

San José State University
Department of Sociology & Interdisciplinary Social Science
SOC 101-01, Social Theory, Spring 2024

Instructor: Preston Rudy, Ph.D.
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Office Hours: Monday 3-3:30, Tuesday 2-2:30, Wednesday 10-10:30, Online Wednesday 11-11:30 & by appointment
Class Days/Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:30 – 11:45
Classroom: DMH 162
Prerequisites: SOCI 1 and SOCI 100W

“Coercion is natural; freedom is artificial. Freedoms are socially engineered spaces where parties engaged in specified pursuits enjoy protection from parties who would otherwise naturally seek to interfere in those pursuits. One person’s freedom is therefore always another person’s restriction: we would not have even the concept of freedom if the reality of coercion were not already present. We think of a freedom as a right, and therefore the opposite of a rule, but a right *is* a rule. It is a prohibition against sanctions on certain types of behavior. We also think of rights as privileges retained by individuals against the rest of society, but rights are created not for the good of individuals, but for the good of society. Individual freedoms are manufactured to achieve group ends.”

Louis Menand (2001) *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America*, p. 409.

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Course Description

Catalog Description: Comparative analysis of micro and macro sociological theories and their origins, including, but not limited to, conflict theories, consensus theories, structural functionalism, symbolic interaction and recent theoretical developments. Required for majors.

Professor Rudy's course: In this course we will study the development of sociological explanations about the social world. We will begin with a brief discussion of the European the discovery of the "social" as a result of the cataclysmic changes brought on by Western Europe's colonial expansion, the growth of its cities and the Industrial Revolution. This period is notable for sociologists because of the important concepts and theories about the modern world developed by Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber. Following these three major theorists we will examine the developments of sociological theory in the United States, and in Europe, as new questions, problems and issues unfolded in the emerging debates that came out of these early analyses. As we begin to read theorists from the twentieth-century we will notice how the discipline of sociology divides up into a variety of important issues and explanations, no longer centrally concerned with capitalism and the development of grand theories.

In completing this course you will be asked to read short excerpts from these theorists, which will require dedicated reading time on your part. To fully appreciate, develop enthusiasm, and participate in the discussion you must complete the reading before class and have thought about

include author and page number from our text. You choose the quote after reading the selection and deciding what is a significant or important section of the reading. The quotes must be roughly 3-5 lines in the text, or 2-4 sentences in length.

You are expected to practice a classroom etiquette of respect for others. This means we will show respect for other's ideas and debate the ideas not the person. Your comments are best directed to help each person achieve the skill of clearly explaining their thoughts orally.

ORAL GROUP PRESENTATIONS – 15%

As part of a group of students, you will be asked to present one of the readings in class. Guidelines for the presentations will be posted on Canvas.

REFLECTION PAPERS & WRITING – 15%

You must complete all the written assignments to pass this class.

You will be required to write **two papers**, 2-3 pages in length, consisting of a quote you choose from one of the theorists we are reading and a two- to three-page reflection about the quote and the theory. You will also have an opportunity to write a third paper. If you write two papers, each paper is worth 7.5% of the paper grade. If you write three papers, each paper will be worth 5%. The reflection will consist in writing about the significance or importance of the quote for understanding the theorist, as well as reflecting on observations of your daily life that the quote and the theory enable you to explain. The example you include can be explained by the causal argument that the theory proposes as the reason why something happens in society.

The due dates for the reflections are: **March 5** (Marx to Merton), **April 11** (Weber to Anyon), **May 9** (Gramsci to D'Emilio).

EVERYONE MUST HAND IN A PAPER ON March 5th.

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SOCI 101 / Social Theory, Spring 2024, Course Schedule

This is the schedule of classes and readings and assignments. The schedule may change, and those changes will be announced in class and on Canvas.

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	25 January	<p>Introduction, words, concepts and theories</p> <p>https://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/100000006719947/europeans-view-americans.html?smid=url-share</p> <p>Sociology as study of groupness and the social causes of action and inaction; Individuals and groups, on which does activity depend? Causal explanations of individual and social action</p> <p>READ: General Introduction by Garner pp. xix-xxiii What are the six questions that many theories explore?</p>
2	30 January	<p>Karl Marx – Division of Labor, Capitalism and Power</p> <p>READ: Classical Theory introduction by Garner pp. 33-34 AND Introduction to Marx’ theory by Garner pp. 35-37</p>
	1 February	<p>Karl Marx – Division of Labor, Capitalism and Power</p> <p>Karl Marx – Capitalism, Commodities and Social Class</p> <p>READ: Intro and Marx and Engels – <i>The Communist Mommunist Mommusi Mommui</i></p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
	7 March	<p>PAPER #1 DUE FROM EVERY ONE AT START OF CLASS 5 March</p> <hr/> <p>Max Weber applied: Theda Skocpol – Power, US political life and civil society</p> <p>READ: Theda Skocpol, introduction pp. 116-117 Theda Skocpol, “The Narrowing of Civic Life” pp. 118-121</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
14	23 April	Michel Foucault - Post-Structuralism & Social Control READ: Garner Introduction to Foucault pp. 365-369 AND Michel Foucault – “Body of the Condemned” pp. 369-372 AND Michel Foucault – The Panopticon: Power and Discipline 372-376
	25 April	Sociologies of Race & Ethnicity: Fanon and Omi & Winant READ: Introduction to race pp. 455-57 Frantz Fanon: Negritude & Colonial Liberation – <i>Wretched of the Earth</i> , pp. 458-62 Michael Omi and Howard Winant: Theory of racial formation, pp. 468-73
15	30 April	Gender, Power and Capitalism: Dorothy Smith Garner – Intro to Gender and Sexuality pp. 485-89 Dorothy Smith – <i>The Conceptual Practices of Power</i> , pp. 489-94 https://www.npr.org/2023/06/21/1183467075/the-labor-of-love
	2 May	Engaged Feminism and Race – Angela Davis READ Introduction and Excerpt from interview with Lisa Lowe, pp. 502-10
16	7 May	Explaining masculinity – Raewyn Connell READ Introduction and selection from <i>Masculinities</i> pp. 510-17
	9 May	Gender, Power and Capitalism: John D’Emilio John D’Emilio – Gender, Social Structure, and Gays identity Garner – Introduction to D’Emilio pp. 517-18 AND
	LAST CLASS	D’Emilio – <i>Making Trouble</i> pp. 518