

EMORY UNIVERSITY

Sociology 457w

DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Spring 2024
Tuesday/Thursday
2:30 – 3:45
White Hall 101

Dr. Timothy J. Dowd
Office Hrs: 11:30 – 2:00 (M)
231 Tarbutton Hall
tdowd@emory.edu

Graduate Assistant: Temi Alao; temitope.alao@emory.edu

Undergraduate Assistant: Annessa Felipe-Pate; annessa.felipe-pate@emory.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sociological theory sometimes has the unfortunate reputation of being (a) removed from empirical matters and (b) previously done by people who are now long dead. That reputation cannot be further from the truth. In fact, sociological theory remains vibrant in the present and, in both its classical and contemporary formulations, it has remained tied to understanding the world in which we live.

One thread that runs through sociological theory is the concern with inequality – both in terms of understanding why it occurs and what needs to be done to eliminate it. To that end, sociologists have put forward theories that address inequality by emphasizing race, gender, class, status and the like (as well as the interplay and intersections found between them).

We take that thread as the organizing principle of this theory class. Indeed, we focus on sociological theory dealing with the mechanisms by which inequality is produced and reproduced, as well as sociological theory that offers solutions regarding those mechanisms. In the process, we will show, on the one hand, how sociological theory is firmly linked to empirical research and, on the other hand, how sociological theories are formulated and refined by people addressing the present world – both in understanding and improving it.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A) Attendance

You are strongly encouraged to attend class, especially because we will use class time to integrate the assigned readings and to present additional information not found in the readings.

Note that missing more than 4 classes could negatively impact your final grade.

I do understand that students should not attend class when ill. Thus, do not put yourself at risk for fear of missing a class. As we navigate this semester together, then, let us stay in touch and be mindful.

B) Office Hours and Appointments

I will be holding office hours in 231 Tarbutton Hall on Mondays from 11:30 am to 2:00 pm. Those hours are “open door” in that you can drop by without an appointment.

I am also available for appointments outside of those office hours. Email me to arrange those appointments.

C) Written Assignments

You are required to complete a final paper – one that you will write in stages across the semester.

For each “stage” I will distribute a question to which you will provide a 3- to 4-page answer that draws upon the class materials.

The final paper will emerge as you combine the stages together (incorporating the feedback that you receive along the way) and, at the end, provide an introduction and conclusion to the paper.

The dates for the staged assignments, as well as the final paper, are listed below. Each staged assignment is worth 25% of your grade, with the final paper itself also worth 25%.

Please note: my expectation is that everyone will earn an “A.” Each stage will be graded as “satisfactory/unsatisfactory” given the emphasis, not on a perfect submission, but on a submission that will be revised. Doing the work (which includes responding to the comments for revision) is what I seek in the final version of the paper. Indeed, in past semesters, most students did indeed earn an “A” for their excellent work.

D) Honor Code

The Emory University honor code applies fully to this course. When you submit your assignments, you are pledging to the honor code. For reference, please consult: <http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html>.

COURSE RESOURCES

As the semester progresses, class materials (e.g., syllabus, lecture slides) will be posted on the Canvas site for SOC 457w (see <http://classes.emory.edu/>).

The assigned readings are drawn from many sources, so there is no textbook. Instead, the required readings will be available on our Canvas site.

If you have any special needs, please contact me at the beginning of the semester and we will discuss the necessary arrangements. For additional information, visit the Emory Department of Accessibility Services website (see <http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/index.html>).

THREE POINTS ABOUT THE COURSE READINGS

Please keep in mind three points regarding the readings below. (1) Sociological theory is found across a sprawling and wide body of scholarship. There is far too much theorizing to address in this course. Thus, the readings below constitute the “tip of the iceberg,” so to speak. Yet, at the same time, I have picked readings that help us grapple with key ideas and lessons.

(2) The readings below provide a mixture of classics, “modern classics,” and new articles. Both types of classics matter because they put forward important theoretical formulations and provide an important comparison with contemporary situations. Meanwhile, the newest articles help us keep apprised of the latest developments.

(3) Some of these articles are written for specialists. Consequently, they sometimes make use of jargon and sophisticated techniques of analysis. But, have no fear! My job will be to translate those articles for you and, in the process, show you the usefulness of those articles for making sense of sociological theory and everyday life. Put another way, we will use class-time both to ground and go beyond the readings below.

COURSE SCHEDULE

(subject to revision)

January 18: Introductions

SOUNDS AND INEQUALITY

January 23: Jon Cruz. 2002. “Nineteenth Century US Religious Crisis and the Sociology of Music.” *Poetics* 30: 5-18.

