Overview
This course provides an intensive introduction to classical and contemporary social theory, with an emphasis on theories central to the discipline of sociology and history. Its aims are twofold: first, to familiarize students with major theoretical concepts, works, and traditions, and second, to provide tools and encouragement for reflexive inquiry, critical interpretation, and rigorous explanation of the social world. Through this sampling of social theory, the course is designed to give students a theoretical foundation for their studies, encourage students to read further in different schools of thought or authors, and to understand problems and concerns of social theory over the last 200 years. For a schematic outline of other problems and issues we will explore in the course, please see the “Central Questions in Social Theory” listed on the last page of the syllabus.

Student Outcomes:
- Develop a scaffolding of social theory in which to begin to build a theoretical foundation for research
- Begin to answer: “How do you see the world?” and to put that answer into dialogue with other social thinkers.
- Describe social thought in an intellectual and historical context
- Apply social theory to contemporary concerns
- Enhance a basic survival skill: putting into words what no one wants to talk about

Books for purchase at Engineer’s and Ga Tech B&N include:


Please Note:

1. Please read each week’s selections in the order listed on the syllabus, as some build on others. Also, be aware of the syllabus subheads; not all readings for a given week are by the same author or reflect the same school of thought.

2. You should be able to succeed in this course without reading any materials beyond those listed on the syllabus. If you like overviews, George Ritzer, Anthony Giddens or Randall Collins are authors/editors of respectable overviews and descriptions of social theory.

3. In written work please cite all sources consulted.

"... you learn to write from the world around you, both from what it forces on you and from what it makes available. The institutions scholars work in push them in some directions, but also open up a lot of possibilities. That's where you make a difference."


Course Requirements

Readings and Participation (15%): Read all of the selections listed for each week prior to class (in the order listed) and come prepared to discuss them.

Written Responses (20%): During the course of the semester you will turn in ten written responses to the weekly readings. There are fourteen weeks of readings; this allows you four “misses.” Responses should be typed, double-spaced, and approximately two pages. A digital copy should be posted to the course T-Square site (Forums: Written Responses) prior to class (the earlier the better), and a hard copy should be handed in during class. There are three types of responses you will need to complete:

   General responses based upon Central Questions: complete eight throughout the term, you choose the weeks, with each week being a different topic. There are eight central questions, each week you will choose which question to pair with that week’s readings/authors. You will be expected to address all eight questions using a careful read of the class readings.
   Research review response: complete one, scheduled via sign-up on the second day.
   Research proposal response: complete one, scheduled via sign-up on the second day.

Please see below for additional details.

Midterm Exam (30%): The midterm will be an open-book, take-home, essay exam covering material through and including the week of 15 October. It may include comprehensive and/or short essays; you will be able to choose the questions you answer from a list. The midterm will be distributed on Monday, 1 October 2012 and handed in on Friday, 20 October 2012.

Final Paper (35%): A paper of approximately 15-20 pages on a *theoretical* topic of your choosing using a minimum of 10 course readings. Please submit a paper proposal (a brief
description of your thesis or question and a preliminary reference list) by 11 November 2012 (in class). Papers are due on X December 2012.

The final essay is evaluated with the following considerations in mind:
1. All essays must be presented as a research paper, properly documented with footnotes or in text citations and a bibliography
2. They must draw explicitly and constructively on the material in the course: i.e. students must display a good understanding of some, if not all, of the prescribed material as well as the issues discussed in class
3. They must be well argued, with an introduction that situates the argument in the literature and that identifies how the paper adds to what we know already
4. They must draw together the main argument is a concluding summary
5. They must respects the requirements in terms of length, delivery date etc.

Grading Scale: Your Points/Total Points = 90% and above) = A
Your Points/Total Points = 80% to 89% = B
Your Points/Total Points = 70% to 79% = C
Your Points/Total Points = 60% to 69% = D
Your Points/Total Points = less than 59% = Failing

Reading Schedule

8/20 Introduction:
“Social Theory: Its Uses and Pleasures” Lemert pp 1-22
“Modernity’s Classical Age” Lemert pp 23-30
Ferdinand Toennies, Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, excerpts

CLASSICAL THEORY

8/27 Emile Durkheim
Suicide, excerpts.
The Division of Labor in Society, excerpts.

9/10 Karl Marx

Works by Marx from the Marx-Engels Reader. **purchase**:
Capital Vol. 1, Ch. XIV, Sec. 4 (division of labor), pp. 392-397.
“German Ideology,” pp. 149 bottom-165 mid, 172 top-174 bottom, 193-200.

**Appropriations and Alternatives:**
Heidi Hartmann, “Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex.”

9/17 **Max Weber** 231 pp.

