

**SOCIOLOGY 612  
SPRING 2013**

**CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY**

Instructor: Hiro Saito  
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Office hours: 3-5pm on Wednesdays or by appointment  
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Seminars: T 1:30-4:00pm  
KUY 401B

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Knowing a lot of good theories does not automatically make you good at constructing one by yourself; however, thorough knowledge of historical development and conceptual mechanics of good theories is essential for becoming a good theorist. Such knowledge helps you not only avoid reinventing the wheel but also acquire good theoretical intuition—how to identify conceptual problems in the existing literature as well as construct new concepts and explore their implications.

Thus, this first-year theory seminar has two objectives. The first is to help you understand historical development of good theories since the mid-twentieth centuries. The second—and this is the ultimate objective—is to train you as a theorist who can wield sociological concepts to construct cogent explanations of empirical phenomena that you are interested in.

**CLASS FORMAT**

At the beginning of each class, I give a short lecture (10-15 minutes) to provide you with historical and theoretical contexts of the assigned readings. In the remainder of the class, we discuss your questions and reactions to the readings (as well as mine).

**GRADING**

Analytic Papers (20% x 3)	60%
Final Paper	40%

\*\* Submit all your papers electronically at Laulima by using the “Drop Box” feature. I will then comment on your papers at Laulima.

Analytic Paper (6 pages, doubled-spaced)

For each of the three sections of the course (“Contemporary Foundations,” “Institutions, Organizations, Networks,” and “Politics and Culture”), you will write an analytic paper.

Pick (at least) three readings in the section. Then, write a critique on each of the three readings by including the following two elements:

(1) Problem—You state what is problematic about the theorist’s argument; for example, a logical contradiction, conceptual inadequacy, or empirical implausibility can be defined as a problem. Articulate the problematic as precisely as possible by using direct quotes;

(2) Solution—You propose and elaborate a solution to the stated problem. What would be the most effective way to solve the stated problem? How does your solution improve or extend the theorist’s argument? Be as specific as possible.

### Final Paper (9 pages, doubled-spaced)

For your final paper, you will pick one empirical phenomenon that you are interested in researching while in graduate school. Then, pick one reading (that you did not use in your analytic paper) from each of the three sections and do the following:

(1) Question—Based on the theorist’s argument, you formulate a research question about the phenomenon that you are interested in. Since you will pick three different readings, you will have three different research questions in total;

(2) Rationale—You elaborate how the research question you have formulated derives logically from the theorist’s argument. By using at least one direct quote, justify the connection between the research question and the theorist;

(3) Evidence—You explain what kind of data you will need to answer the research question. Specify which method(s) you will choose to collect the data and justify your choice.

## **TEXTBOOKS**

Except for Niklas Luhmann’s *Ecological Communication*, all readings are uploaded on Laulima. A master copy of the Luhmann reading will be placed in my mailbox.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### January 8: Introduction

Paul J. DiMaggio. 1995. “Comments on ‘What Theory is Not’.” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 40(3): 391-397

Richard Swedberg. 2012. “Theorizing in Sociology and Social Science: Turning to the Context of Discovery.” *Theory & Society* 41: 1-40

## **Contemporary Foundations**

### January 15: Jürgen Habermas

Jürgen Habermas. 1993. "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere." Pp. 421-461 in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by C. Calhoun

Jürgen Habermas. 1996. "Civil Society and the Political Public Sphere." Pp. 329-387 in *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*

January 22: Niklas Luhmann

Niklas Luhmann. Pp. 1-50 & 106-142 in *Ecological Communication* [A master copy is in my mailbox]

January 29: Michel Foucault

Michel Foucault. 1997. "The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom." Pp. 281-301 in *Michel Foucault: Ethics*, edited by P. Rabinow

Michel Foucault. 2000. "Truth and Power," "Governmentality," & "The Subject and Power." Pp. 111-133, 201-222, & 326-348 in *Michel Foucault: Power*, edited by J. D. Faubion

February 5: Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu. 2000. "Bodily Knowledge." Pp. 128-163 in *Pascalian Meditations*

Pierre Bourdieu. 1991. "Social Space and the Genesis of 'Classes'." Pp. 229-251 in *Language & Symbolic Power*

Pierre Bourdieu. 1983. "The Forms of Capital." Pp. 241-258 in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J. G. Richardson

February 12: Feminism

Judith Butler. 1997. "Introduction." Pp. 1-30 in *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*

Chantal Mouffe. 2000. "For an Agonistic Model of Democracy." Pp. 80-107 in *The Democratic Paradox*

Iris Marion Young. 1996. "Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy." Pp. 120-135 in *Democracy and Difference*, edited by S. Benhabib