January 25: W.E.B. Du Bois. 1905. *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*. London: Archibald Constable & Co. Chapters 1 and 14.

January 30: Damon J. Phillips and David A. Owens. 2004. “Incumbents, Innovation, and Competence: The Emergence of Recorded Jazz, 1920-1929.” *Poetics* 32: 281-295.

February 1: Joseph C. Ewoodzie, Jr. 2017. *Break Beats in the Bronx: Rediscovering Hip-Hop’s Early Years*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press. Chapters 3 and 5.

February 6: Wei-Ting Lu. 2013. "Confucius or Mozart? Community Cultural Wealth and Upward Mobility among Children of Chinese Immigrants." *Qualitative Sociology* 36: 303-321.

CREDENTIALS AND INEQUALITY

February 8: Shamus Khan. 2011. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Introduction, Chapters 3 and 4.

February 13: Yi-Lin Chiang. 2018. "When Things Don't Go as Planned: Contingencies, Cultural Capital, Parental Involvement for Elite University Admission in China." *Comparative Education Review* 62: 503-521.

February 15: Byun, Soo-yong, Evan Schofer and Kyung-keun Kim. 2012. "Revisiting the Role of Cultural Capital in East Asian Educational Systems: The Case of South Korea." *Sociology of Education* 85: 219-239.

February 20: Tressie McMillan Cottom. 2017. *Lower Ed: The Troubling Rise of For-Profit Colleges in the New Economy*. New York: The New Press. Introduction, Chapters 1 and 4.

FIRST-STAGE ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED

February 22: Lauren A. Rivera. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms." *American Sociological Review* 77: 999-1022.

COMMODIFICATION AND INEQUALITY

February 27: Viviana A. Zelizer. 2011. *Economic Lives: How Culture Shapes the Economy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Pages 1-18, 72-92, and 128-136

FIRST-STAGE ASSIGNMENT DUE

February 29: Hung Cam Thai. 2014. *Insufficient Funds: The Culture of Money in Low-Wage Transnational Families*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Chapters 1, 3, and 9.

March 5: Cheris Shun-Ching Chan. 2009. "Creating a Market in the Presence of Cultural Resistance: The Case of Life Insurance in China." *Theory and Society* 38: 271-305.

March 7: Monica Liu. 2019. "Devoted, Caring, and Home Loving: A Chinese Portrayal of Western Masculinity in Transnational Cyberspace Romance." *Men and Masculinities* 22: 317-337.

March 12 & 14: **SPRING BREAK (NO CLASS)**

March 19: Jordanna Matlon. 2016. "Racial Capitalism and the Crisis of Black Masculinity." *American Sociological Review* 81: 1014-1038.

WORK AND INEQUALITY

March 21: Evelyn Nakano Glenn. 1985. "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 18: 1-43.

SECOND-STAGE ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED

March 26: Milian Kang. 2003. "The Managed Hand: The Commercialization of Bodies and Emotions on Korean-Immigrant-Owned Nail Salons." *Gender and Society* 17: 820-839.

March 28: Sergio Chávez, Heather B. Edelblute, and Elizabeth Korver-Glenn. 2016. "Life on the Edge: Balancing Gendered and Occupational Identities among Unauthorized Mexican Migrant Roofers." *Qualitative Sociology* 39: 125-146.

SECOND-STAGE ASSIGNMENT DUE

April 2: Adia Harvey-Wingfield. 2013. *No More Invisible Man: Race and Gender in Men's Work*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Chapters 2, 5 and 6.

April 4: Devah Pager. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108: 937-975.

THIRD-STAGE ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED

CONNECTIONS AND INEQUALITY

April 9: Martin Luther King, Jr. 2002 (1968) "World House." Pages 177-202 in *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* Boston: Beacon Press.

April 11: Mustafa Emirbayer. 1997. "Manifesto for a Relational Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 103: 281-371.

THIRD-STAGE ASSIGNMENT DUE

- April 16:* Francisco Vieyra. 2016. "Pickup Basketball in the Production of Black Community." *Qualitative Sociology* 39: 101-123.
- April 18:* Corey D. Fields. 2014. "Not Your Grandma's Knitting: The Role of Identity Processes in the Transformation of Cultural Practices." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 77: 150-165.
- April 23:* Omar Lizardo. 2006. "How Cultural Tastes Shape Personal Networks." *American Sociological Review* 71: 778-807.
- April 25:* Mario L. Small and Christopher Sukhu. 2016. "Because They Were There: Access, Deliberation, and the Mobilization of Networks for Support." *Social Networks* 47: 73-84.
- May 6:* **FINAL PAPER DUE**