James Madison College
Michigan State University
Fall 2015: Tu-Th 12:40-2:00
339 Case Hall

MC280 - 003 Social Theory and Social Relations:

This course is intended as a foundation course for Social Relations and Policy majors and to introduce you to the logic, theories, and methods that are useful for understanding social relations. The course focuses on the processes and institutions that create social integration, social identities and roles, and social inequality and conflict, especially in contemporary American society. Some specific topics in the course will include how classical and contemporary theories inform our understanding of social problems and solutions. We explore issues such as how “modernization,” “capitalism,” and “postmodernism” explain our contemporary world, how social class, racial and gender categories change over time, and how theory is necessary to do social policy. But a more general course objective is to introduce students to the theoretical and research logics that allow deep understanding of social structures and processes. Thus, the course begins with the theoretical foundations of social scientific inquiry and cultural studies. We begin with the important role of social theory. We will also cover the logic and practices of various social research methodologies. The work of social analysis is demonstrated in the written texts and lectures and we will analyze these works to find out how they are constructed. We use these materials to gain understanding of how knowledge itself is constructed (an approach called the sociology of knowledge), as we assume that all social research is embedded in local social relations. That is, we learn more about the world as we challenge our ideas and understandings of the world and our assumptions about how it works. These theoretical and research tools will provide a foundation for analysis of a wide range of topics and are crucial to do the intellectual work required in advanced Social Relations courses given here at James Madison College. You need to learn here how to go about doing social research and analysis on your own. These foundations are crucial to undertaking policy analyses in upper division courses. (322 words)

Objectives of the course:

By the end of the semester, students will be able to know and apply key social scientific analytic concepts to understand social issues, to evaluate different paradigms, or ways of thinking, that affect our approach to social problems, and to know how to study a problem using social scientific methods. Your mastery of these course objectives will be assessed through a variety of written and oral assignments that allow you to practice and improve your analytic skills. Moreover, a number of co-curricular activities will be arranged throughout the semester to allow you to expand and stretch your intellectual experiences.

Required Texts:
All books are on reserve at the Main Library and/or in the James Madison College. Additional texts are recommended and available at the Main Library Course Reserve Desk for background reading.


Susan Ferguson, Mapping the Social Landscape (7th ed. preferred) HM826.M36 2008 - 2012

Annette Lareau: Unequal Childhood: Class, Race and Family Life 2nd ed. HQ767.9 L37 2011


**Additional Texts for Reference:** These texts are on reserve as an additional resource at the Main library course reserve desk and in the JMC library. Some excerpts are required.


**Course Assignments and Requirements:**

**Attendance and Participation (10%).** Your first task is to familiarize yourself with concepts and issues presented in the written texts and lectures. You should be prepared to tackle a new vocabulary in the coming weeks and I expect that you’ll have many questions that you can bring to class. You will need to practice these new concepts – much like a new language! – in writing assignments and in class discussion. The dates on the syllabus direct your reading assignments. Have text assignments prepared for the day they appear on the syllabus. Indeed, class attendance is fundamental. If you miss more than 2 unexcused class meetings, your final grade will be lowered .5 of a grade. Please see me in advance if you must miss a class. I expect everyone to speak up and contribute to the class every day. The Collaborative Discussion entries are designed to help you articulate your oral contributions.

**Analytic paper (1 for 20%)** One midterm short analytic essay of 7 pages is required, due You will compare Marx, Weber, and Durkheim and is due Nov.6. A separate handout will be provided.

**Four applied “lab” assignments (4 at 15% each).** You will turn in four applied “lab” assignments generated in conjunction with class discussion and lecture and can be considered lab work to reaffirm lessons. For instance, they will help you in understanding the foundations for your analytic papers. These take home assignments (and one in-class debate) will require different kinds of critical analysis and will take different forms, so separate handouts will be given out for each assignment. They are available on D2L.

**Collaborative Learning: Discussion Forum participation (10 entry and 10 responses per throughout the semester for 10% of total grade).** Your entry is must be completed and posted usually by Sunday at 11 pm – though some dates are different. The discussion forum topics are listed every week in the syllabus and can be found on D2L in the course table of contents under Piazza – a new interface available that I am still setting up for the course. While we will begin with a full class discussion forum, later you will be assigned to groups. The assignment requires you to write a one paragraph essay every week – about 300 words or so (see first paragraph above) – on the assigned topic as stated in the syllabus. You also need to respond to other class members entries. On September 8th you will bring a hard copy of your first post to class to exchange with a partner. Both your essay and your peer response will be graded. If you do an adequate job, each will be worth one point, though if you provide an outstanding contribution you will receive an extra .5 points. A good essay will include definitions of key concepts, textual referencing, connections to prior readings, applications to current events or other issues in the class, as well as helpful responses to peers’ entries. You need to get 10 points for a 4.0, 9 points for 3.5, 8 points for 3.0, etc. Group discussions will be formed later in September. I want to emphasize that this assignment is to enable students to participate and lead discussions during class time, to serve as a first draft and to work out ideas for their longer analytic papers, and to enhance student-led learning.
Assignment of Final Grades

