings

1-2. Hannah Arendt and the humanist critique of modernity

*Arendt, H. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

*Arendt, H. 1951. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt.

*Arendt, H. 1961. *Eichmann in Jerusalem; A Report on the Banality of Evil*. London: Faber & Faber.

Arendt, H. 1962. *On Revolution*. New York: Penguin.

Baehr, P. 2002. 'Identifying the Unprecedented: Hannah Arendt, Totalitarianism, and the Critique of Sociology'. *American Sociological Review*, 67(6), 804-831.

*Baehr, P. and P. Walsh. eds. 2018. *The Anthem Companion to Hannah Arendt*. London: Anthem Press. (Especially Introduction, Chapters 1-4)

Bernstein, R. 2018. *Why Read Hannah Arendt Now?* Cambridge: Polity.

Bowring, F. 2011. *Hannah Arendt. A Critical Introduction*. London: Pluto Press. (Especially Chapters 1-2, 5)

Vázquez, R. 2006. 'Thinking the Event with Hannah Arendt'. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9(1), 43-57.

Villa, D. ed. 2000. *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Especially Chapters 1, 3-4)

Essay questions:

What, according to Hannah Arendt, is distinctive about totalitarianism?

What does Hannah Arendt mean by 'banality of evil'?

3-4. The Frankfurt School, critique of Enlightenment and the notion of critical theory

- Adorno, T. 1994. *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture*. Ed. Stephen Crook. London and New York: Routledge.
- Adorno, T. 1991. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. Ed. J.M. Bernstein. London: Routledge.
- Benjamin, W. 2008. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. London: Penguin. (originally: 1936)
- * Horkheimer, M. 2005. *The Eclipse of Reason*. London: Continuum. (originally: 1947)
- * Horkheimer, M. and T. Adorno. 1973. *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*. London: Allen Lane. (originally: 1944)
- * Marcuse, H. 1964. *One-Dimensional Man*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Arato, A. and E. Gebhardt. eds. 1978. *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bronner, S.E. 1994. *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Geuss, R. 1981. *The Idea of a Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Especially Introduction, Chapter 3)
- Held, D. 1990. *Introduction to Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- * Jay, M. 1973. *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923 - 1950*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Rose, G. 1978. *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno*. London: Macmillan.
- Wiggershaus, R. 1994. *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*. Trans. Michael Robertson. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Essay questions:

According to the Frankfurt School, what is problematic about the Enlightenment project?
How does critical theory differ from other theories?

5-6. Habermas and critical theory (I)

- *Habermas, J. 1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. (originally: 1962)
- Habermas, J. 1975. *Legitimation Crisis*. Boston: Beacon Press. (originally: 1973)
- *Habermas, J. 1979. 'What is Universal Pragmatics?', in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1-68. (originally: 1976)
- *Habermas, J. 1990. 'Discourse Ethics', in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 43-115. (originally: 1983)
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Essay questions:

What are the main shortcomings of Habermas' notion of the public sphere?
Does Habermas's theory of practical discourse provide a sound basis for dealing with the normative problems of critical theory?

7. Habermas and Critical Theory (II)

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- Habermas, J. 1988. 'Law and Morality', *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, VIII*. Salt Lake City, pp. 217-299.
- *Habermas, J. 1996. *Between Facts and Norms*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (originally: 1992)
- Habermas, J. 1994. 'Three Normative Models of Democracy', *Constellations*, 1(1): 1-10.
- Habermas, J. 2001. *The Postnational Constellation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (originally: 1998)
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Essay questions:

Is Habermas right to think of modernity as an unfinished project?
Is cosmopolitan democracy desirable and feasible?

8. Critical theory today: Honneth and Fraser

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Honneth, A. 2007. *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (originally: 2000)

*Fraser, N. 1989. *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Especially Chapters 6-8)

*Fraser, N. and A. Honneth. 2003. *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, London: Verso.

Essay questions:

What, if any, are the tasks of a critical theory of society today?

Can redistributive politics be reconciled with the politics of recognition?

