

Soc 510a: Seminar in Social Theory

Tu-Th 2:00 to 3:20 in Savery 409

Professor Sarah Quinn

E-mail: slquinn@uw.edu

Office: Savery Hall 253

Sign up for office hours online at <http://www.meetme.so/SarahQuinn>

This seminar provides an introduction to some canonical texts and foundational paradigms for sociology graduate students. The main goal is for students to be able to identify and understand each perspective and the central distinctions among them. A secondary goal is to understand how foundational theoretical insights inform current research and debates in sociology; to that end, I have sometimes paired classic texts with more contemporary work. Finally, we will use these materials as a jumping off point for a broader conversation about how to independently read and parse demanding texts. Class time will consist of a mix of lecture and discussion.

COURSE WEBSITE

I will use a Canvas page to send updates about the course. You will need to sign up for Canvas immediately and check it regularly to keep up with the class. To do this, login to myuw.edu, and select "Teaching" from the menu bar on the left. Then under "Tools, Services, and Resources," select the link for Canvas.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required books are on order at the University Book Store (4236 University Way):

- Tucker, Robert C. (ed). 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader* (2nd edition). New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Gerth and Mills (eds.) 1946. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Durkheim, Emile. 2008 [1912]. *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (abridged edition, Cladis and Cosman, eds). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Levine, Donald N. (ed). 1971. *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- David L. Lewis. (ed). 1995. *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Reader*. New York: H. Holt and Co.

Recommended but not required:

- Collins, Randall. 1994. *Four Sociological Traditions*. New York: Oxford
- Giddens, Anthony. 1971. *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber*. Cambridge.

COURSE WORK

Your grade will be based on class participation, eight reading reactions, and a final paper.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

I have two ground rules for class discussion. First, everyone comes prepared. In any seminar you should show up with the readings completed and in-hand, having already: (i) prepared at least one or two questions to share with the class, (ii) weighed the strengths and weaknesses of each piece, (iii) identified especially important passages, (iv) considered how the current reading relates to other course materials, and (v) considered implications for research. Second, everyone participates. I may use small group activities to get us warmed up, and I may call on students during discussions. If you have reservations about speaking in class please discuss this with me immediately.

EIGHT (8) READING REACTIONS.

Instructions for these are listed in the course schedule. These are a chance for me to see how the class as a whole is doing, and they are an incentive for you to reflect on the readings before class. The latter helps create a class discussion that is lively, informed, and inclusive. There are eight required responses and nine opportunities to turn them in, so you get one "free" week to take at a time of your choice.

Reading reactions should be printed out and brought to class. I will sometimes use them to kick off an activity, and I will always collect them at the end of the meeting. If you miss a class please leave it in my mailbox in the sociology office. Do not email me your memo. I will read all of the memos each week and hand them back. For most I will just check off that you have completed the assignment, but each week I will select a smaller group for more extensive feedback.

FINAL PAPER

A 15-20 page final paper will be due at 2pm on Wednesday, December 16 in my mailbox. Further instructions will follow during the first weeks of class.

Course Schedule

Do the readings in the order listed below.
Suggested further readings are posted on Canvas.

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION

No reading reaction due today

- Abend, Gabriel. 2008. "The Meaning of 'Theory'." *Sociological Theory* 26(2): 173-99.
- Homans, George C. 1964. "Bringing Men Back In." *American Sociological Review* 29(6): 809-18.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 1989. "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought." *Signs* 14(4): 745-73.
- Abbott, Andrew. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. "Chapter 1: Explanation" & "Chapter 2: Basic Debates and Methodological Practices (41-79)"

WEEK 2: MARX & ENGELS

Reading reaction: notes. Prepare reading notes and bring them to class. We will start discussion by sharing them in small groups.

- Tucker, Robert C. (ed). *The Marx-Engels Reader* (2nd edition). New York: W.W. Norton & Company (1978)
 - Marx on the History of His Opinions, 4 ("The first work which I undertook . . . ") to the end of the first paragraph on page 5 (" . . . the prehistory of human society to a close")
 - Theses on Feuerbach, 143-145
 - German Ideology, 172-175, 179, 186-88
 - Estranged Labour, 70 – 81
 - Wage Labor and Capital, 203-217
 - *Capital*, Vol. I., fetishism of commodities, 319 ("A commodity appears . . . ") to 324 ("as soon as we come to other forms of production.")
 - *Communist Manifesto*, 471 – 491 (stop at . . . "for the free development of all.") and 500 (from "In short, Communists everywhere . . . " to the end of the page)

WEEK 3: MARXIAN TRADITION

Reading reaction: notes. Prepare and bring in reading notes on one of the assigned articles. Try using a new technique. If you previously wrote a narrative summary, try using an outline or chart. Or if you previously typed up notes while reading, try writing up a capsule summary after you have read the entire piece.

- Gramsci, Antonio. "On Hegemony." Chapter 15 in *Classical Sociological Theory*, Calhoun et. al (eds). Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. Selected pages posted on Canvas.
- Fanon, Frantz. 2004. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press. "V. Colonial War and Mental Disorders." (181-233). On Canvas
- Piketty, Thomas. 2014. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. USA: Belknap Press. Chapter 1: Introduction (Pp. 1-35); Chapter 10: Inequality of Capital Ownership & Chapter 11: Merit and Inheritance in the Long Run (Pp. 336-429)
- Purser, Gretchen. 2014. "The Circle of Dispossession: Evicting the Urban Poor in Baltimore." *Critical Sociology*. 1-23.