10%  Attendance and Participation
20%  One analytic paper (7 pages)
60%  Four lab assignments - 15% each
10%  Collaborative Learning Discussion Forum Entries and Response (hard copy and/or Piazza line on D2L)  (10 entries plus responses total throughout the semester)

Honors Option: To earn Honors Option credit for this course (honors is available to all students in JMC – and three honors courses in core courses are necessary if you want to do an honors thesis in the College) you will have the opportunity to engage in an extra “seminar” meeting that meets outside of class. We will meet maybe once a week, though not for the whole semester. Details are forthcoming. To receive “honors” in the course, you need to earn a 3.5 or better for the course and to complete this common honors option course. There will be a separate reading and discussion meeting and an additional 5 page paper. Recommended readings on the syllabus should be read for the honors option readings throughout the course.

Office Hours:

I hold regular office hours on Thursdays from 5:30- 7:00 pm, but I am also happy to meet with you at alternative times if you cannot meet me during the designated office hours. I also think this is a great opportunity for any of you – singly or in friendly groups, to come discuss theory in more depth and to get questions answered outside of class. Finally, it can serve as a tutorial for those needing extra help or for those who want to really master using the language and conceptual architecture of theory. Please keep in mind that Madison courses receive 4 credits, while weekly class meeting times total only 3 hours. The JMC crediting system assumes that extra class meeting times are to be encouraged and as such, are built into our credit hours. I am happy to meet you for dinner on some Thursday nights at Case Hall.

Statement on Academic Honesty:

Madison students must strictly adhere to our code on Academic Honesty, as outlined in the JMC Handbook: "The faculty recognize that it is the responsibility of the instructor to take appropriate action if an act of academic dishonesty is discovered. It is further understood that a student may appeal a judgment of academic dishonesty to the Student-Faculty Judiciary. The Faculty Assembled recommend that in cases involving proven academic dishonesty, the student should receive, as a minimum, a 0.0 in the course and that a record of the circumstances, sanctions, and any appeal, be placed in the student's confidential file....The individual faculty member or the Dean may recommend further action, including dismissal from the University, to the Student-Faculty Judiciary. If a second case of academic dishonesty should occur, the recommendation is that the faculty, through the Office of Director of Academic and Student Affairs, should seek the student's dismissal from the College and the University." If you are suspected of copying prose without proper referencing, passing off excerpts or quotes or paraphrasing from someone else’s writing, including the internet, books assigned for class or additional readings, or from a fellow student's work, you will be asked to show original hand-written and/or computer generated notes. If you cannot prove all work done for this class is original work, you will receive no credit for the assignment and if academic dishonesty is found, you will receive 0 credit for this class, as well as having a permanent note in your file, which carries over on all transcripts and will be included in your record to potential employers or academic programs.

http://jmc.msu.edu/academic-standards/
SCHEDULE FOR READINGS AND DISCUSSION

PART 1: THE RELATION BETWEEN THEORY AND THE EMPIRICAL WORLD

WEEK 1: Introduction to C. Wright Mills’s “The Promise” and the Sociological Imagination

We will NOT meet on the first day of classes, Thursday, Sept. 3rd, as I will be out of town. Do complete the readings listed below and write up your first collaborative discussion assignment to turn in on our first class meeting Tuesday Sept. 8. The missed class date will be made up.

Read: Ferguson, Mapping the Social Landscape

Ch. 1 C. Wright Mills, “The Promise” pp.1-7 or online http://www.lclark.edu/~goldman/socimagination.html

About C. Wright Mills, http://www.D2Lfire.com/or/sociologyshop/CWM.html#fss

Ch. 10 Howard Becker’s “Culture: A Sociological View” 95-105

Begin Reading Lareau’s Unequal Childhood, Chaps 1-5 and 12 complete by 9-10

#1 Collaborative Discussion Forum Assignment: “JMC and My Sociological Imagination”
In a paragraph of about 300 words, define the concepts of the sociological imagination and culture and describe how you have used your sociological imagination to figure out your integration into the structure and culture of JMC. Provide a contribution on Piazza on D2L posted by Tuesday Sept. 8th by 10 am AND – due in class as a “hard” printed copy on Tuesday Sept 8. You will share this with a class partner in an exchange in class.

