Sociological theory sometimes has the unfortunate reputation of being (a) removed from empirical matters and (b) done by people who are now long dead. That reputation cannot be further from the truth. In fact, sociological theory remains vibrant in the present and, in both its classical and contemporary formulations, it has remained tied to understanding empirically the world in which we live. In this seminar, we will focus on recent streams of thought within sociological theory, paying attention to key contributors. We start with such 20th century sociologists as W.E.B. Du Bois and Oliver C. Cox and work our way to such living sociologists as Arlie Hochschild and Viviana Zelizer. In the process, we will see how sociological theory connects to such fundamental concerns as race and racism, identity and interaction, commercialization, and everyday life. Throughout the semester, we will interrogate the notion of “theory” and problematize the nature of the contemporary “sociological canon.”

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course is organized as a seminar, which entails the combination of a fair amount of reading, class discussion, and an empirical paper. Given this organization, you are expected to attend each class and to participate.

A) Attendance

If you must miss a class, please inform me ahead of time so that we can make arrangements. Note that unexcused absences will negatively affect your final grade.

B) Class Participation and Discussion

Active participation requires adequate preparation. You therefore must read the assigned material before class and develop your own assessment of this material. Such careful preparation will improve the quality of class discussion. Of course, class discussion should be both informed
respectful; moreover, it should be a forum wherein all can raise questions, explore ideas, and express misgivings. Most of all, this discussion should be fun.

C) Weekly Memos

You will prepare a 3-page memo for each week's readings (typed and double-spaced). You should regard these memos as ideas in progress rather than as finished products. Use them to digest each week's readings and to respond with questions, criticisms, and new ideas. Please bring your memo to class and submit it at the end of class.

Below is a list of things you MIGHT address in a given week. But, there is much flexibility in terms of how you formulate your own ideas.

- What is it that the theorists are trying to explain – and why is that an important endeavor?
- What explanation do the theorists propose?
- How do the theorists motivate their explanation, both logically and empirically?
- What gaps do they leave in their explanation?
- Is there explanation compelling and does it “travel” to other cases?
- How does their theoretical explanation fit (or not fit) with the broader sociological literature?

COURSE RESOURCES

As the semester progresses, class materials will be posted on the Canvas site for SOC 742 (see https://canvas.emory.edu).

The assigned readings are drawn from many sources, so there is no textbook. Instead, the required readings are available at our Canvas site and at Woodruff electronic reserves (see https://ereserves.library.emory.edu/index.php).

If you have any special needs, please contact me at the beginning of the semester and we will discuss the necessary arrangements (for additional information, visit the Emory Office of Accessibility Services website; see http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/index.html).

COURSE SCHEDULE
(Subject to Revision)

January 17: Introductions

January 24: Approaching Theory and Theorizing


**January 31: Theorizing with Race & Racism: Part 1**


**February 7: Theorizing with Race & Racism: Part 2**


February 14: Theorizing with Gender & Intersectionality: Part 1


February 21: Theorizing with Gender & Intersectionality: Part 2


February 28: Theorizing Classification and the Social Order: Part 1


**March 7:** *Theorizing Classification and the Social Order: Part 2*


**March 14:** *SPRING BREAK (No Class)*

**March 21:** *Theorizing Interaction & the Social Order: Part 1*


March 28: Theorizing Interaction & the Social Order: Part 2


April 4: Theorizing Fields and Relationality


April 11: Theorizing Networks & Meaning


**April 18:**  
**Theorizing Commodification and Commercialism**


**April 25:**  
**Thinking about Theorizing Once Again: Everyday Life for Academics & People in General…**


