

**Department of Sociology  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
South Asian University  
MA Semester-II**

**Sociological Theory- II**

**Total Credits: 4**

**Objectives of the course:**

This course aims to provide a survey of contemporary sociological theory. The principal strands of 20<sup>th</sup> century sociological thought will be examined, taking their respective handling of classical social theory as points of departure. We will start chronologically, with the Frankfurt School and its interrogations of modernity and the reconfigurations of European Marxist thought with Gramsci. We will then move to post-war American sociology and conclude with debates about the sociology of everyday life and the nature of post-modernity.

**Unit I:**

This unit aims to provide an overview of some seminal debates on modernity emerging from the European experience of fascism, which have been particularly influential in contemporary sociology. The unit has two components. We will first focus on a few key German re-examinations of the fundamental underpinnings of the enlightenment and modernity actuated by the experiences of wartime Europe. We will examine interventions by thinkers who had an existential relation to these tragic events and whose writings were deeply shaped by its experience. We will discuss some of these accounts re-historicising modern structures of power and knowledge. The second component will focus on how the sociological legacy of Marx gets rethought in the changed economic and political contexts of 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe.

Benjamin, Walter. 1968. Illuminations. Schocken Books: New York

Adorno, Theodor and Max Horkheimer. 2002. Dialectic of enlightenment. Stanford University Press: Stanford

Arendt, Hannah. 1998. The human condition. University of Chicago Press: Chicago

Habermas, Jürgen. 1991. The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society. MIT Press: Cambridge

Forgacs, David. 2000. A Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings (1916-1935). New York University Press: New York

Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci. International Publishers: New York

## **Unit II:**

This unit examines how the concerns of classical sociology get translated in post-war American sociology. The focus will be on debates that establish logical-theoretical continuity with classical sociology.

Mills, C Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford University Press: New York

Turner, B S. 1999. *The Talcott Parsons Reader*. Blackwell: Hoboken

Merton, Robert K. 1968. *Social Theory & Social Structure*. Simon & Schuster: New York

Goffman, Erving. 1956. *The presentation of self in everyday life*. University of Edinburgh: Edinburgh

## **Unit III**

This unit introduces three hugely influential and innovative sociological thinkers of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century—Bourdieu, Foucault and Bauman— who have taken the concerns of contemporary sociology to fresh directions with a new focus on embodiment and everyday life in late modernity. Key concepts like symbolic capital, habitus, discipline, bio-power and liquid modernity will be focused on.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford University Press: Stanford

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1998. *Practical reason: On the theory of action*. Stanford University Press: Stanford

Foucault, Michel. 1979. *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison*. Vintage Books: New York

Foucault, Michel. 1978. *The history of sexuality: An introduction*. Penguin Books: London

Foucault, Michel and Rabinow, Paul. Ed. 1984. *The Foucault Reader*. Pantheon Books: New York

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1989. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Polity Press: Cambridge

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1992. *Intimations of Postmodernity*. Routledge: London

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Polity Press: Cambridge