WEEK 2: Introduction to the Course and the Uses and Pleasures of Using our Sociological Imaginations

TU 9-8 Linking History and Biography: Definitions of Structure, Culture and Agency

Presentation: of Overview of the Course Syllabus and D2L

Discussion: “The Promise” by C. Wright Mills and “Culture” by Becker

Turn in: Collaborative Discussion Assignment 1.

Recommended Readings for H-option:
Additional recommended readings on social theory available on D2L:
C. Lemert: Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classical Readings
“The Uses and Pleasures of Theory” pp. 1-20 (pdf on D2L)
“Modernity’s Classical Age: 1848-1919” pp. 21-27 (pdf on D2L)
TH 9-10  Observing and Theorizing Class Cultures of Childrearing

Discussion: Lareau’s *Unequal Childhoods*, Ch 1-5 pp.1-104 & Ch. 12 pp. 233-257.

#2 Collaborative Discussion Forum Assignment due Sunday 9-13 by 11 pm:
Define the concepts of social structure, social agency, and culture and explain how they interact.

WEEK 3:  Conceptual Definitions and Applications

TU 9-15  Bourdieu’s Habitus and Social and Cultural Capital

Discussion:
2. Horace Miner’s “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema”  D2L.
   (Handout on D2L)

See websites:
Bourdieu’s intellectual biography and definitions of habitus and social capital:
http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Pierre%20Bourdieu
Bourdieu as public intellectual

TH 9-17:  Micro-Structural Practices and Qualitative Analysis

Lareau: *Unequal Childhoods*, Chaps 6-8, and Chap 10, pp. 107-181 and 198-220
   Appendices A, pp. 345-360 and C, 365-376

#3 Collaborative Discussion Forum Assignment due Sunday 9-20 by 11pm.
Define the concept of “habitus,” give an example from Lareau, and apply it to James Madison

WEEK 4:  The Logic of Social Science Inquiry: Combining Theory and Empirical Research

TU 9-22:  History and Biography Revisited: Mapping Causal and Influential factors
How culture and structural environments affect individual futures

Lareau: “Part 4 Introduction and Ch. 13  pp.259-311
   Chap. 15 “In Context” and Tables in Appendix D, pp. 333-343, 377-384.
The Vocabulary of Social Science inquiry and causal modeling

Read on D2L:

"The Vocabulary of Science" by Lisa McIntyre, *The Practical Skeptic*, pp. 52-73

#4 Collaborative Discussion Forum Assignment due Friday 9-25 by 11 pm:
Explain how Lareau controls variables in her research design.
How does she know that social class is the determinant process?

Due in class on Tuesday Sept 29: Lab assignment 1: Mapping Causal Processes:
How do new students get successfully socialized to James Madison College?

Part 2: THE USES AND PLEASURES OF CLASSICAL THEORY

Recommended readings on reserve:

Anthony Giddens: Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Weber. HM19 G53
Charles Lemert (ed) Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings HM51 S66245 2004

Week 5: Marx and Engels on History as Modes of Production and Modern Capitalism

“The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it. “
Marx: *The Theses on Feuerbach*

TU 9-29 Lessons from Classical Social Theory: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

Please read McIntosh (ed) Classical Sociological Theory
Introduction to Classical Theory:, pp. 1-8, Biography, pp. 13-14
The German Ideology, pp. 26-38
Review Prof. Jezierski’s ppt. on Marx and Engels on D2L

Explore the websites on Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels:
TH 10-1  Marx (and Engels) on Capitalist Accumulation and Appropriation

McIntosh (ed) Classical Sociological Theory
The Communist Manifesto, pp. 39-47
So-Called Primitive Accumulation pp. 72-96

#5  Collaborative Discussion Forum Assignment due Sunday 10-4:
Explain how Marxist theory is both a theory of social order and social conflict:
How is history generated through dialectic relations?

WEEK 6: Marxist views on Modes of Production and the Ordering of Social Relations
TU 10-6  Marx and Engels on Human Nature, Organization of the Family and State

Available from the internet:
Engels: On the Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State:
Chapter 8: “Barbarism and Civilization”
http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1884/origin-family/ch09.htm

and On Socialist Feminism: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-class/#1

TH 10-8  Alienation and Commodification

McIntosh (ed) Classical Sociological Theory
On Alienation and Estranged Labor, pp. 15-23
Wage, Labor, and Capital, pp. 48-65
Fetishism of Commodities, pp. 68-71

#6  Collaborative Discussion Forum Assignment due 10-11
Explain the four components of Marx’s concept of Alienation and provide contemporary examples from the readings. How is alienation different from Commodification?

