

Seminar: Modern Social Theory

Fall 2021

Tuesday 10-13, Unicom 7.2210

VAK 08-351-1-MC1-1

Prof. Dr. Martin Nonhoff

Universität Bremen

Master International Relations: Global Governance and Social Theory

Module M C1: Modern Social Theory

Course Description

The purpose of the course is to discuss key questions of modern social theory by studying classic and contemporary texts that have shaped the current debate. On the basis of these texts, we will elaborate central concepts for the analysis and evaluation of modern societies. Topics for discussion include the methodological status of social theory, different characterizations of modern society, the relation of agency and structure, the critique of certain features of modern society, the continuing impact of the era of colonialism and the relevance of the categories of race and gender. The course will serve as a general introduction to modern social theory – it does not require any previous knowledge of this field, but the willingness to engage with complex theoretical texts and their arguments.

Preparatory ReadingBhambra, Gurminder K.; Holmwood, John (2021): *Colonialism and Modern Social Theory*.

Cambridge, Medford: Polity Press.

Elliot, Athony (2014): *Routledge Handbook of Social and Cultural Theory*. Milton Park, New

York: Routledge.

Benzecry, Claudio E.; Krause, Monika; Reed, Isaac Ariail (ed.) (2017): *Social Theory Now*.

Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Delanty, Gerard (2000): The Foundations of Social Theory: Origins and Trajectories, in: Bryan

S. Turner (ed.): *The Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, 2nd edition. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 21-46.Harrington, Austin (ed.) (2004): *Modern Social Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.Inglis, David; Thorpe, Christopher (ed.) (2021): *An Invitation to Social Theory*. 2nd edition.

Cambridge: Polity Press.

Joas, Hans; Knöbl, Wolfgang (2009): *Social Theory. Twenty Introductory Lectures*. Cambridge

University Press.

Contact:

Prof. Dr. Martin Nonhoff

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3-4pm (starting on 19 October) or by special appointment;
please make an appointment for all meeting times with my secretary Peter
Arnhold (arnhold@uni-bremen.de). Office hours should be attended in person,
but Zoom meetings are also possible while the pandemic is not over yet.

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Additional Information for Teaching under Corona Conditions

In line with the decisions made by the two universities (for the UB see [here](#)), this seminar will take place in person. To accommodate registered students who are unable to attend the sessions physically, the meetings will be live streamed (but not recorded) using Zoom. Access to the meetings via Zoom will be restricted to students who have enrolled as distance students or send me a doctor's note testifying their inability to come to campus, either generally during the pandemic (e.g. because they belong to a risk group) or temporarily due to illness. Of course, a sufficiently recent proof that they have tested positive for the coronavirus (and thus have to stay at home) will also be accepted.

At the start of each session, your "3G" status will have to be checked. "3G" stands for "geimpft, genesen oder getestet" (vaccinated, recuperated or tested). All students must also log into the seminar room using the BremenGast App in order to enable contact tracing. Please also remember to check out once the session is over. As the seminar room used for Modern Social Theory (7.2210) is not large enough to keep a distance of 1.5 meters, masks must be worn at all times except during presentations.

Assignments and grading

In the three first semesters of the MAIR program, students take twelve classes altogether. Of these twelve classes, students must choose six in which they complete a "large" workload (for 9 credit points) and six with a "small" workload (for 6 credit points). It is recommended that you opt for two small and two large versions each semester. In the following, both workload versions of the class "Modern Social Theory" are described.

Please let me know your choice of workload for this class right some time before the Christmas break.

1. Small version of the seminar workload

In the course of the seminar, you will give a seminar presentation on one of the seminar readings and you will write position papers on two of the (other) texts. The presentation counts for 50 % of the seminar grade; each of the discussion papers counts for 25 %.

a) Seminar presentation

Every student will shortly introduce one or two of the texts (depending on text length). Presenters should prepare a written handout (please upload the handout to StudIP and make enough hard copies for those present in classroom!) that summarizes the key points of their seminar introduction and the main questions for the discussion. Handouts need an appropriate head and a bibliography of texts used. Page numbers are helpful for class discussion.

Unexcused failure to show up for a text presentation will result in a 5.0 grade for the presentation (fail).

b) Position papers on readings

Every student will write position papers (750-1000 words) on two of the texts. A position paper needs to show your position in regard to a text we discuss in class. This means that

you should summarize the main lines of argument and then develop a critical discussion of the text. The summary should comprise at least one third of your paper, the discussion also at least one third. You can use the last third as you like, either for having a longer summary or a longer discussion. Ideally, your position paper should start with a short introduction of two or three sentences (one paragraph) that manages to describe the main thrust of what the text wants to say. And you should use references to page numbers whenever you reproduce important argumentative steps (not only when you use literal quotes). You do not need to use additional literature; the focus is completely on the text itself (it is, however, not forbidden to use additional literature).

