**Course Description**

Does humanity make progress? Are we rational creatures? What is an economy, or culture, or power? Where do religion and ethics come from? And how do we find hope in the face of violence, loneliness, inequality, and the prospect of our own mortality? These fundamental questions about the human condition are the province social theory, a term that encompasses a wide range of methodologies and approaches including philosophy, psychology, politics, economics, linguistics, religion, anthropology, and sociology. This seminar will examine the theory and methods behind interdisciplinary inquiry in the humanities and social sciences via a number of classic thinkers in social theory, including Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Sigmund Freud, Theodor Adorno, Hannah Arendt, and Michel Foucault.

**Requirements**

Students will be expected to complete all of the course readings. These are often brief but usually complex. The course has two short assignments and a seminar paper. The first short assignment is due on February 24 and counts for 10% of the grade. The second is due April 7 and counts for 20%. In each case, students will be asked to write one 3-4 page essay taken from a list of suggested questions. The seminar paper of around 15 pages will be due on May 8 and will be worth 40% of the grade. Students are encouraged to develop their own topics of research, provided that they are related to the content of the course and approved of by the instructors. Attendance at all seminars and active participation are mandatory and constitute the remaining 30% of the grade. Please do not bring food, laptops, or other electronics/phones into class. (If you have a strong reason for needing to use a laptop in class, please come speak to us.) Water, coffee, tea, soda etc are fine.

**Readings**

All of the readings will be available on the course website except these books that students should acquire:

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978).

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality and Other Writings*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, trans. Carol Diethe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,* trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, [1912] 1995).

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, ed. and trans. Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells (New York: Penguin Books, [1905] 2002).

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989).

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

* Note: Please purchase only this addition and *not* the older one published by Continuum.

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1994).

Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

**Course Syllabus**

January 18: Course Introduction

January 23: Marx I

* + “On the Jewish Question.”
  + “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” (pp. 66-101).

January 25: Marx II

* + “*The German Ideology*,” (146-175).
  + “*A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*: Preface.”
  + *Capital*, Vol. I (294-302, 431-438).
  + “Inaugural Address of the Working Men’s International Association.”
  + “Speech at the Graveside of Marx.”

January 30: Nietzsche I

* + *The Genealogy of Morals*, Preface and Essays 1 and 2

February 1: Nietzsche II

* + *The Genealogy of Morals*, Essay 3

February 6: Weber I

* + *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

February 8: Weber Ii

* + “Science as a Vocation,” “Politics as a Vocation”

February 13: Saussure and Durkheim I

* + Saussure: Selections from *Course in General Linguistics*
  + Durkheim: *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Introduction and Ch. 1

February 15: Durkheim II

* + *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*
    - Book 2: Ch. 1, §3, Ch. 6, §1, Ch. 7 (all), Ch. 8, §§4-6
    - Book 3: Ch. 2, §3, Ch. 3, §2-3, Ch. 4 (all)
    - Conclusion
  + **First Assignment Distributed**

February 20: Freud

* + *Civilization and its Discontents*.

February 22: Du Bois

* + *Black Reconstruction in America*, Chapters I, XVI, XVII.

February 24: **First Assignment Due**

February 27: Heidegger

* + “The Question Concerning Technology.”

March 1: Fanon

* + “On Violence.”

March 6: Benjamin and Adorno and Horkheimer I

* + Benjamin: “On the Concept of History.”
  + Adorno and Horkheimer: Prefaces, “The Concept of Enlightenment,” and “Excursus I: Odysseys or Myth and Enlightenment.”

March 8: Adorno and Horkheimer II

* + “Excursus II: Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality,” “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” and “Elements of Anti-Semitism: Limits of Enlightenment.”

March 12 – 18: Spring Break

March 20: Arendt I

* + *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Part 2.

March 22: Arendt II

* + *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Part 3.
  + **Second assignment distributed.**

March 27: Keynes

* + *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, “Europe Before the War.”
  + “The End of Laissez-Faire?”
  + “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren.”
  + “A Self-Adjusting Economic System.”
  + *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*, “Concluding Notes on the Social Philosophy Towards which the General Theory Might Lead.”

March 29: Hayek and Friedman

* + Friedrich Hayek, “The Use of Knowledge in Society.”
  + Friedrich Hayek, “Why I Am Not a Conservative.”
  + Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, “Introduction,” Chapters I-II, XIII.

April 3: Foucault I

* + “Critical Theory/Intellectual History.”
  + *Birth of Biopolitics*, Lectures 1-2.

April 5 : Foucault II

* + *Birth of Biopolitics*, Lectures 5, 9.
  + “The Risks of Security.”

April 7 : **Second Assignment Due**

April 10: Goffman

* + *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

April 12: Geertz

* + “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.”
  + “Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight.”

April 17: (Joan) Scott

* + “Deconstructing Equality-versus-Difference: Or, the Uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism.”
  + “The Evidence of Experience.”
  + “The Vexed Relationship of Emancipation and Equality.”

April 19: (James) Scott

* + *Seeing Like a State*, “Introduction,” “Part 1,” and “Part 4”

April 24: Class Choice I

April 26: Class Choice II

May 8: **Seminar Paper Due**