9-10. The postmodern turn: Modernity and postmodernity

Rorty, R. 1979. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Especially Chapters 7-8)

*Lyotard, J.-F. 2004. *The Postmodern Condition*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. (originally: 1979)

Harvey, D. 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.

*Bauman, Z. 1993. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

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Bauman, Z. and K. Tester. 2001. *Conversations with Zygmunt Bauman*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Smith, D. 1999. *Zygmunt Bauman: Prophet of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Connor, S. 1989. *Postmodernist Culture*. London: Blackwell.

Best, S. and D. Kellner. 1991. *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Callinicos, A. 1990. *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Essay questions:

Is Lyotard's incredulity toward metanarratives justified?

'Without modern civilization, without the whole assortment of achievements of which we are otherwise so proud, the Holocaust would have been unthinkable.' (BAUMAN) Discuss.

11-12. The Cultural Turn: Rediscovering Marx and Durkheim

Merton, R.K. 1967. 'On the 'History' and 'Systematics' of Sociological Theory', in *On Theoretical Sociology*. New York: Free Press, 1-37.

Levine, D. 1995. *Visions of the Sociological Tradition*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. (Especially Chapters 1, 13, Epilogue)

*Silva, F.C. and M.B. Vieira. 2019. 'Introduction', in *The Politics of the Book. A Study on the Materiality of Ideas*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1-16. (see also Chapters 1, 3)

*Gramsci, A. 2005. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence & Wishart. (Especially Part I, Chapter 1; Part II, Chapter 2) (originally: 1971)

*Said, E. 2003. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin. (Especially Chapter 1, Afterword) (originally: 1978)

- Anderson, P. 1976. *Considerations on Western Marxism*. London: New Left Books.
- *Hall, S. 1994. 'Cultural identity and diaspora', in *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: A Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 227-237.
- *Spivak, G. 1988. 'Can the subaltern speak?', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 271-313.
- Chakrabarty, D. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Especially Introduction, Chapters 1, 4-5)
- Durham, M. and D. Kellner. (eds.) 2006. *Media and Cultural Studies. Keywords*. 2nd edition. London: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Kellner, D. 2005. 'Western Marxism', in *Modern Social Theory: An Introduction*, edited by Austin Harrington. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 154-174.
- Go, J. 2018. "Postcolonial Thought as Social Theory", in *Social Theory Now*, eds. C. Benzecry, M. Krause, I. Reed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 130-161.
- *Durkheim, E. 1995. *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translated by K. Fields. New York: The Free Press. (originally: 1912) (Especially 'Translator's Introduction'; Book III, Chapter 5, section IV, Conclusion)
- Turner, V. 1969. *The Ritual Process*. New York: Aladine De Gruyter.
- Geertz, C. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Clifford, J. and G. Marcus. (eds.) 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- *Alexander, J.C. 2003. *The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- *Alexander, J.C. and P. Smith (eds.). 2005. *The Cambridge Companion to Durkheim*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Especially Introduction, Chapter 6)
- Alexander, J.C. 2006. *The Civil Sphere*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Especially Chapter 4).
- Reed, I.A. 2018. "On the Very Idea of Cultural Sociology", in *Social Theory Now*, eds. C. Benzecry, M. Krause, I. Reed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 18-41.
- Alexander, J.C. 2012. *Iconic Power: Materiality and Meaning in Social Life*. London: Palgrave.
- Magnani, R. and Watt, D. 2018. 'Toward a Queer Philology', *Postmedieval*, 9(3): 252–268.

Essay questions:

Why, according to Spivak, are western efforts to speak for the other bound to fail? Do you agree? In which respects, if any, is cultural sociology superior to the sociology of culture?

