

Seminar: Modern Social Theory

Fall 2019

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 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 Reading

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.) (2019): *An Invitation to Social Theory*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Polity Press.

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

Contact:

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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 by mid-November (mid-term).

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 (make enough hard copies for everyone!) 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).

The text should be thought of as having three goals: First, to help you focus your own thoughts about a text. Second, to help you in class to remember 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 stuff 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.
- Texts marked with two asterisks count for *two* position papers (they may have double length, too) if students choose to have them counted double.

- 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 (Hollis/Taylor) 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 11 Jan 2020. 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 the 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 11 January 2020.
3. The final paper is due on 1 March 2020. 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.

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Overview

#	Date	Topic
1	1 Oct. 2019	Introduction and Seminar Organization
2	8 Oct. 2019	What Is and Why Do We Do Social Theory? Hollis, Taylor
3	15 Oct. 2019	Modernity, Western Exceptionalism, Racism: Weber, Mills
4	22 Oct. 2019	Capitalism, Exploitation and Oppression: Marx, Young
5	29 Oct. 2019	City Life and Acceleration: Simmel, Rosa
6	5 Nov. 2019	Capitalist Culture/Rationality Lost: Horkheimer and Adorno
7	12 Nov. 2019	Rationality Regained? Habermas, Haraway
8	19 Nov. 2019	Performing the Self: Mead, Goffman
9	26 Nov. 2019	Action and Structure: Bourdieu, Giddens
10	3 Dec. 2019	Power and Subject(ivation): Foucault
11	10 Dec. 2019	Feminist Theory in Focus: Beauvoir, Butler
12	17 Dec. 2019	Queer Theory/Intersectionality: Rubin, Crenshaw
13	7 Jan. 2020	Guest Lecture by Gülşen Seven (TED University Ankara) on Populism in Turkey
14	15 Jan. 2020	Final discussion and presentation of first ideas for term papers

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Detailed Reading List:

1.10.2019 Introduction and Seminar Organization

(1)

8.10.2019 What Is and Why Do We Do Social Theory?

(2)

Readings:

Hollis, Martin (2002): *The Philosophy of Social Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 40-65.

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

Presentation(s):

15.10.2019 Modernity, Western Exceptionalism, Racism

(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.

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

Presentation(s):

22.10.2019 Capitalism, Exploitation and Oppression

(4)

Readings:

Marx, Karl; Engels, Friedrich (2019[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.)

**Young, Iris Marion (2011[1990]): *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 39-65.

Presentation(s):

29.10.2019 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):

5.11.2019 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):

12.11.2019 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):

19.11.2019 Performing the Self

(8)

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):

26.11.2019 Action and Structure

(9)

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):

3.12.2019 Power and Subject(ivation)

(10)

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):

10.12.2019 Feminist Theory in Focus

(11)

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):

17.12.2019 Intersectionality/Queer Theory

(12)

Readings:

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.

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.

Presentation(s):

24./31.12.2019 *Christmas Break*

7.1.2020 Populism (in Turkey and Elsewhere)

(13)

(a) Guest Lecture by Gülşen Seven (TED University, Ankara)
 “Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Populism in Turkey”

(b) Discussion of Readings

Baykan, Toygar (2014): *Halkcilik and Populizm: “Official-Rational” versus “Popular”* in the context of “Turkish Exceptionalism”. Sussex European Institute.

Stavrakakis, Yannis (2014): The Return of „the People“: Populism and Anti-Populism in the Shadow of the European Crisis, in: *Constellations* 21/4, 505-517.

Additional Background Reading:

Turan, Ilter; Erozan, Bogac (2004): Development of Political Science in Turkey. *Political Science and Politics*, 37(2), 359-63.

Presentation(s):

14.1.2020 Final Discussion/Presentation of Term Paper Abstracts

(14)