WEEK 4: RATIONAL CHOICE AND ITS INTERLOCUTERS

Reading reaction: notes. Prepare and bring in reading notes on one of the assigned articles. Continue to experiment with different approaches.

- Hechter, Michael and Satoshi Kanazawa. 1997. "Sociological Rational Choice Theory" *Annual Review of Sociology* 23:191-214.
- Julia Adams. "Culture in Rational Choice Theories of State-Formation," in *State/Culture: State Formation after the Cultural Turn*, ed. George Steinmetz. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999: 98-122.
- Kiser, Edgar and Joachim Schneider. 1994. "Bureaucracy and Efficiency: An Analysis of Taxation in Early Modern Prussia" *American Sociological Review* 59(2): 187-204
- North, Douglass. 1994. "Economic Performance Through Time" *American Economic Review* 84(3): 359-368.
- Tversky, Amos, and Daniel Kahneman. 1974. "Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases." *Science* 185(4157): 1124-31.

WEEK 5: WEBER

Reading reaction: In one or two paragraphs, develop a critical question about one or more of these readings.

- Social Action, Pp. 280-290 in *Classical Sociological Theory*, Calhoun et. al (eds). Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. On Canvas.
- Forms of Legitimate Domination, 212-216 in *Economy and Society*. On Canvas.
- Gerth and Mills (eds.) 1946. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Bureaucracy, pp. 196-199 (through "...ideologically hallowed"), 214-216, 224-244.
- Class, Status, Party (180-195)
- Science as a Vocation, 137 (from "In contrast with..." to 156)

WEEK 6: DURKHEIM I

Bring to class: Short (1page) proposal for final paper. Identify what you would like to write about, what argument you expect to make, which readings (from class or beyond) you will use.

- Durkheim, Emile, Rules of Sociological Method, On Canvas.
- Durkheim, Emile, Suicide (selected pages. On Canvas.
- Durkheim, Emile, and W. D. Halls. 1984. Selections from *The Division of Labor in Society*. On Canvas.

WEEK 7: DURKHEIM II

Reading reaction: A two-page response to the readings.

- *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Review the whole text, reading the following sections with special care: 10-21 (Classification), 35-46 (Sacred and the Profane), Book 2 chapter 3 (109-115), Pp. 153 -162, 169-177 (until '...moral life'), 198-202 (body and soul), 274-5 (causality and will, starting from "In sum . . .), 285-288 (rites), 310-343 (conclusion)

WEEK 8: SIMMEL

Writer's choice: you can turn in a reading response, a critical question, reading notes, or something more creative.

- Levine, 's *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms*:
 - Fashion, Chapter 19
 - Metropolis and Mental Life, Chapter 20
 - The Stranger, Chapter 10
 - Exchange, Chapter 5
- Simmel, selections from "The Dyad and the Triad" in *Classical Sociological Theory*. On Canvas.
- Ronald S. Burt. 2004. "Structural Holes and Good Ideas." *American Journal of Sociology* 110(2): 349-99.

WEEK 9: DU BOIS

Reading reaction: notes. You do not need to turn in a separate reading note for each essay, but you should include some kind of summary or synthesis (such as a paragraph that encapsulates the main points, or a list of important take-aways) for the readings as a group.

- Selections from *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Reader* in the following order:
 - Propaganda and World War - page 388 to 389 (to " . . . and my people could find a welcome place.")
 - The Conservation of Races (20-27)
 - Race Intelligence (197- 198)
 - The Negroes of Farmville (231-236)
 - Of Our Spiritual Strivings (28-33)
 - The Black Mother (294)
 - The Damnation of Women (299-312)
 - The Souls of White Folk (453-465)
 - The Talented Tenth: Memorial Address (347-353)
 - Marxism and the Negro Problem (538-544)
 - The Black Worker (594-607)
 - Socialism and the Negro Problem (577-580)
 - The African Roots of the War (642-651)
 - The Disfranchised Colonies (676-682)
 - Application for Membership of the Communist Part of the United States of America (631-633)

WEEK 10: TBD

Reading reaction: writer's choice.

As a class we will decide collectively, early in the quarter, what to read this week. Options include phenomenology (e.g., Merleau-Ponty, Schütz), selections from the American tradition (e.g., Dewey, Cooley, Mead, and/or Goffman), Bourdieu, Foucault, Giddens, Polanyi, critical race theory, queer theory, feminist theory, new institutionalism, or other traditions of interest to class members.

WEEK 11: Why theory?

No reaction this week.

- Review the Abend and Abbott readings from week 1.
- Read THREE of the following
 - a. Connell, R. W. 1997. "Why is Classical Theory Classical" *American Journal of Sociology* 102(6): 1511-57.
 - i. AND Randall Collins. 1997. "A Sociological Guilt Trip: Comment on Connell" *American Journal of Sociology* 102: 1558-64
 - b. Meyer, John W. and Brian Rowan. 1977. "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony." *American Journal of Sociology* 83:340-363
 - c. Collins, Randall. 2004. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
 - i. "Solidarity Prolonged and Stored in Symbols." P. 86 (from "I have couched . . ." to 87)
 - ii. "Reinvestment of Emotional Energy and Membership Symbols." 149-153
 - iii. "Intellectual Networks and Creative Thinking" 190-196
 - d. Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. *The Forms of Capital*. Available online: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm>