

24.502: Topics in Metaphysics and Ethics
Spring 2012: Social Structure: What? How? Why?

Course Description:

Social and political theorists often talk of social structures, the positions of individuals within social structures, the effects of social structures, and even the breakdown of social structures. Common examples of social structures appear at different levels of breadth and depth. On the one hand, they include broad and deep social phenomena such as the wage-labor system of industrial capitalism and the heteronormative and bionormative nuclear family. On the other hand, they include much more local and flexible phenomena such as the structure of a particular institution such as a school, church, or business. As theoretical entities, social structures are postulated to do work in social theory. For example:

- a) They are invoked in structural explanations;
- b) They enable us to identify and critique structural injustice;
- c) They provide a framework for locating and theorizing cultural difference;
- d) They provide the (both enabling and constraining) context for human agency.

Needless to say, sociologists have a multiplicity of competing theories about social structures answering a variety of questions. However, social structures (and social practices within structures) are relevant to a broad range of philosophical issues, not only in moral and political philosophy, but also concerning topics in epistemology (how do social structures both enable and constrain us as knowers?), metaphysics (to what extent is the postulation of social structure consistent with methodological individualism, and should we care if it isn't?), philosophy of social science (to what extent are structural explanations compatible with rational choice theory)? The goal of the seminar will be to develop a philosophically useful account of social structure, drawing on recent work in the social sciences, and to draw out the implications of this account (and competing accounts) for ongoing philosophical debates.

Instructor: Sally Haslanger

Time: Mondays 12:30-3:30

Place: 32-D831

Requirements:

- Individual meeting with instructor to discuss term paper topic by April 27.
- Class presentation of draft of term paper (including main question, thesis and sketch of argument) on May 7 or 14 (or other date agreed upon).
- 20-25 page term paper, complete draft due by Monday May 21, 5pm.

Required Text:

Alan Garfinkel. 1981. *Forms of Explanation: Rethinking the Questions in Social Theory*. Yale University Press.

Useful background text:

Brian Fay. 1996. *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Additional readings will be available on the Stellar site for the course.

Stellar Site: <https://stellar.mit.edu/S/course/24/sp12/24.502/index.html>

Schedule

Monday, February 13: Introduction

No assigned reading

Useful background reading:

- *Sherry Ortner. 1984. "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26(1): 126-166.
- Stuart Hall. 1994/ 1980. "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms." In *Culture/Power/History*, ed., Nicholas Dirks, Geoff Eley, Sherry Ortner. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jane Collier and Sylvia Yanagisako. 1989. "Theory in Anthropology Since Feminist Practice." *Critique of Anthropology* 9(2): 27-37.

Brad's class: February 16, Contrastive Explanation

Garfinkel, Intro, Ch 1.

Tuesday, February 21: Small taste of 1970's feminist social (socialist..) theory

Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex."

Other useful reading:

- Christine Delphy. 1984. "The Main Enemy." In *Close to Home*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Heidi Hartmann. 1981. "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union." In *Women and Revolution* ed., Lydia Sargent. Boston: South End Press, pp. 1-42.
- Catharine MacKinnon. 1982. "Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: An Agenda for Theory." *Signs* 7(3): 515-544.
- Iris Young. 1981. "Beyond the Unhappy Marriage: A Critique of the Dual Systems Theory." In *Women and Revolution* ed., Lydia Sargent. Boston: South End Press.
- _____. 1990/1980. "Socialist Feminism and the Limits of Dual Systems Theory." In *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.

→ If you are interested, I can also provide a set of readings on race and racial structures.

Brad's class: February 23, Reductionism

Garfinkel, Ch 2.

Sober, The Multiple Realizability Argument Against Reductionism.
Kitcher, 1953 and all that.

Monday, February 27: A brief look at explanation

Garfinkel (1981), Intro, Ch. 1.

Other useful reading:

- Elliott Sober. 1986. "Explanatory Presupposition." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 64(2): 143-49.
- Fred Dretske. 1988. *Explaining Behavior: Reasons in a World of Causes*. MIT Press, Ch. 1-2.
- Elizabeth Anderson. 1995. "Knowledge, Human Interests, and Objectivity in Feminist Epistemology." *Philosophical Topics* 23(2).
- Sylvain Bromberger. 1992. *On What We Know We Don't Know: Explanation, Theory, Linguistics, and How Questions Shape Them*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Little, Daniel. 1990. *The Varieties of Social Explanation*. Westview.

Brad's class: March 1, Individualism in Social Thought

Garfinkel, Ch 3.

Monday, March 5: Structural Explanation and Rational Choice

Garfinkel (1981), Ch. 2.

Satz, Debra and John Ferejohn. "Rational Choice and Social Theory." *The Journal of Philosophy* 91, no. 2 (1994): 71-87.

