This seminar, designed for incoming M.A. students, provides a broad introduction to theories and methods that have shaped the interdisciplinary terrain of the social sciences. The course emphasizes the reading of classic and more contemporary works of social theory and methodology, with a focus on key concepts and thinkers. How does one define a society? What is culture? How have social and cultural processes been understood? What is the relationship between a society or culture and a social group, an institution, or an individual? What is the nature of power, difference and identity? How do such foundational questions generate theories of modernity, capitalism, nationalism and globalization? How do such foundational questions orient the variety of disciplines within the social sciences? The course also surveys qualitative and quantitative methodologies, exploring the relationship between theory, methods, and the broader goals of research within the social sciences.

Class Structure: The first half of every class will be devoted to exploring the theoretical and methodological texts assigned, teasing out the key ideas and perspectives of the authors and discussing how these might influence how we understand the study of society. During the second half of class we will put these theories and methods to work: collectively and collaboratively applying these frameworks to concrete social phenomenon, asking ourselves what observations, evidence, categories, descriptions and analysis are proposed by the approaches we have studied, and using these to draft appropriate plans for research.

**LEARNING GOALS**

- Introduce students to core theoretical texts in the social sciences
- Introduce students to multiple methodologies in use in the social sciences
- Introduce students to the basic questions that drive the social sciences
- Demonstrate how enquiry, theory and methodology work together
Create a foundation for interdisciplinary study from a social sciences perspective.

SOME IMPORTANT CAVEATS

A note on grading. My pedagogical philosophy and practice is one that privileges classroom dialogue over testing, openness in feedback over ranking of students. The Gallatin School—my main employer—was founded on the principles of educational exploration and encourages at least occasionally taking courses without grades. If you are able to take this course for P/NP, I would encourage it. In any case, the percentage of effort expected of you is described below, under “requirements.” If you do take the course for a grade, it will be on a contract basis.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This is a reading-intensive course and you should plan on spending several hours a week in reading for this course, and you should realistically assess the workload of this course before deciding to take it. You are expected to come to class having done the all reading and ready to actively participate in discussion. It is not assumed that students have background in political theory or political studies, but it is assumed that you have a basic working background in social theory.

The most important requirement of this course is that you read the materials each week closely, carefully, and thoughtfully, and that you attend class as an active participant. Some of the weeks have more reading than others—the reading load generally varies inversely with its difficulty. In addition to general attendance/participation you will be expected to write weekly memos, prepare presentation(s) to the class, and two small writing projects. My assumptions in making these papers smaller and of lesser importance in the overall grade scheme is that you will devote your energies to careful reading (and thinking).

· Memos (30 percent of your effort). Before 6pm on Sundays (that is, the day before the seminar meeting), submit to the seminar distribution list an analytical memo of no more than 600-1,000 words. Comment succinctly on what you found most interesting, important, puzzling, infuriating, fundamental, etc. about the readings. Distributed over email in a timely manner, these abstracts will not only help you organize your response to the readings but will also serve as a guide for discussions.

· Critical reviews / class presentations (30 percent of your effort). (NOTE: These are significant assignments) In groups of 2-3 you will write and distribute in class a discussion guide for the week's reading in which you briefly summarize some of the key ideas of the readings and offer some guiding questions for discussion. The discussion guide will also contain a dictionary of key terms used by the authors as well as a summary of questions submitted to
the email list. I would like you to enter those terms on our class wiki. You will then briefly present some themes for discussion in the first **fifteen minutes** of class (this is a firm limit); you should **not** read your discussion guide, or feel each member of your group needs to present. Your presentation could consist of identifying particularly problematic passages in the text, contextualizing the debates implicit or explicit in the text, or preparing specific questions for discussion. I expect you to take some time preparing this presentation. If your week has a “case study” attached to it, you will be expected to find additional materials for the class to digest

• **Essay #1 (20 percent of your effort).** A short (5-10 page) essay answer to a topic handed out in class. Due on October 17th.

• **Final Paper (20 percent of your effort).** You should negotiate a topic with me appropriate to your academic objectives. These papers should be no more than 10 pages (2,500-3,000 words). Due on December 22nd, at NOON.

Books:
- W.E.B. Dubois, The Souls of Black Folk
- Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, vol 1
- Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels, The German Ideology
- Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism
- Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its Discontents
- Sigmund Freud, Dora

Books can be ordered online through Amazon, Alibris, Powells and other stores (many can bought used, some may be found free online, and sharing is encouraged). All of essays and selections can be accessed, for reference purposes only (do not copy or download) via a shared Google Folder.

**SEMESTER SCHEDULE**

**Sept 19** What is a Social Question? What is a social science?

Recommended:


Sept 26 Marx I

READ: Karl Marx, “Thesis on Fuerbach,” and “The German Ideology”;

Oct 3 Marx II

Karl Marx, “The Communist Manifesto” and “Socialism, Utopian and Scientific”

OCT 10 No Class

Oct 17 Weber I

READ: Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism;


Essay #1 Handed Out

Oct. 24 Weber II

TBD

DUE: Essay #1

Oct. 31 Durkehim

READ: Emile Durkheim, Excerpts from The Division of Labor in Society and “The Cultural Logic of Collective Representations”


Nov 7 Freud

READ: Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its Discontents and Dora

Nov 14: WEB Dubois

READ: W.E.B. Dubois, The Souls of Black Folk

Nov 21 Foucault

READ: Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, vol 1

Nov 28 - Gender


DeVault, Marjorie. 1999. Liberating Methods. Chapters 2 and 3

Dec 5 Globalization


Dec 12: What is a Case Study?


**Additional Topics Not Yet Scheduled**

Research Strategies:

Ethnography/Interviews and Surveys/Document Analysis

READ: Robert Weiss, Learning from Strangers (selections);

READ: TBA

FINAL PAPER DUE ON DEC 22ND AT NOON