Position papers should be thought of as having three goals: First, to help you focus your own thoughts about a text. Second, to help you to remember in class what the text said and what your own thoughts about it were. Third, it can serve as an excerpt that you can use for your entire academic career (that's why it's important to use page numbers, so that you find important passages quickly in class and later on).

Students choose freely the two texts they write about, following these rules:

- You cannot write a position paper on the text that you present on.
- Of those texts marked with an asterisk you may only choose *one* for a position paper.
- Position papers on texts marked with two asterisks count for *two* position papers if students choose to have them counted double. They may have double length, too.
- You are allowed to write a *third* position paper in order to improve your grades. A third position paper can cancel either half of the presentation grade or the grade of another position paper if the respective grade was worse.
- Papers written for the first session (Marx, Federici) may be re-written after grading.

2. Large version of the seminar workload

In case you opt for the “large version”, you will write a final paper in addition to a reduced in-class contribution.

a) In-class assignment(s)

Here, you must make a choice: Either you give a seminar presentation on one of the seminar readings; or you write two position papers. Details are given above. The in-class assignments will count for 25 % of the final grade (i.e. if you write position papers 12.5 % each).

b) Final paper

The final paper (4000-5000 words) is an in-depth discussion of one of the central debates touched upon in the seminar. Topics and first ideas will be presented at the last session of the seminar; in order to make this possible, abstracts must be uploaded to StudIP by 15 Jan 2022. An abstract will consist of roughly one page of text outline, a preliminary table of contents and a preliminary bibliography. The abstract itself will *not* be graded. Please come to my office hours for a preliminary discussion of your ideas, at best at some time in late November or early December. Final papers can be co-authored by two students (6000-8000 words). The final paper will count for 75 % of the final grade.

Deadlines and other Rules

1. Position papers are due until Monday, 10am before each seminar (via e-mail). Late submissions will not be counted.
2. The abstracts for the final papers must be uploaded to StudIP by 15 January 2022.
3. The final paper is due on 1 March 2022. Papers must be handed in as electronic (via e-mail) and as hard copy. Late submission of the electronic copy of the paper will result in a reduction of the grade as specified by the general rules of the MA program.
4. In order to pass the course, a student must pass all the assignments of the chosen seminar version (small/large workload), i.e. failed partial grades cannot be compensated for by other grades.

Seminar Overview

#	Date	Topic
1	12 Oct. 2021	Introduction and Seminar Organization
2	19 Oct. 2021	Capitalism, Exploitation and the Female Body: Marx, Federici
3	26 Oct. 2021	Modernity, Modernities: Weber, Eisenstadt
4	2 Nov. 2021	Modernity, Coloniality, Racism: Quijano, Mills
5	9 Nov. 2021	City Life and Acceleration: Simmel, Rosa
6	16 Nov. 2021	Capitalist Culture/Rationality Lost: Horkheimer and Adorno
7	23 Nov. 2021	Rationality Regained? Habermas, Haraway
8	30 Nov. 2021	Midterm Reflection: What Is and Why Do We Do Social Theory? Tully, Taylor
9	7 Dec. 2021	Performing the Self: Mead, Goffman
10	14 Dec. 2021	Action and Structure: Bourdieu, Giddens
11	21 Dec. 2021	Power and Subject(ivation): Foucault
	28 Dec. 2021	<i>Christmas Break</i>
12	4 Jan. 2022	Feminist Theory in Focus: Beauvoir, Butler
13	11 Jan. 2022	Queer Theory/Intersectionality: Rubin, Crenshaw
14	18 Jan. 2022	Final discussion and presentation of first ideas for term papers

Alternative Schedule for the last three weeks:

12	4 Jan. 2022	<i>Christmas break</i> (2 nd week)
13	11 Jan. 2022	Feminist Theory in Focus: Beauvoir, Butler
14	18 Jan. 2022	<u>Double Session</u> 10-13 Queer Theory/Intersectionality: Rubin, Crenshaw 14-17 Final discussion and presentation of first ideas for term papers

In the first session on 12 October 2021, we'll take the decision which schedule we'll follow in the last three weeks.

Detailed Reading List:

12.10.2021 Introduction and Seminar Organization

10-13 hrs.