*Works by Weber:*
- *Economy and Society*, excerpts on Social Action, Types of Legitimate Domination.
- “Bureaucracy,” excerpts.
- *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, pp. xxviii-xlii (author’s intro), 13-80, 102-125. **purchase**
- “Class, Status, Party,” excerpts.
- “‘Objectivity’ in Social Science,” excerpts.
- “Science as a Vocation”

*Appropriations and Alternatives:*
- Chp 11 in Calhoun: DiMaggio and Powell
- **Optional**: W.E.B. DuBois, “Of the Sons of Master and Man”

9/24 **Self and Society: Simmel, Mead, and Elias** 190± pp.

*Works by Georg Simmel:*
- “The Field of Sociology,” excerpts.
- “The Isolated Individual and the Dyad”
- “The Metropolis and Mental Life”

*Work by George Herbert Mead:*
- “Self,” excerpts.

*Work by Norbert Elias:*
- Chp 33 in Calhoun

*Appropriations and Alternatives*
- W.E.B. DuBois, “Forethought” and “Of Our Spiritual Strivings”
- Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Introduction

*Work by C.W. Mills*
- chp 14 in Calhoun

10/1 **Power, Science, and Technology** 170± pp.

*Works by Friedrich Nietzsche*
- “The will to power as knowledge” pp 261-331
- *Gay Science* pp. 167-220

*Optional: Katherine Marie Higgins on “Gender in the Gay Science”*
Work by Ludwig Wittgenstein:
   *Philosophical Investigations* pp 1-17.

*Works by Heidegger, Martin*
   “The Question Concerning Technology”
   “Science and Reflection”

Work by Hannah Arendt
   *The Human Condition* pp. 1-22.

Work by Steven Lukes
   Chp 17 in Calhoun

**Take-home Midterm distributed**

**CONTEMPORARY THEORY**

Analytical Perspectives

10/8 **Structural Functionalism and Critiques**  182 pp.

*Works by Talcott Parsons:*
   *The Structure of Social Action*, excerpts (optional)
   Toward a General Theory of Action, excerpts
   “An Outline of the Social System,” excerpts
   “Evolutionary Universals in Society”

*Work by Robert Merton:*
   “Manifest and Latent Functions,” excerpts

*Critiques:*
   David Lockwood, “Some Remarks on ‘The Social System’”
   Dennis Wrong, “The Oversocialized Conception of Man in Modern Sociology”
   Alvin Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*, excerpts (optional)


*Methodological Individualism, Rational Choice, and Social Exchange Theory:*
   George Homans, “Bringing Men Back In”
   George Homans, chp 5 in Calhoun
   Peter Blau, chp 6 in Calhoun
   James Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*, Chs. 1 & 2

*American Structuralism: Network Theory*
   Mark Granovetter, chp 10 in Calhoun
   Ronald Burt, chp 13 in Calhoun
   Harrison White, chp 13 in Calhoun

*A Feminist Critique of Rational Choice*
Friday 10/20   **Midterm Exam Due** in the T-Square Drop Box by 4:30 pm.

10/22   **Symbolic Interactionism & Affiliated Tradition**   approx. 165 pp.

*Phenomenology*
  Alfred Schutz, chp 1 in Calhoun
  Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality*, excerpts

*Dramaturgy*
  Erving Goffman, chp 2 in Calhoun.

*Symbolic Interactionism*
  Herbert Blumer, chp 3 in Calhoun
  Randall Collins, chp 4 in Calhoun

*Ethnomethodology*
  Kessler and McKenna: “Gender: an ethnomethodological approach”

**Critical Theory**

10/29   **Western Marxism: The Frankfurt School and Beyond**   approx 147 pp.

*The Frankfurt School*
  Max Horkheimer, “Traditional and Critical Theory,” excerpt
  Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, “The Concept of Enlightenment”

*Other Western Marxists*
  Antonio Gramsci, chp 15 in Calhoun
  Perry Anderson, “The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci”
  Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”

11/5   **Postcolonial and Feminist Theories of Knowledge**   approx 158 pp.

*Postcolonial Theory*
  Franz Fanon, “On National Culture” and chp 28 in Calhoun
  Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Ch. 1

*Feminist Theory*
  Patricia Hill Collins, Chp 27 in Calhoun
  Dorothy Smith, Chp 26 in Calhoun
  Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?*, Ch. 2
  Sandra Harding, “After the Neutrality Ideal: Science, Politics, and ‘Strong Objectivity’”

*Crisis and Change*
  Giovanni Arrighi, chp 37 in Calhoun
  Saskia Sassen, chp 38 in Calhoun
  Immanuel Wallerstein, chp 39 in Calhoun
11/12 **Critical Theory Today**  
approx 141 pp.

