

**751 Contemporary Theory  
Fall 2021**

**Professor N. McLaughlin**

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**Class Meets On-Line From 11:00 AM to 2:00pm (not required)**

**Office Hours:** During class time when in session and not during the fall break: Other times by appointment.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This graduate seminar on contemporary theory will explore in detail debates about canons, the theory-method connection, the theory in the public sociology debate and questions about what it means to be critical, public, reflexive, positivist and global.

**REQUIREMENTS**

Response to readings: 10 best out of 12 = 20%

Essay on Canons: 25%

Theorizing Public Sociology: 20%

Final essay on concepts: 35%

There will be a 2% a day late penalty on all assignments, including the responses to the readings.

The response questions will be posted on Avenue to Learn, in the announcement space in advance of the class. The details for each assignment are posted on Avenue to Learn, under the headline "Details for Assignments." The response should be between one single space page and two single spaced pages, and as detailed as possible, while staying on the topic of the question asked. I will take all late responses without questions with a 15% late penalty by a final date noted in Avenue to Learn. Students should read the **BOLDED REQUIRED READINGS** and draw on at least one other article in doing the response. Reading all of the articles can increase your grade but it is not required for an A.

**Required Readings below are in BOLD**

**Week 1 Tuesday Sept 14: Introduction to Class and Canons**

Connell, RW. "Why is classical theory classical?." *American journal of sociology* 102, no. 6 (1997): 1511-1557.

Collins, Randall (1997). "A Sociological Guilt Trip: Comment on Connell," *American journal of sociology* 102: 6: 1558-1564.

**Week 2: Tuesday Sept 21: Predecessor Selection**

Camic, Charles. "Reputation and predecessor selection: Parsons and the institutionalists." *American Sociological Review* (1992): 421-445.

Camic, Charles. "Alexander's antisociology." *Sociological Theory* 14, no. 2 (1996): 172-186.

Alexander, J.C. and Sciortino, G., 1996. On choosing one's intellectual predecessors: The reductionism of Camic's treatment of Parsons and the Institutionalists. *Sociological Theory*, 14(2), pp.154-171.

**Week 3: Tuesday Sept 28: Lamont and Baehr**

Lamont, M. (1987). How to become a dominant French philosopher: The case of Jacques Derrida. *American Journal of Sociology*, 584-622.

Baehr, P. (2013). The Honoured Outsider: Raymond Aron as Sociologist. *Sociological Theory* 31:2: 93-115.

Lamont, M. (2019). From Having to Being, *The British Journal of Sociology* 70:3: 666-707.

Lamont, M. (2018). Addressing Recognition Gaps," *American Sociological Review*: 83:3: 419-444.

**Week 4: Tuesday Oct 5: Merton, Cosers and Du Bois**

**Lewis Coser, (1975). "Two Methods in Search of a Substance," *American Sociological Review*, 40: 6: 691-700.**

**Blau, Judith, and Eric Brown. Du Bois and Diasporic Identity, 19:219-232**

**Merton, Robert, (1949) On Sociological Theories of the middle range, *Classical Sociological Theory*,**

Morris Video talk on Avenue

**Week 5: October 12: Recess**

**Week 6: Tuesday Oct 19: Alford Types of Theory and examples**

**Alford, The Craft of Inquiry 1998.**

**Goffman, Erving. 1983. The Interaction Order, *The American Sociological Review*, 48:1: 1-17.**

**Seth Abrutyn and Anna Mueller, 2014. The Socioemotional Foundations of Suicide *Sociological Theory* 32:4: 327-351.**

**Mann, Michael. 1984. The autonomous power of the states, *European Journal of Sociology* 25: 2: 185-215**

**Week 7: Tuesday Oct 26: Public sociology**

**Burawoy, M., 2005. For public sociology. *American sociological review*, 70(1), pp.4-28.**

**Diane Vaughan, (2006). "NASA Revisited: Theory, Analogy, and Public Sociology, *American Journal of Sociology*, 112:2: 353-393.**

**Swartz, David L. (2003). From Critical Sociology to Public Intellectual: Pierre Bourdieu and Politics. *Theory and Society*, 32: 791-823.**

**Week 8: Tuesday Nov 2: Bourdieu**

**Cheliotis, Leonidas 2011. For a Freudo-Marxist Critique of Domination *Journal of Classical Sociology* 11:438.**

**Grillo, Carmen. 2017. Revisiting Fromm and Bourdieu *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 418-432.**

Paul Joose and Robin Wiley 2020. Gender and Charismatic Power, *Theory and Society*. 49: 533-561

**Week 9: Tuesday Nov 9: what does it mean to be critical**

**Axel van den Berg, Critical Theory: Is there still hope? *American Journal of Sociology*. 86:3: 449-478.**

**Martyn Hammersley, "Should Social Science be Critical? *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 35: 2: 175-195.**

**Jonathan Sterne,  
C. Wright Mills, the Bureau for Applied Social Research, and the Meaning of Critical Scholarship," *Cultural Studies* 2005.**

**Week 10: Tuesday Nov 16. What does it mean to be reflexive?**

**Monika Krause On Sociological Reflexivity *Sociological Theory* 2021: 1: 3-18**

Michael Lynch, Against Reflexivity, *Theory, Culture and Society* 2000 17:3: 26-54

Charles Lemert and Paul Piccone, Gouldner's Theoretical method and Reflexive Sociology,

**Week 11: Tuesday Nov 23, What does it mean to be public?**

**Eleanor Townsley, "Public Intellectual in Canada and the US," in *Speaking Truth to Power*," page 41-68**

**Jeffrey Alexander. On the Interpretation of The Civil Sphere," *The Sociological Quarterly* 2007: 48: 641-659.**

**Week 12: Tuesday Nov 30: What does it mean to be positivist**

**Mark Granovetter, (1983) “The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited,”**  
*Sociological Theory* 1: 201-233.

**Jonathan Turner, In Defense of Positivism, *Sociological Theory*, 3:2: 1985: 24-30.**

**Week 13: Tuesday Dec 7: What does it mean to be global.**

**Immanuel Wallerstein, The rise and future Demise of the World Capitalist System,**  
*Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16:4: 1974: 387-415.

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Mark Granovetter "The Strength of Weak Ties" AJS

Fanon, F., 1965. This is the Voice of Algeria. *A Dying Colonialism*. New York: *Monthly Review*, pp.69-98.