WEEK 7: The Division of Labor differently understood: Marx to Durkheim.
TU 10-13 Life in Contemporary Capitalist Society: Exploitation and Alienation

Mapping the Social Landscape
26: Ehrenreich, Nickle and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America 278-290
32: LeDuff, At a Slaughterhouse, Some Things Never Die 354-363
43: Hochschild, The Time Bind 491-501

David Harvey Reviews Thomas Piketty: Capital on D2L
TH 10-15: Lessons from Classical Social Theory: Émile Durkheim

From Durkheim’s *Rules of Sociological Method* (1895)

“The first and most fundamental rule is: Consider social facts as things.”

“Man already had ideas on law, morality, the family, the state, and society itself before the advent of social science, for these ideas were necessary conditions of his life... The organisation of the family, of contracts, of punishment, of the state and of society appears thus to be simply the embodiment of the ideas we hold concerning society, the state, justice, etc... Not only are they within us, but, as they are a product of repeated experiences, they derive from repetition and from the habit resulting from it, a sort of dominance and authority. We feel their resistance when we try to shake them off. We are bound to confer the character of reality on phenomena which oppose us. All arguments thus converge to make us find the true social reality in these phenomena.”

See the Website on Émile Durkheim: [http://durkheim.uchicago.edu](http://durkheim.uchicago.edu)

Review Prof. Jezierski’s ppt presentation on Durkheim

McIntosh (ed) Classical Sociological Theory
Émile Durkheim: Biography and “The Division of Labor” pp.179-206

And Read On D2L:
“Society as Sui Generis” by Adams and Sydie, (2001)

Recommended: “Durkheimian Tradition in Conflict Sociology” by Randall Collins

#7 Collaborative Discussion Forum Assignment: Explain the differences between mechanical and organic solidarity and why Anomie is more prevalent in modern society. Provide contemporary examples. Due Sunday 10-18 by 11 pm.

Week 8: Modern Society As Anomic or Abnormal Forms of the Division of Labor

TU 10-20 Mechanical and Organic Solidarity

McIntosh: Solidarity and Anomie: pp.207-231. “What is a Social Fact?” & “Suicide”

TH 10-22 Solidarity and Anomie

Ferguson: Mapping the Social Landscape
16: Dyer: Anybody’s Son Will Do. Pp. 158-168
18: Adler and Adler: Peer Power, pp179-193

In Class Film: The Children of Rockdale County

#8 Collaborative Discussion Forum Assignment: Compare the paradigms of Social Order & Social Conflict: Explain how conflict and order are embedded in Marx, Durkheim, and Lareau’s theories of social relations. According to Lareau, how do modern families deal with anomic conditions of modern social change? Due Sunday 10-25 by 11 pm
Week 9: Lessons from Classical Social Theory: Max Weber

"Sociologically the state cannot be defined in terms of its ends. There is scarcely any task that some political association has not taken in hand, and there is no task that one could say has always been exclusive and peculiar to those associations which are designated as political ones... Ultimately one can define the modern state sociologically only in terms of the specific means peculiar to it...namely the use of political force."

Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation* (1919)

See this Website on Max Weber:  http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/weber/

TU 10-27 Rationalization: The Structures and Ideologies of Modern Capitalism

McIntosh on Max Weber: *Biography, pp.113-114*

*Legitimacy and Authority*, pp. 165-174

Review Prof. Jezierski’s ppt. Presentation on Max Weber

TH 10-29 On Bureaucracy and Rationalization of Society

McIntosh: The Iron Cage: On Bureaucracy and Rationalization, pp. 142-153

Ferguson, 41: Leidner: Over the Counter: McDonald’s 453-463

Ritzer: The McDonaldization of Society, pdf on D2L or

http://sociology.morrisville.edu/readings/SOCI101/Mcdonaldization-excerpt.pdf

#9 Collaborative Discussion Forum Assignment: Explain the dualistic nature (the good side and the bad side) of rationalization and how authority structures change with modernity.

Analytic paper due in my mailbox Friday November 6 by 4 pm  7 pp. double spaced

Understanding the Problems of Modernity:

A comparison of Anomie, Alienation, and Rationalization

WEEK 10: Weber on Politics: Class, Status and Power (CSP) and applications

TU 11-3 McIntosh Classical Sociological Theory

Class, Status and Party, pp. 132-141

Ferguson: *Mapping the Social Landscape*:

35: C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite pp. 391-397

37: Freeland, The Rise of the new Global Elite pp. 413-422
Intro to PESC

Kalberg's Introduction, pp. 8-63
Glossary, pp. 416-427

**#10 Collaborative Discussion Forum Assignment:** How does CSP help us to understand the complexities of interest group politics?