*Works by Jurgen Habermas: chps 30, 31 and 32 in Calhoun*
- “Knowledge and Human Interests: A General Perspective”
- “The Rationalization of the Lifeworld”
- “The Uncoupling of System and Lifeworld”
- “Social Analysis and Communicative Competence”
- “The Public Sphere”

*A Critique*
- Nancy Fraser, “What’s So Critical About Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender”

**Final Paper: Proposals Due**

11/19 **Michel Foucault**  
approx 163 pp.

*Works by Foucault: chps 19, 20 and 21 in Calhoun*
- *Discipline and Punish*, “Docile Bodies” and “Panopticism”
- *The History of Sexuality* Vol. 1, excerpt
- *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, “Discourse on Language”
- “Truth and Power,” excerpts

*Controversy*
- Nancy Hartsock, “Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?”
- Jana Sawicki, “Foucault and Feminism: A Critical Reappraisal”

11/29 **Structure and Agency Revisited chps 22, 23, 24 and 25 in Calhoun**  
151 pp.

Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital”
Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, excerpts
Pierre Bourdieu, “The Scholastic Point of View”
Anthony Giddens, “Agency, Structure” (optional chp 18 in Calhoun)

12/3 **Modernity, Postmodernism and Poststructuralism**  
113 pp.+

*Modernity*
- Norbert Elias, Chp 33 in Calhoun
- Zygmunt Bauman, chp 34 in Calhoun
- Anthony Giddens, chp 35 in Calhoun
- Bruno Latour, chp 36 in Calhoun

*The Condition of Postmodernity*

*Postmodern and Poststructural Theory*
Jacques Derrida, “The Decentering Event in Social Thought”
Jean-Francois Lyotard, “The Postmodern Condition”
Jean Baudrillard, “Simulacra and Simulations: Disneyland”

Friday 12/10? **Final Exam/Paper Due** by 4:30 pm - place a copy in the drop box on T-Square.

All week **Course/Instructor Opinion Survey (CIOS):** Go to [http://www.cetl.gatech.edu/cios/](http://www.cetl.gatech.edu/cios/)

**General Notice:**
All writing assignments are to be typed with a 10 or 12 point font. If this is a hardship for you, please see me. Please use gender neutral pronouns (i.e. he/she, they) and proper citations. All written work is to be your own original work and may not have been submitted in another class for a grade. Plagiarism violates GaTech’s code of conduct and students who plagiarize will be reported to the Dean of Students. If you have any questions whatsoever, read the Honor Code and discuss it with me. It is available at: [www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/Policy/code.in.sections.htm#AHC](http://www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/Policy/code.in.sections.htm#AHC).

Always use proper citation practices. If you have questions about writing and citation practices, please see me and/or the library’s website: [http://www.library.gatech.edu/search/citation_guide.php](http://www.library.gatech.edu/search/citation_guide.php). If it should happen that you need to deviate from the established syllabus in any way for any reason please be respectful of yourself, your classmates and the instructor by attending to the situation in a respectful, honest and professional manner.

Georgia Tech complies with the regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and offers accommodations to students with disabilities. If you are in need of a classroom accommodation, please make an appointment with the ADAPTS office to discuss the appropriate procedures as soon as possible in order for us to make appropriate modifications to ensure your success in HTS 6001. The website for ADAPTS: [http://adapts.gatech.edu](http://adapts.gatech.edu). Please note that accommodations can only be made for the future.

The instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus as needed. All changes will be announced in class and on T-Square. It is the student’s responsibility to stay informed.

"I neither knew how to develop an idea nor how to connect any ideas with those of others. I did not understand that it is necessary to know the literature of one's field well and to use that knowledge to give depth to one's own ideas. Since my ideas could not develop in a vacuum, they didn't develop at all. My ignorance was so complete that I did not understand that my inability to develop and sustain interesting ideas was not a reflection of my ability but of my ignorance and lack of training. I did not understand that ideas cannot come from nowhere and relate to nothing."

Research Review Response (one, scheduled via sign-up sheet on the second day of class)

This response requires you to read an additional article or book featuring empirical research that is based, at least in part, on the week’s theorists or theoretical schools. Additional readings may be located via Sociological Abstracts, found on the GT library website (search the theorist’s name as a reference, in the abstract, or “anywhere”). I am also happy to assist you in finding something.