**\*\* The first analytic paper is due on February 19 (Tue)**

**Institutions, Organizations, Networks**

### February 19: Institutional Sociology of Organizations

Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell. 1991. "Introduction." Pp. 1-38 in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*

John Meyer. 2008. "Reflections on Institutional Theories of Organizations." Pp. 790-811 in *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, edited by R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, R. Suddaby, & K. Sahlin-Andersson

Arthur Stinchcombe. 1997. "On the Virtues of the Old Institutionalism." *Annual Review of Sociology* 23: 1-18

### February 26: Institutional Dynamics and Transformations

Paul DiMaggio. 1988. "Interest and Agency in Institutional Theory." Pp. 3-22 in *Institutional Patterns and Organizations*, edited by L. Zucker

Roger Friedland and Robert Alford. 1991. "Bringing Society Back in: Symbols, Practices, and Institutional Contradictions." Pp. 232-263 in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, edited by W. Powell and P. DiMaggio

William Sewell Jr. 2003. "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation." Pp. 124-151 in *Logics of History*

### March 5: Causes and Effects of Networks

Mark Granovetter. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78: 1360-1380

Brian Uzzi. 1996. "The Sources and Consequences of Embeddedness for the Economic Performance of Organizations: The Network Effect." *American Sociological Review* 61(4): 674-698

Mustafa Emirbayer and Jeff Goddwin. 1994. "Network Analysis, Culture, and the Problem of Agency." *American Journal of Sociology* 99: 1411-1454

### March 12: Mobilization of Networks

Ronald Burt. 2000. "The Network Structure of Social Capital." *Research in Organizational Behaviour* 22: 345-423

Michel Callon and Bruno Latour. 1981. "Unscrewing the Big Leviathan: How Actors

Macro-structure Reality and How Sociologists Help Them to Do So.” Pp. 277-303 in *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: Toward an Integration of Micro- and Macro-sociologies*, edited by K. Knorr-Cetina and A. V. Cicourel

**\*\* The second analytic paper is due on March 19 (Tue)**

### **Intermission**

#### March 19: Critical Theory

Pierre Bourdieu. 1975. “The Specificity of the Scientific Field and the Social Conditions of the Progress of Reason.” *Social Science Information* 14: 19-47

Bruno Latour. 2004. “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern.” *Critical Inquiry* 30(2): 225-248

#### March 26: Spring Recess

### **Politics and Culture**

#### April 2: The State

Theda Skocpol. 1985. “Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research.” Pp. 3-37 in *Bringing the State Back In*, edited by P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, and T. Skocpol

Michael Mann. 1986. “The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results.” Pp. 109-136 in *States in History*, edited by J. A. Hall

Philip Abrams. 1988. “Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State.” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1: 58-89

#### April 9: Culture and State Formation

Pierre Bourdieu. 1998. “Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field.” Pp. 35-63 in *Practical Reason*

Timothy Mitchell. 1999. “Society, Economy, and the State Effect.” Pp. 76-97 in *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn*, edited by G. Steinmetz

John Meyer, John Boli, George Thomas, and Francisco Ramirez. 1997. “World Society and the Nation-State.” *American Journal of Sociology* 103: 144-181

#### April 16: History of the Nation-State

Rogers Brubaker. 1990. "Immigration, Citizenship, and the Nation-State in France and Germany: A Comparative Historical Analysis." *International Sociology* 5(4): 379-407

Andreas Wimmer and Yuval Feinstein. 2010. "The Rise of the Nation-State across the World, 1816 to 2001." *American Sociological Review* 75(5): 764-790

Michael Mann. 1997. "Has Globalization Ended the Rise and Rise of the Nation-State?" *Review of International Political Economy* 4(3): 472-496

April 23: Politics and Culture in the Age of Globalization

Saskia Sassen. 2007. "The State Confronts the Global Economy and Digital Networks." Pp. 45-96 in *A Sociology of Globalization*

Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. "Transnational Advocacy Networks in International Politics: Introduction." Pp. 1-38 in *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*

Craig Calhoun. 2002. "Imagining Solidarity: Cosmopolitanism, Constitutional Patriotism, and the Public Sphere." *Public Culture* 14(1): 147-171

**\*\* The second analytic paper is due on April 30 (Tue)**

**Reflections on Sociology**

April 30: The Nature of Sociology as an Academic Discipline + Ideas for Final Papers

Andrew Abbott. 2001. "The Unity of History" & "The Context of Disciplines." Pp. 91-120 & 121-153 in *Chaos of Disciplines*

**\*\* The final paper is due on May 9 (Thu)**