**Week 11:** The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (PESC)

**TU 11-10:** PESC, Part I. Chapters 1-3, pp. 67-109

**TH Nov. 12** PESC, Part 2, Chapters 4-5, pp. 113-179

Handout: Alan Wolfe (Also on D2L)
“The God of a Diverse People: How Americans overcame their Puritanism”

**#11 Collaborative Discussion Forum Assignment:** Calling versus Career: Explain how you chose your major course of study using a Weberian analysis. Identify the traditional, rational, or charismatic authority influences that shaped your choice of major field of study and your occupational goals.

**PART 3: THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL CATEGORIES AND INEQUALITIES**

**Week 12:** Social Class Structures

**TU 11-17** Inequality due to Functional Div. of Labor versus power conflict approaches

Ferguson, 23: Davis, Moore, and Tumin Debate: Principles of Stratification 243-252
Herbert Gans, “The Uses of Poverty” Handout on D2L

**TH 11-19** Conflict paradigm critical of the Functions of Class Division

Ferguson: 25: Race, Homeownership, and Wealth pp. 266-277
Dennis Gilbert (D2L) *The American Class Structure* Chaps 4 and 6.

**#12 Collaborative Discussion Assignment** Due 11-22 by noon:
What social class are you? Discuss the background of your family of origin and your own transitional social class. This will prepare you for the lab you will turn in next Wednesday. This website will help you identify your class standing.
Week 13: The Social Construction of Gender Differences and Inequality

TU 11-24  
In Ferguson, Mapping the Social Landscape  
27: Risman: Gender As Structure  pp. 291-301  
28: Lucal: What it Means to be Gendered Me  pp. 301-315  

In D2L  


#13 Collaborative Discussion Forum Assignment:  
Compare the assumptions of different paradigms for gender.

Lab Assignment 2: “Mapping your SES position” Due by Wednesday 11-25 noon

See separate handout and additional resources for your lab available on D2L:  

Review Charts on US Class Structure and Occupational Structure in Gilbert.

Website on Census categories on Race and Ethnicity and definition of poverty  
http://www.census.gov/

Provide an analysis within three pages to describe and explain your social class and the opportunity of social mobility within which your class standing is based. You will use CENSUS data, an interactive graphic table from The New York Times, and tables from Gilbert Chaps 4 and 6 (on D2L). Define the difference between structural mobility and individual mobility. How is the contemporary class structure in the United States changing? Explain how structural factors, such as the changing economy and state policy, enhance or constrain the opportunity structure for your individual mobility. Is your generation’s chance for upward mobility as open as those in the 1950s? 1970s? Use Gilbert to help you identify and map your social class standing (begin with your family of origin and consider your own trajectory for class standing

TH 11-26  
Happy Thanksgiving!
WEEK 14: Race Categories and Racial Formation

TU 12-1 The social formation of racial categories and discrimination

Ferguson, 31 Desmond and Emirbayer, What is Racial Domination? pp. 338-353

On D2L
WEB DuBois: excerpts from WEB DuBois: A Reader, ed. By David L. Lewis
“The Meaning of All This” The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study (1899) pp.162-164
“The Negro College” The Crisis, (August 1933) pp. 68-75,

See the Website on Census categories on Race and Ethnicity

TH 12-3 Racial Paradigms and Changing Constructions

On D2L:
Chapter 4: “Racial Formation” and Chapter 5: “The Racial State” pp.103-158
Conclusion: 245-269

#13 Collaborative Discussion Assignment: What difference does a paradigm make? Should the US government record racial and ethnic categories? What utility do these data serve? Think about how theoretical assumptions affect categorization and, ultimately, policy solutions.

Lab Assignment 3: “Charting 5 racial paradigms and policy outcomes”
Due in Class Dec. 8: See separate handout on D2L

PART 4: CONNECTING THEORY, EMPIRICAL RESEARCH, AND POLICY

WEEK 15: Invisible Inequality and Policy Non-Events


TH 12-10 Heat Wave, Chapters 4 and 5 pp. 165-224
Conclusion and Epilogue, pp. 225-242

#15 Collaborative Discussion Assignment: Use a Durkheimian, a Weberian and a Marxian analysis to describe how policy debates are constructed. Explain the phenomenon of a “non-event. Provide examples and mechanisms for improving policy transparency from Heatwave.

Lab 4: In class Debate: MWD and Heatwave see handout on D2
During Exam period Tuesday Dec. 15 12:45-2:45 pm