After reading the empirical work, write about two pages, addressing most or all of the following:

1. What is the topic of the empirical work? What questions about that topic does it address?
2. How exactly is the theory (e.g., Marxist, Parsonsian, symbolic interactionism) invoked: As a set of sensitizing concepts? As a general framework for posing questions and conducting research? As one theory to be tested against others? As a problematic theory to be disproven? As a good but simple theory that requires elaboration? Other?
3. If the piece contains a review of topic-relevant literature, does it suggest that the theory is widely used in this area, or that the author is innovating by applying it to this topic?
4. How is the theory used to generate questions about the topic? Does the theory also suggest a range of answers to those questions, or particular methods of data gathering? Does it appear to constrain the range of questions, answers, or methods?
5. Does the author claim that research findings support or contradict the theory? Does this seem valid? Could the data also lead to different conclusions?
6. What theoretical implications does the author draw from the study? How does this study contribute to the ongoing critique/elaboration/use of the theory?
7. If you were examining the same topic and research questions, would you use this theory or a different one? Or, if you wanted to use this theory in empirical research, would you choose a different topic? A different question about the same topic? A different set of research methods? Overall, does the theory seem appropriate to the topic addressed, questions raised, and the methods employed?
8. Additional evaluations and/or observations?

Please provide a full bibliography entry for the work you have reviewed. In addition, note that you will be asked to speak briefly about the empirical piece and your response to it in class.
Research Proposal Response (only one, any week but preferably after your research review)

This response asks you to design an (imaginary) empirical study based on at least one of the theorists or theoretical schools we have read throughout the term (week 2 excluded). You can use any theorist/school and hand it in any week, but it is suggested that you do so after you complete the research review response outlined above—largely so you can see how other people incorporate theory into research before attempting it yourself.

Your response should address the following questions, though you are free to change the order (see also note below):

- What is your empirical topic?
- What is your empirical research question, i.e. What is it about your topic that are you trying to explain or understand?
- What theory or theories will you use to examine this topic? How will they enable you to explain or understand it? Why are these theories superior to others (note at least one alternative)?
- What is your theoretical research question, i.e. What gap in the theory will this empirical study help you fill? What aspect of social existence in general will the study allow you to understand more fully?
- What data and methods you will use to answer your theoretical and empirical questions? (You must propose something that is potentially doable, i.e. relevant data either exists already or is, in theory, collectable. However, there are no other constraints: you can imagine yourself working alone or heading a giant grant-funded project.)
- What kinds of answers (explanations, understandings) do you expect to generate with this combination of topic, theory, methods, and data (feel free to hypothesize and speculate)?
- What kinds of answers will you not uncover (again, feel free to hypothesize and speculate)? I.e., by using this particular theory, do you ignore other answers to your empirical questions that are equally or more plausible? By addressing this particular empirical topic, do you ignore other answers to your theoretical questions that are equally or more plausible?

Note: It is possible and often preferable to begin with a theoretical question and then choose an empirical topic that will allow you to address it. If you do so, you will want to alter the order of the first four questions above, and in some cases also their wording (e.g., #3, What empirical topic will you use to examine this theoretical question? … Why is this topic superior to others?).

Please provide a bibliography. In addition, you may be asked to discuss your response in class.
Central Questions in Social Theory  
Descriptions by Amanda Damarin

**Order:** What is the glue that keeps people living and working together in groups and societies rather than splintering apart? How are social stability and order created and maintained (or not)? Is social order voluntary or imposed, formal or informal, hierarchical or egalitarian, rational or irrational? Can different ordering mechanisms coexist in the same society?

**Change:** Is society best seen as a static entity or as an ever-changing process? What explains small- and large-scale social transitions: does history have a single decisive motor, or is change usually a multi-causal phenomenon? Does long-term change generally reflect progress, such that societies grow more complex, rational, just, or liberating, or does history reflect regress or move in no single direction?

**Agency and Structure:** Are individual and collective actions driven by will, purpose, or some other form of human agency, or are they shaped by larger social structures such as class divisions, group relations, or cultural formations? Is action voluntary or determined?

**Structure and Culture:** Are our actions and ideas shaped mostly by the larger beliefs and values of our surrounding cultural environment, or do they reflect social structure and our positions within it? How are cultural and structural forces related?

**Difference and Inequality:** What are the most salient differences among individuals and groups (e.g. class, status, gender, race, nation, other)? Are these differences natural or social in origin? If social, how do they come about? Is there a single, universal human nature that transcends all individual and group differences? How is difference related to distributions of wealth, power, prestige, and other “goods,” and hence to inequality? How do such relationships shift over time?

**Power:** What is power? How is it exercised? Is it a property of persons or of social structures? If a property of persons, how is it allocated? Is power usually repressive (power over) or can it be productive (power to)? What role does it play in everyday life and in larger social orders?

**Knowledge:** What are the origins of knowledge? Are there different forms of knowledge? How does knowledge differ from belief, interpretation, or opinion? What makes knowledge true—and what does “true” mean? How is knowledge acquired and distributed? How is it linked to other dimensions of social life such as power, difference, and order?

**Raison d’Etre:** What is the purpose of social theory and of empirical social or historical research? What constitutes valid social theory? Valid empirical explanation? Should social theory be value-neutral, and can it be? What role should social science play in social life?
READINGS:


