

## **MSTU5606 Communication Theory and Social Thought**

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(Please email me to schedule a specific time slot)

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MSTU5606 • MSTU5607: Fall 2008 and Spring 2009

Readings in Communication theory and social thought is a year-long course, sampling the work of key 20th-century social thinkers. Each week during the academic year, we will read and discuss the work of an important historical contributor to theories of communication and social life. A basic schedule for the year is in the MSTU5606 Navigator to the right of your screen. The dates (9/3 • 1, 9/10 • 2, etc.) link to a more detailed schedule, indicating readings and StudyPlace resources that we will add to and draw on. Here are some preliminary reflections on the course.

Teachers, academics, artists, journalists, public leaders, intellectuals — educators all — aggregate their work into an encompassing formative ethos, which feeds back upon their efforts, powerfully conditioning them. This formative ethos, itself massively moving, ever interacting with emergent events, filled with cross-currents and eddies, works on each in unique, determinate ways, setting limits on potentialities, defining a complex ecology of feasible actions. As participants in this formative ethos, we struggle to build up our capacity to understand and anticipate the changing character of it, to grasp how it affects historical action, personal and public, perhaps even to shape it by an increment towards what we deem to be the better, or away from what we fear to be the worst. As participants in the formative ethos, we seek to anticipate what knowledge, skills, and values will prove to be of most worth, both for us and others, as the influence of events, foreseen and unforeseen, reverberates through the formative ethos of our time. We can strengthen our capacity for such anticipation by attending to our predecessors diagnosed the challenge of self-determination within the encompassing formative ethos that they faced. In this course, we study examples of such efforts in twentieth-century Western experience.

A basic question drives our inquiry. How does education, understood as an historical component of all human experience, salient in the lives of every person and in the fate of every group, shape human interaction and condition the quality of life? This is one of the great pedagogical problems, prior to all professional educative efforts. To come to grips with it, we need to look, not at the norms and actualities of formal education, but at efforts to explain and interpret the ways in which humans give themselves determinate character and capacities in the course of their historical interactions. We can strengthen our capacities for such an inquiry by contending with the ideas about communication and

social action developed by leading thinkers since the late 19th century. In doing so, we will then be engaged primarily in concept formation, *Begriffsbildung* in German — the fashioning of ideas with which to grasp the structure and meaning of human experience. Concepts so formed become formative in their turn, allowing people to try to draw new potentialities from the flux of their experience. In reading through our agenda of weekly works, we have the task of developing a clear and thoughtful inventory of the key concepts each writer worked to form. As a tangible outcome of our work, we should develop conceptual glossaries for each writer that we read as collaborative contributions about each on StudyPlace.

Here are a few tips about how we can best confront each reading. Each week, we should concentrate on a distinctive text, one that requires sustained, close reading. In class meetings, we should seek primarily to engage through conversation directly with the text in question, seeking to ground what we have to say by reference to particular words and passages in the text we have in common. We should not expect the seminar to impart a body of established knowledge that about some historical synthesis of social thought in the 20th century that we deem authoritative. An appreciation of common themes and concerns should emerge, unique for each participant, but we should not try to read each text as an example of some given context, ticking off which themes and concerns in the context the work reflected, as if the purpose animating it had merely been to illustrate some pre-existent givens. We strengthen our capacities to construe the context of our lives by seeking to appreciate through the close reading of substantial works how prior authors construed the contexts of their lives.

In addition, we should not presume that our selection of texts merits attention because it forms an authoritative canon, an optimal foundation for sound theorizing about communications and society in the present. We select thinkers whose work achieved a challenging intellectual richness, forming concepts that were both deep and broad in relevance to historical experience. We build our own capacity to form powerful concepts, to engage in *Begriffsbildung*, by exercising our capacity to engage such work by others. We simply want to ask what sort of conceptual resources we find in each text, taking it as an autonomous work that we seek to experience in its integrity, as best we can under the constraints. We, merely human, need to contend with the work as peers of it, for it is the fruit of the merely human. What can we learn from the work? What can we do with the concepts formed in it and conveyed through it? Do these help us make sense of our experience of our world? What do we find surprising in them? Disturbing? Confusing? Inspiring?

