

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Department of Sociology
Sociology 731.01
Doctoral Seminar in Sociological Theory
Fall 2012

Instructor: Dr. A.W. Frank

Office: SS 916

Email: frank@ucalgary.ca, arthurwfrank@gmail.com

Office hours: Tuesday, Thursday, 11-12:00, or by appointment

Course hours: Tuesday 12:30-15:20

Sociology Department web page: <http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca>

Course objectives:

The seminar prepares advanced students to read whatever theoretical material is required by their individual research projects and to situate their work with respect to the development of sociological theory. Although, the scope of *theory* is extremely broad and will be a recurring topic for our discussions.

As a starting point, let me suggest that a *theory* in social science:

- is informed by empirical observations that it seeks to interpret, but theories can rarely be proven by observations or empirical materials;
 - most theories seem *underdetermined* by whatever empirical material the theorist presents;
- theories mix description with explanation;
- theoretical argument is not an experiment, but it does test a world view;
- the measure of a theory--its reach and staying power--depends on the distinctiveness of the world view it reflects;
- theories have more or less intended prescriptive implications; readers are left feeling that some ways of living are better undertaken than others;
- most theorists, over their careers, seem to expand the scope of their arguments more than they revise them;
- theories are more or less cohesive as formal arguments, but, good theories effect a coherence of what was either previously unrecognized or not understood as part of a pattern with some significance.

Each of the books we study is presented as a reading lesson in theory. A systematic survey is *not* attempted, although the instructor's lectures will contextualize each reading within its period, thus providing a selective survey. Our focus, however, will be on interpreting and making use of theoretical arguments.

Readings have been selected on the following bases:

- Each represents a significant intervention in the ongoing conversation of social theory.
- Each is, for its time and in its own way, a model of professional sociology.
- Each refers back to previous theorists, and each was taken up by future theorists.

- The readings have a continuity of issues and concerns which should give our discussions a cumulative effect.

Required Texts:

- Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility* (Harvard/Belknap)
- Axel Honneth, *Reification: a new look at an old idea* (Oxford)
- Erving Goffman, *The Goffman Reader* (Blackwell)
- Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Columbia)
- Michele Lamont, *Money, Morals, and Manners* (Chicago)

Course Requirements:

Final grades will be: 50% based on four short (1000 word maximum) essays on individual theorists; 50% based on a final essay.

- Models for essays are the “Comments” to Honneth’s Tanner Lectures.

Due Dates:

- Students are to write a short essay on four of the five books we read; your choice which. Essays are due one week after the last assigned reading of that theorist.
 - All four assignments must be completed with a passing grade in order to pass the course.
 - *Revision* of the first two essays will be allowed, with a new grade no higher than a B. Revised essays are due one week after the initial essay is returned to students.
- Final essay will be due Friday, December 7, no later than 4:00 p.m.
 - Papers can be slid under the instructor’s door, SS 916.
 - *Include a mailing envelope large enough for both the final essay and the final notes assignment*, if you want these returned. Depending on the season, protect work in an envelope, but no covers on papers, please.
 - Note that the Dec. 7 deadline is firm. The instructor is leaving Calgary for a conference in mid-December, and late submissions may not be graded until the end of January (students will receive an “Incomplete” until then).

Missed examinations: N/A, as there are no examinations in this course.

Late submission of essays will have *one* grade/day deducted (e.g., C+ to C).

- See University policy for acceptable excuses for lateness.

Essay format: The final essay should be no longer than 3,500 words. The essay is not a research paper; no additional reading is expected, but references beyond the assigned readings are welcome. Recall that *essay* derives from a verb *to test* something or put it on trial. Most of all, be clear what idea you are putting on trial how such an idea can be evaluated, and what significance the conclusion has for the continuing conversation of theory. Clarity of expression and the organization of ideas will count in the grade. Careful editing is crucial.

All written work should be typed or printed,

- double-spaced in 12-point font,
- with pages numbered and stapled together.
- Printing pages two-sided is preferred.
- The student's name and ID# should appear in the upper corner of the first page.
- Please do not put papers in covers.

Grades and Return of term work: Final essays and notes will be returned *by mail only*, in late January. Papers will *not* be returned through the Sociology Department Office, nor will grades be posted by the instructor (due to FOIP rules). Students who want their papers returned by mail should attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Keep a copy: As in every course, my friendly advice is to keep a printed copy of all work you submit. At some point you should have printed at least one draft to edit on paper; keep that too. Students who might want a letter of recommendation should keep copies of their written term work (again, good advice in all courses).