13-14. The ontological turn: New materialisms

- *Appadurai, A. (ed.). 1986. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Especially Chapters 1-2)
- *Sullivan, L. 1986. 'Sound and senses: Toward a Hermeneutics of Performance', *History of Religions* 26: 1-33.
- *Miller, D. (ed.), 2005. *Materiality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Miller, D. 2009. *Stuff*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hodder, I. 2012. *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things*. London: Wiley-Blackwell. (Especially Chapters 1, 5, 8, 10)
- *Boivin, N. 2008. *Material Cultures, Material Minds: The Impact of Things on Human Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bennett, J. 2009. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- *Haraway, D. 1994. 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s', in *The Postmodern Turn: New Perspectives on Social Theory*. Edited by S. Seidman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 82-116. (originally: 1984)
- *Hayles, K. 1999. *How We Became Posthuman*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Mol, A. 2002. *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. (Especially Chapter 6)
- *Barad, K. 2003. 'Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', *Signs* 28: 801-831.
- *Braidotti, R. 2013. *The Posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Braidotti, R. 2019. *Posthuman Knowledge*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (Especially Chapters 1-3)
- Zerilli, L. 2005. *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (Especially Introduction, Chapters 1, 4)
- Haraway, D. 2016. 'Playing string figures with companion species', in *Staying with the Trouble*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 9-29.
- Ahmed, S. 2010. 'Orientations Matter', in D. Coole, S. Frost (eds.) *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 237-257. (See also Introduction)
- Roden, D. 2015. *Posthuman Life: Philosophy at the Edge of the Human*. London: Routledge. (Especially Chapter 1).

Essay questions:

Do things have agency?

'By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs.' (HARAWAY) Discuss.

15-16: Social theory and the imperial episteme

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- *Connell, R. W. 1997. 'Why Is Classical Theory Classical?' *American Journal of Sociology* 102 (6): 1511-57. <https://doi.org/10.1086/231125>.
- *Go, Julian 2016. *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- *Meghji, Ali. 2020. *Decolonizing Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Mignolo, Walter D. 2007. 'Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of de-Coloniality'. *Cultural Studies* 21 (2-3): 449-514.
- Alatas, Syed Farid, and Vineeta Sinha. 2001. 'Teaching Classical Sociological Theory in Singapore: The Context of Eurocentrism'. *Teaching Sociology* 29 (3): 316-31. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1319190>.
- Bhambra, G. 2007. *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Connell, Raewyn. 2007. 'The Northern Theory of Globalization'. *Sociological Theory* 25 (4): 368-85. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9558.2007.00314.x>.
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- Go, Julian. 2013. 'The Emergence of American Sociology in the Context of Empire'. In *Sociology & Empire: The Imperial Entanglements of a Discipline*, edited by George Steinmetz, 83-103. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
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- Magubane, Zine. 2016. ‘American Sociology’s Racial Ontology: Remembering Slavery, Deconstructing Modernity, and Charting the Future of Global Historical Sociology’. *Cultural Sociology* 10 (3): 369–84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975516641301>.
- Meghji, Ali. 2019. Histories of sociology and decolonising education. Surviving Society podcast. <https://soundcloud.com/user-622675754/e052-ali-meghji-histories-of-sociology-and-decolonising>
- Patel, Sujata. 2006. ‘Beyond Binaries: A Case for Self-Reflexive Sociologies’. *Current Sociology* 54 (3): 381–95. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392106063187>.
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- Shari’ati, Ali. 1986. *What Is to Be Done: The Enlightened Thinkers and as Islamic Renaissance*. Edited by Farhang Rajaee. Houston, TX: The Institute for Research and Islamic Studies. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162647>. [‘What is to be done?’]
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1. To what extent is the 20th century social theory canon Eurocentric?
2. To what extent is canonical social theory guilty of ‘analytical bifurcation’ (Go), or ‘abyssal thinking’ (de Sousa Santos)?
3. What can social theory learn from postcolonial theory? What can postcolonial theory learn from social theory?

Easter 2022

Lectures Michaelmas 1-10; Lent 1-4:
Revision – Prof. P Baert.

Lectures Michaelmas 11-12; Lent 5-14:
Revision – Dr Silva

Lectures Michaelmas 13-16; Lent 15-16:
Revision – Dr Meghji

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