As the texts we read are not authoritative, our reading of them must be tentative and initial. One week permits only a too-brief encounter. An expansive intellect samples many works and much experience, returning recurrently with sustained attention to a chosen few of them. Those constitute a working canon for each of us, deriving its authority from each of us for each of us. Here we should work more quickly, seriously sampling possibilities. For what purpose would I include this work and others by this writer among those to which I think in future I might return? Of what potentials in my own educational and intellectual options do I find this work exemplary? What cautionary

tales may it offer? To what degree does the work and the concepts it offers support my interior discourse about the meaning of my world and my potential for action within it? All these are among the many questions before us.

Meetings

**1 • 9/3: Introductory**

**2 • 9/10: Marx & Engels, 1844-1888**

Study Marx • Study Engels

Discussion reading:

For our class discussion on September 10th, let's concentrate first on the two versions of "Theses on Feuerbach" and then on Manifesto of the Communist Party. We have added in these initial readings from Marx and Engels in an effort to call to mind background from 19th-century social thought that may be useful in subsequent readings. In this respect, the work of Marx and Engels has a two-sided importance — internally it is an important part of the relevant background, and externally it stands as a reminder, and perhaps a conduit, to many other 19th-century contributors to the background relevant to 20th-century social thinkers. With Marx and Engels, we are in a sense alluding to a complex web of influences to which we can be alert in our further readings even though we can never adequately take it into account.

- \* Karl Marx, 1845:
  - o "Theses on Feuerbach", original, published 1924
  - o "Theses on Feuerbach", Engels' edit, 1888
- \* Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, 1848:
  - o Manifesto of the Communist Party

Supplementary:

- \* From Karl Marx. 1844: "Estranged Labor" in Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844.
  - o "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy in General" in Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts. (This is a difficult text, but illuminating if you are interested in the relation of Marx to Hegel. Engels deals with that from a more finished perspective in Socialism: Utopian and Scientific.)
- \* From Karl Marx, 1867: Capital, Volume 1:Chapter 1
- \* Karl Marx, 1875: Critique of the Gotha Programme
- \* Friedrich Engels, 1880: Socialism: Utopian and Scientific (to edit readings. . . )

### **3 • 9/17: Emile Durkheim, 1893 & 95**

Study Durkheim

Discussion reading:

\* Emile Durkheim. *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893). W. D. Halls, trans., New York: The Free Press, 1984. Chapters 1-3, pp. 1-87. Electronic Reserve. \$17.95.

\* Emile Durkheim. *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895). W. D. Halls, trans., New York: The Free Press, 1982. Chapters I and II, pp. 50-84. Electronic Reserve. \$17.95.

(to edit readings. . . )

### **4 • 9/24: Ferdinand Tönnies, 1887**

Study Tönnies

Discussion reading:

\* Ferdinand Tönnies. *Community and Civil Society* (1887). Jose Harris and Margaret Hollis, trans. (New York: Cambridge University Press 2001). \$25.00, especially "Book One: A General Classification of Key Ideas" pp. 15-91, Electronic Reserve.

\* Here is a reading strategy for engaging the text in a relatively limited time. First read the table of contents of the whole book. Then page through the file in five minutes or so to get a sense of what is there. Skip the Preface and read the opening sub-section of "The Argument" (pp. 17-20). Then read sub-sections 1-2, 5-7, 10, 13, and 18 in "The Theory of Gemeinschaft," and sub-sections 19-23, 25, and 35-39 in "The Theory of Gesellschaft," skimming the sub-sections you skip over. It is relevant to think about similarities and differences between Tönnies and Durkheim. It is important to note that they use mechanical and organic in differing ways. It may also be helpful to be aware that Tönnies came from a prosperous peasant family in the farm area just south of Denmark. In addition to high stature among German sociologists, he was a prominent specialist on the work of Thomas Hobbes and his academic career suffered because Prussian governing authorities distrusted his sympathies for Social Democratic actions.

Supplementary reading:

\* Ferdinand Tönnies. *Community and Civil Society* (1887). Jose Harris and Margaret Hollis, trans. (New York: Cambridge University Press 2001). \$25.00, especially "Book Two: Natural Will and Rational Will," pp. 95-175, Electronic Reserve; and Book Three: "The Sociological Basis of Natural Law," pp.179-243, Electronic Reserve.

\* Werner J. Cahnman. "Tönnies and Durkheim," in Cahnman, ed., *Ferdinand Tönnies: A New Evaluation -- Essays and Documents*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973, pp. 239-256. Electronic Reserve.

## 5 • 10/1: Max Weber, c. 1910

### Study Weber

#### Discussion reading:

\* Max Weber. "Basic Sociological Terms" in *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), Vol. 1, pp. 3-62. Electronic Reserve

o In reading Weber's discussion of basic sociological terms, let us concentrate on grasping what he means in his description of sociology as "a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences" (p. 4). What might Weber have understood by science, interpretive understanding, social action, and causal explanation? Is his concern with these and other basic concepts what you would expect or is it a bit surprising to you?

o *Economy and Society* is a huge work, posthumous (although largely in a form that Weber gave it). Peruse the "Summary contents" to get a sense of what the whole covers (note that Chapter VI, Religious groups, Chapter VIII, Economy and law, and Chapter XVI, the City, are book-length components). Next I'd page through the whole chapter on basic concepts, to get a sense of its content and structure. Then I would read section 1a and 1b carefully, the first 20 pages or so. The main definitions in the subsequent sections (in regular type) are quite compact, elucidated by numbered remarks (in smaller type). I'd read the definitions and skim (not skip) the remarks in an effort to get a sense of what Weber was trying to grasp through his *Begriffsbildung* (concept formation), of which all this gives the distilled results. You might wonder which of his concepts were most important for Weber and you might also reflect on whether they still have significant importance for 21st-century inquiry.

#### Supplementary reading:

\* Max Weber. "Types of Social Action and Groups," Appendix I of *Economy and Society* (Vol. 2, pp. 1375-1380). Electronic Reserve

\* Max Weber. "The Plebeian City" and "Ancient and Medieval Democracy" in *Economy and Society*, Vol 2, pp. 1301-1372, esp., 1339-1372. Electronic Reserve

\* See [www.zeno.org](http://www.zeno.org) for Weber's work in German.

## **6 • 10/8: Georg Simmel, 1903, 1904**

Study Simmel

Discussion reading:

\* Georg Simmel. "The Web of Group-Affiliations" in Simmel, *Conflict and the Web of Group-Affiliations* (New York: The Free Press, 1964) pp. 125-195. Electronic Reserve

o This essay is a good example of the early 20th-century effort at concept formation, seeking to develop conceptual resources for explaining how persons achieved individuality while engaging in many-sided social linkages. Look for similarities and differences with Tönnies and Weber.

\* Georg Simmel. "Fashion" and "The Metropolis and Mental Life" in Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, Donald N. Levine, ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1971), pp. 294-339. Electronic Reserve

o Simmel published much of his work through essays for a well-educated, general audience, a style represented in these.

## **7 • 10/15: Building a Course FAQ**

\* Let's build a FAQ for the course by listing questions and concerns about the reading we have done, and will do, that you have on your mind at this point and developing responses to them. In preparation for our discussion October 15th, list any concern that you would like to clarify on the Course FAQ and we can discuss and develop responses in class.

## **8 • 10/22: W. E. B. Du Bois, 1903**

Study Du Bois

Discussion reading:

\* W. E. B. Du Bois. *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003). \$5.95. Google Books.

## **9 • 10/29: John Dewey, 1927**

Study Dewey

Discussion reading:

\* John Dewey. *The Public and Its Problems* (1927). (Athens, OH: Swallow Press, 1990). Online Reading: Past Masters. (Login with your Cunix ID and password. click on "Dewey, Collected Works." Expand Dewey's Later Works. *The Public and Its Problems* is in Vol. 2.) B&N, \$13.95.

**10 • 11/5: G. H. Mead, 1908/1930**

Study Mead

Discussion reading:

\* Selected Essays: MSTU5606/George H. Mead

**11 • 11/12: Karl Mannheim, 1929**

Study Mannheim

Discussion reading:

\* Karl Mannheim. *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (1929). Louis Wirth and Edward Shils, trans., (New York: Harvest Books, 1936). Chapters I, II, and V; pp. 1-108, 264-311. Electronic Reserve. \$15.00.

**12 • 11/19: Siegfried Kracauer, 1930**

Study Kracauer

Discussion reading:

\* Siegfried Kracauer. *The Salaried Masses* (1930). Quintin Hoare, trans. (New York: Verso, 1998). B&N, \$15.00.

**13 • 12/3: Antonio Gramsci, 1930+/-**

Study Gramsci

Discussion reading:

\* Antonio Gramsci. *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916-1935* (1930+/-). David Forgacs, ed., (New York: New York University Press, 2000). pp. 53-75, 189-245, 300-322, and 363-402. Electronic Reserve. \$27.95.

**14 • 12/10: Walter Benjamin, 1935+/-**

Discussion reading:

\* Walter Benjamin. *Illuminations* (1935+/-). Hannah Arendt, ed. (New York: Knopf, 1979). "Introduction" (Hannah Arendt), "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), and "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940); pp. 1-59 and 217-264. Electronic Reserve. \$13.50.

**15 • 12/17: Erich Fromm, 1942**

Study Fromm

Discussion reading:

\* Erich Fromm. *The Fear of Freedom* (1942). (New York: Routledge Classics, 2001). Online: CU Ebrary B&N, \$14.00.

**16 • 1/21: Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944**

Study Horkheimer & Study Adorno

Discussion reading:

\* Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (1947). Edmund Jephcott, trans. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002). xi-xix, 1-62, 94-136, 217-252. Electronic Reserve\_1, Electronic Reserve\_2. \$22.95.

**17 • 1/28: Joseph Schumpeter, 1947**

Study Schumpeter

Discussion reading:

\* Joseph A. Schumpeter. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (3rd. edition, 1942, 1947, & 1950). New York: HarperCollins, 1976. Part II. *Can Capitalism Survive?* Electronic Reserve; Part IV: *Socialism and Democracy*, Electronic Reserve. \$16.00.

**18 • 2/4: Karl Polanyi, 1944, 1957**

Study Polanyi

Discussion reading:

\* Karl Polanyi. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (1944, 1957). 2nd paperback edition with a Foreword by Joseph E. Stiglitz and an Introduction by Fred Block. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001). Chapters 11-21, pp. 136-268. Electronic Reserve. ACLS Humanities E-Book \$22.00.

**19 • 2/11: David Riesman, 1950**

Study Reisman

Discussion reading:

\* David Riesman. *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (1950, 1969). Abridged and revised edition. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). pp. 31-108, 163-238. B&N, \$17.95.

**20 • 2/18: C. Wright Mills, 1956**

Study Mills

Discussion reading:

\* C. Wright Mills. *The Power Elite* (1956). (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Chapters 1, 5, 6, and 12-15; pp. 3-29, 94-146, and 269-361. Electronic Reserve. \$18.95.

**21 • 2/25: Roland Barthes, 1957**

Study Barthes

Discussion reading:

\* Roland Barthes. *Mythologies*. (1957) Annette Lavers, trans., New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1989. Electronic Reserve. \$10.80.

**22 • 3/4: John K. Galbraith, 1958**

Study Galbraith

Discussion reading:

\* John Kenneth Galbraith. *The Affluent Society*. Fortieth Anniversary Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1958, 1998. Chapters 1-11, 21-24. pp. 1-131, 223-264. Online: CU NetLibrary Electronic Reserve. \$13.50.

**23 • 3/11: Hannah Arendt, 1958**

Discussion reading:

\* Hannah Arendt. *The Human Condition* (1958). 2nd edition. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998). Prologue, Parts I, II, and VI; pp. 1-78, 248-325. Electronic Reserve. \$15.75.

**24 • 3/25: Jürgen Habermas, 1962**

Study Habermas

Discussion reading:

\* Jürgen Habermas. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962). Thomas Burger, trans., (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991). Chapters 16-25 (pp. 141-250) are on electronic reserve. We highly recommend getting the book and reading the whole thing, however. Online: CU NetLibrary Electronic Reserve. \$27.00.

**25 • 4/1: Herbert Marcuse, 1964**

Study Marcuse

Discussion reading:

\* Herbert Marcuse. *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (1964). (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991). Chapters 1, 2, and 8-10; pp. 1-55 and 203-257. Electronic Reserve. \$14.40.

**26 • 4/8: Michel Foucault, 1969**

Study Foucault

Discussion reading:

\* Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language* (1969). (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

**27 • 4/15: Paulo Freire, 1970**

Study Freire

Discussion reading:

\* Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2000. Electronic Reserve. \$15.95.

**28 • 4/22: Pierre Bourdieu, 1970**

Study Bourdieu

Discussion reading:

\* Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (1970). (Thousand Oaks, CA:Sage Publications Ltd, 1990).

**29 • 4/29: Fredric Jameson, 1984**

Study Jameson

Discussion reading:

\* Fredric Jameson. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1984). (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991) pp. 1-54, Chapter 1: "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." Electronic Reserve. \$23.95. Original article: Jameson, "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *The New Left Review*, July-August, 1984, pp. 53-92.

**30 • 5/6: MSTU5606-wrap-up**

Talk:MSTU5606/MSTU5607-wrap-up