Other useful reading:

Elliott Sober. 1983. "Equilibrium Explanation." *Philosophical Studies* 43(2): 201-210.

Elizabeth Anderson. 2002. "Should Feminists Reject Rational Choice Theory?" In *A Mind of One's Own*. Second Edition. Ed., Louise Antony and Charlotte Witt. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Ann Cudd. 2002. "Rational Choice and the Lessons of Feminism." In *A Mind of One's Own*. Second Edition. Ed., Louise Antony and Charlotte Witt. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Elizabeth Anderson. 2001. "Unstrapping the Straightjacket of 'Preference'." *Economics and Philosophy* 17: 21-38.

Fabienne Peter and Hans Bernhard Schmid, ed. 2007. *Rationality and Commitment*, Oxford Univ. Press.

Brad's class: March 8, ...and in Biology

Garfinkel, Ch 4.

Monday, March 12: Structures, Practices and Injustice

Garfinkel Ch. 3 (&4)

Iris Young. 2011. "Structure as the Subject of Justice." In *Responsibility for Justice*. Oxford University Press.

Other useful reading:

Iris Young. 2006. "Education in the Context of Structural Injustice." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 38(1): 93-103.

Iris Young. 2009. "Structural Injustice and the Politics of Difference." In *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy*, ed., Thomas Christiano and John Christman.

Sally Haslanger, 2000. "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?" *Noûs*.

Ann Cudd. 2006. *Analyzing Oppression*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[Dorothy Smith. 1987. *The Everyday World as Problematic*. Boston: Northeastern University Press. Ch. 3]

Thursday, March 15 – Meet with Brad's Seminar – Explanation and Value

Garfinkel Ch. 5-6

Other useful reading:

Elizabeth Anderson. 1995. "Feminist Epistemology: An Interpretation and a Defense." *Hypatia* 10(3): 50-84

Fricker, Miranda. 2007. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford University Press.

Helen Longino. 1990. *Science as Social Knowledge*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Monday, March 19 – No class. Sally out of town.

Monday, March 26 – No class. Spring Break.

Monday, April 2 – Social structure in social science

William H. Sewell, Jr. 1992. “A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency and Transformation.” *The American Journal of Sociology* 98(1): 1-29.

Other useful reading:

William Sewell. 1999. “The Concept(s) of Culture.” In *Beyond the Cultural Turn* (1999), pp. 35-61.

Anthony Giddens. 1994/1979. *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

John Berger and Thomas Luckmann. 1967. *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York: Anchor Books.

Pierre Bourdieu, selection TBD.

Barry Barnes. 2001. “Practice as Collective Action.” In *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed., Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina and Eike Von Savigny. NY: Routledge, pp. 17-28.

Joseph Rouse. 2001. “Two Concepts of Practice.” In *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed., Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina and Eike Von Savigny. NY: Routledge, pp. 189-198.

John Searle. 2010. *Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization*. Oxford University Press.

Monday, April 9 – Material resources

Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 4.

Additional reading TBD.

Other useful reading:

Michel Foucault. 1995. *Discipline and Punish, 2nd edition*. Vintage Books.

Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital.” In J. Richardson (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood, pp. 241-258.

Monday, April 16 – No class. Patriots’ Day.

Monday, April 23 – Schemas and Ideology

Silbey, Susan S. 1998. “Ideology, Power and Justice.” *Justice and Power in Sociological Studies*. Eds. B. Garth and A. Sarat. Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, pp. 272-308.

Virginia Valian. 1998. *Why So Slow?* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press., Ch. 6.

Other useful reading:

Shelby, Tommie. 2003. Ideology, Racism and Critical Social Theory. *The Philosophical Forum* 34, no. 2: 153-188.

Louis Althusser. 2001. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Translated by Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Terry Eagleton. 2007/1991. *Ideology: An Introduction*. London: Verso.

Antonio Gramsci. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Ed., Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. London: International Publishers Co.

T. Purvis and A. Hunt. 1993. “Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology...” *The British Journal of Sociology* 44: 473-499.

Reymond Geuss. 1981. *The Very Idea of a Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stuart Hall. 1996. “The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees.” *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed., David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen. New York: Routledge.

Monday, April 30 -- Agency and Identity

Ian Hacking, 2004/?? “Making Up People.” In *Historical Ontology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Other useful reading:

Hall, Stuart. 2000. “Who Needs Identity?” In Paul du Gay, J. Evans, P. Redman, P (eds.), *Identity: A Reader*. Sage Publications, pp. 15-30.

Taylor, C. 1985/1971. “Interpretation and the sciences of man.” In *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*: Cambridge University Press.

There’s lots more!! (Just ask.)

Monday, May 7 – Presentation of student drafts

Monday, May 14 – Presentation of student drafts

Monday, May 21 – Drafts of term papers due.