(1)

19.10.2021 Capitalism, Exploitation, and the Female Body

10-13 hrs.

(2)

Readings:

Marx, Karl; Engels, Friedrich (2021[1848]): Manifesto of the Communist Party. Marxists Internet Archive, 14-27, 34, 56-57. Download at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm> (29.9.2019).

(ATTENTION: The file of this reading contains many additional materials/ text passages. Mandatory reading encompasses only the pages given above.)

**Federici, Silvia (2004): *Caliban and the Witch. Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation*. New York: Autonomedia, 61-115.

Presentation(s):

26.10.2021 Modernity, Modernities

10-13 hrs.

(3)

Readings:

*Weber, Max (2006): Puritanism and the Spirit of Capitalism, in: Sam Whimster (ed.): *The Essential Weber*, London: Routledge, 25-34.

*Weber, Max (2006): Prefatory Remarks to the Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion, in: Sam Whimster (ed.): *The Essential Weber*, London: Routledge, 101-112.

Eisenstadt, Shmuel Noah (2000): Multiple Modernities, in: *Daedalus* 129/1: 1-29.

Presentation(s):

2.11.2021 Modernity, Coloniality, Racism

10-13 hrs.

(4)

Readings:

**Quijano, Anibal (2000): Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America, in: *Neplanta. News from the South* 1/3: 533-580.

Mills, Charles (1997): *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 1-40.

Presentation(s):

9.11.2021 City Life and Acceleration

(5)

Readings:

*Simmel, Georg (2005): *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, in: Gary Bridge/
 Sophie Watson (eds.): *The Blackwell City Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 11-19.
 Rosa, Hartmut (2003): *Social Acceleration*, in: *Constellations*, 10/1, 3-33.

Presentation(s):

16.11.2021 Capitalist Culture/Rationality Lost

(6)

Reading:

**Horkheimer, Max; Adorno, Theodor W. (2002 [1944]): *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*, in: Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno: *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 94-136.

Presentation(s):

23.11.2021 Rationality Regained?

(7)

Readings:

Habermas, Jürgen (1987): *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Cambridge/MA: Polity Press, 341-367. (The file of this reading contains the entire chapter XII, pp. 336-367; mandatory reading is only pp. 341-367.)

Haraway, Donna (1988): "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", in: *Feminist Studies* 14/3: 575-599

Presentation(s):

30.11.2021 Midterm Reflection: What Is and Why Do We Do Social Theory?

(8)

Readings:

Taylor, Charles (1985): *Social Theory as Practice*, in: id.: *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 91-115.

Tully, James (2002): *Political Philosophy as a Critical Activity*, in: *Political Theory* 30/4, pp. 533-555.

Presentation(s):

7.12.2021 Performing the Self

(9)

Readings:

Mead, George H. (1934): *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (edited by Charles W. Morris). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 152-164, 173-178, 214-222.

**Goffman, Erving (1959): *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Anchor Books, 1-30, 248-255.

Presentation(s):

14.12.2021 Action and Structure

(10)

Readings:

**Giddens, Anthony (1984): *The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1-40.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1999): Structures, Habitus, Practice, in: Elliot, Anthony (ed.): *Contemporary Social Theory*. Malden, Oxford: Blackwell, 107-118.

Presentation(s):

21.12.2021 Power and Subject(ivation)

(11)

Readings:

Foucault, Michel (2004[1976]): Lecture of 14 January 1976, in: Michel Foucault: *Society Must Be Defended*. London: Penguin, 23-42.

Foucault, Michel (1978 [1976]): *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books, 135-159 (Part V).

Presentation(s):

28.12.2021 *Christmas Break*

For the last three sessions, we may yet agree on a different schedule; for the alternative see page 4 of the syllabus. (To be decided in first session.)

4.1.2022 Feminist Theory in Focus

(12)

Readings:

*Beauvoir, Simone de (2010[1949]): *The Second Sex*. London: Vintage, 3-18.

Butler, Judith (2004): "Gender Regulations", in: Judith Butler: *Undoing Gender*. New York, Milton Park: Routledge, 40-56.

Presentation(s):

11.1.2022 Queer Theory/Intersectionality

(13)

Readings:

Rubin, Gayle S. (1999 [1984]): Thinking Sex. Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality, in: Richard Guy Parker and Peter Aggleton (ed.), *Culture, Society and Sexuality. A Reader*. London/Philadelphia: UCL Press, 143–178.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé (1989): Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics, in: *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, 139-167.

Presentation(s):

18.1.2022 Final Discussion/Presentation of Term Paper Abstracts

(14)