

Explorations in Social Theory (Anth/Soc 275, Fall 2003)

J. Peter Ekstrom, Ph. D., Associate Professor of Anthropology
(C109; #3931 Office hours: MW: 4:00-5:00 or most anytime)

Thomas G. McGowan, Ph. D., Associate Professor of Sociology
(C107; #3932 Office hours: M & W 10:30-11:30; T & Th 9am – 9:40)

Course Statement

Social theory is the conceptual backbone of both anthropology and sociology. The purpose of this seminar is to study classic and contemporary contributions to social theory and to explore how these contributions have informed the development and practice of anthropology and sociology. This course is being co-taught by an anthropologist and a sociologist in order to provide the interpretive perspectives of both disciplines. We will take turns lecturing and leading discussions, and participate in all seminar meetings.

Participation in seminar discussions is mandatory and will be one of the criteria for determining your course grade (10%). The seminar will also require the completion of four essay papers (20% each) and a seminar presentation of one essay paper (10%). In addition to meeting on Tuesdays and Thursday we will meet on Monday evenings four times during the semester in order to provide the necessary time to discuss essays and other seminar material.

Required Texts

Farganis, James (ed.) 2004. Readings In Social Theory. 4'th edition. McGraw Hill: Boston.

Jackson, Michael. 1998. Minima Ethnographica. U. of Chicago Press, Chicago

McGee, R. John and Richard L. Warms. (MW) Anthropological Theory. Mayfield Pub. Co.

Ritzer, George 2004. Sociological Theory 6'th edition. McGraw Hill: Boston.

Taussig, Michael. 1988. The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America.
U. of North Carolina Press.

Grading

Essay #1	.....	20%
Essay #2	.....	20%
Essay #3	.....	20%
Essay #4	.....	20%
Presentation	.....	10%
Class Participation	...	10%

Tuesday	8/28	Overview of course goals and material
Tuesday	9/4	Overview of Sociological Theory Discuss chapter 1 in Ritzer (historical overview)
Thursday	9/6	Overview of Sociological Theory Discuss chapter 6 in Ritzer (contemporary overview)
Tuesday	9/9	Culture (MW, Ch. 2), Geertz, Wagner
Thursday	9/11	Evolutionism/Neomaterialism (MW, Ch. 22), Steward and Murphy
Tuesday	9/16	Durkheim Discuss chapter 3 in Ritzer (Durkheim)
Thursday	9/18	Durkheim Discuss chapter 2 in Farganis (Durkheim)
Tuesday	9/23	Structural functionalism (MW, 13, 15 and 23)
Thursday	9/25	Structuralism of the French variety, Levi-Strauss, (MW, Ch. 27)
Seminar meets between 5 and 7pm for presentations and discussion of essay #1		
Tuesday	9/30	Marx and Conflict Theory Discuss chapter 2 in Ritzer (Marx)
Thursday	10/2	Marx Discuss chapter 1 in Farganis (Marx)
Tuesday	10/7	Marx Discuss chapter 13 in Farganis (Critical Theory)
Thursday	10/9	Taussig, Part I and II
Tuesday	10/14	Taussig, Part III
Thursday	10/16	Taussig, Part III
Tuesday	10/21	Fall Break
Thursday	10/23	Symbolic Sociology Discuss chapter 10 in Ritzer and chapter 11 in Farganis

Seminar meets between 5 & 7pm for presentations/essay # 2

Tuesday	10/28	Symbolic Soc Discuss chapter 11 in Ritzer and chapter 10 in Farganis
Thursday	10/30	Phenomenology Discuss chapters 4 and 5 in Farganis
Tuesday	11/4	Weber Discuss chapter 4 in Ritzer (Weber)
Thursday	11/6	Weber Discuss chapter 3 in Farganis (Weber)
Tuesday	11/11	Jackson, Preamble
Thursday	11/13	Jackson, Returns
Seminar meets between 5 and 7pm for presentations and discussion of essay #3		
Tuesday	11/18	Jackson, Digressions and Assays
Thursday	11/20	Jackson, Here/Now
Tuesday	11/25	Discussion
Thursday	11/27	Thanksgiving break
Tuesday	12/2	Postmodernist social theory Discuss chapter 17 in Ritzer
Thursday	12/4	Postmodernist social theory Discuss chapter 14 in Farganis
Seminar meets between 5 and 7pm for presentations and discussion of essay #4		
Tuesday	12/19	Final class meeting