Lecture schedule and readings:

September 11 -- seminar introduction

September 18 -- Benjamin, editorial introductions; chapters 14-15, 28, 1, 6-9

September 25 -- Benjamin, chapters 31-45

October 2 -- Honneth, including Comments and Response

October 9 -- Goffman, pp. 3-91

October 16 -- Goffman, pp. 95-166

October 23 -- Bourdieu, chapters 1 & 2

October 30 -- Bourdieu, chapters 3-6

November 6 -- Bourdieu, chapters 7-10

November 13 (Reading Day, no seminar)

November 20 -- Lamont, Prologue, chapters 1-3

November 27 -- Lamont, chapters 4-7

December 4 -- concluding discussion.

Writing advice, especially for final essay.

- Almost any idea is a potentially good paper; it all depends on how you write it. Many of sociology's greatest works have been on topics that most people would have regarded as marginal or uninteresting. The imagination in "sociological imagination" is the ability to demonstrate the importance of aspects of social life that had seemed uninteresting in their marginality.
- The opening paragraph should do two tasks: engage the reader (make him/her want to continue reading) and tell the reader what the essay will accomplish or contribute.
 - A friend told me that academic papers should be structured like detective stories. A murder mystery begins with the discovery of a corpse; the reader knows that what follows will progressively solve who did it.
 - Any essay should open by "discovering the body"; that is, discovering whatever is consequentially troublesome and requires some kind of solution.
- The most difficult part of writing may be learning to read what you have written as if you were someone else, remembering that this someone else does not know what you mean to express—and that you have to make this person care about what you're trying to say. Writing requires G.H. Mead's idea of taking the role of the other.
- Writing begins in revision. The first draft is an opening offer; then you get to work.
- As you edit, concentrate on continuity: does each sentence and each paragraph lead into the next, or does the reader have to ask why you are suddenly talking about this? Writing requires meeting a reader's expectations, but without becoming predictable and thus boring. Each paragraph should do what the reader expects, but do it in a way that is unexpected.
- The old rule of "one idea, one paragraph" remains a reliable guide. In general, the first sentence states the idea of the paragraph. The next one or two (or three if necessary) sentences expand and refine this idea. The final sentence is a transition to the next paragraph. It puts the idea back in the context of the whole argument by suggesting what needs to be said next (maybe not explicitly, but enough for the reader to think "Of course!" at the start of the next paragraph).
- Never write, "in my opinion." If what you are saying needs this qualification (i.e., disclaimer), you should do more research until you can present it as more than your own opinion. The point of sociology is to present arguments that are compelling because they are more than the "opinion" of the writer—that's science.
- A conclusion should be more than a summary. The conclusion should notch up the importance of the argument, giving the reader perhaps the best reason why the essay matters. In a truly fine conclusion, the reader will realize that s/he could not have understood this final reason without having read the essay. The reader will feel surprised, yet the conclusion will make perfect sense.
 - A film critic once wrote that audiences will forgive anything during the movie's first 30 minutes, but nothing in the last 30 seconds.

Mandatory Information

Emergency evacuations:

In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom/lab, please proceed to the assembly point by [check link to find assembly point for your building] -- <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/node/75>

Deferrals:

If at all possible you must provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to take a test or pass in an assignment or essay on time. All requests for deferral of a course component due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the physical or emotional problem rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, the instructor can require you to write a “make up” test as close in time to the original test as possible or can choose to transfer the percentage weight to another course component. If the instructor schedules a “make up” test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the Department of Sociology.

Deferred Final Exam Form:

Please note that requests to defer a Registrar-scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar’s Office. Further information about deadlines, and where paperwork should be taken, is available on the form, which can be found at:

http://ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/APP%20FOR%20DF%20EXAM_0.pdf

Deferred Term Work Form:

Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It’s available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/defTW.pdf>

Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

Ethics Research: Students are advised that any research with human subjects--including

any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation--must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

Academic Misconduct: Plagiarism, cheating and other academic misconduct are regarded as serious academic offences. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct.

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside an instructor's office or the Department main office. Written assignments must be returned to students individually, during class, or during the instructor's office hours; if a student is unable to pick up her/his assignment s/he may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

Safewalk: The University of Calgary provides a "safe walk" service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.

Academic Accommodation: Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, phone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. It is a student's responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.

Handing in papers outside of class, return of final papers, and release of final grades:

1. When students are unable to submit papers in class, they should make arrangements to hand in their papers directly to the instructor or teaching assistant. Papers will not be accepted in the main Sociology Department office.
2. Final papers will not be returned through the main Sociology Department office. The Freedom of Information and Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place (i.e. outside an instructor's office, the department office etc.) Students who want their final papers returned by mail must attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the paper. Otherwise final papers will be available for pick-up only during the instructor's office hours at the end of this term or at the beginning of the next term.

3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are available only online.