

THEORIZING SOCIETY, THE SELF, AND CULTURE

HASS 02.003 // 'Introduction to the social sciences'

WHAT ARE WE DOING TODAY?

- Who are we?
- Housekeeping
- Why this course?
 - o Why bother with the social sciences at all?
 - o So what about the social sciences?
 - o What makes a classic ... classic?
 - o How are these insights delivered?
 - o Their big questions?

THE TEAM



Olivia Nicol,
Leader



Gabriel Tusinski



Sandeep Ray



Nilanjan



Yow W. Q.



Y H Pang



G. Dixon

HOUSEKEEPING



OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE – PART 1

	Topic	Most relevant field(s) of soc. science
Week 1	Introduction	(all)
Week 2	Historical narrative	History
Week 3	Political economy / Rational choice	economics, political Science
Week 4	Critique of political economy	economics, sociology, history
Week 5	Functionalism	sociology
Week 6	library	ALL
Week 7	Recess week	-

OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE – PART 2

	Topic	Most relevant field(s) of soc. science
Week 8	Modernization	sociology, history
Week 9	Cultural hermeneutics	anthropology
Week 10	2D	
Week 11	Symbolic interactionism	sociology, anthropology
Week 12	Theories of the self	psychology, linguistics
Week 13	Race n gender	History, sociology, anthropology
Week 14	Finals week	(all)

TO-DO LIST , AND IN GENERAL

Read the compulsory literature! Read the recommended literature! Read anything you can

When you encounter unknown terms:

Note it down. Then, Google it. Ask your peers.
If you understand it now, good. If not, bring it to class.

Think about what you read. Make notes. Discuss it with others.
Bring ideas and questions to class.

Speak up!

Don't be shy. Just let your feelings roll on by /
Don't wear fear or nobody will know you're there!

WHY BOTHER WITH THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AT ALL?

BROAD, WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATION



Technology and design operate
in the social world.

*Technology affects and is affected by
society*

The fair maiden,
Attracts a gentleman.
Book of Songs (1046 BC)
窈窕淑女，君子好逑
《詩經》



SUTD SEEKS TO NURTURE TECHNICALLY GROUNDED LEADERS AND INNOVATORS TO SERVE SOCIETAL NEEDS.



SUTD PILLARS



SO WHAT ABOUT THE SOCIAL SCIENCES?

WHAT MAKES THE SOCIAL SCIENCES THE SOCIAL SCIENCES?

Not (only) what we study, but how we study it...



(As my fav German Prof Margit Waas used to say
It's time to do a – *tiefgründig*)

TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION...



what we study, but how we study it...

Sociology
Anthropology
Geography
Economics
Psychology
Political Science
History

TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION...

WE SIMPLY LOOK AT CLASSICS

... which will provide us with
core debates
conceptual tools



TICKLE A CLASSIC...

Michel Foucault (1980)

on a classic:

"use it, deform it, make it groan and protest."



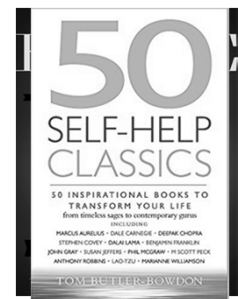
WHAT MAKES A CLASSIC ... CLASSIC?

Death
Provocative
Historical Circumstances
Ambiguity

"contemporary practitioners of the discipline in question believe that they can learn as much about their field through understanding this earlier work as they can from the work of their own contemporaries." (Alexander, 1987)

THE CLASSICS DEAL WITH KEY QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIETY...

social change
Power relations
Conflict
Mass transformations



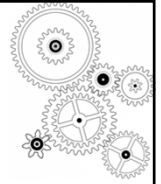
ONE WAY TO UNDERSTAND THE TYPES OF QUESTIONS, WHICH CONCERN SOCIAL SCIENTISTS, IS TO LOOK AT THE BIG PICTURE.

Diagram showing social scientists arranged around a central point, with a sign pointing to "THE BIG PICTURE" (NEXT EXIT).

GOFFMAN, DURKHEIM, Beauvoir, TROUILLOT, MARX, GEERTZ, WEBER, FREUD, ADAM SMITH, Trouillot

POSITIVISM

- the world is independent of and unaffected by the researcher
- the methods of the **natural sciences** are appropriate for the study of social phenomenon
- only those phenomena which are **observable** can be counted as knowledge
- knowledge is developed inductively through the **accumulation** of verified facts



POSITIVISM

- hypotheses are derived deductively from **scientific** theories to be tested empirically
- observations are the final arbiter in theoretical disputes
- facts and values are distinct, thus making it possible to conduct objective enquiry



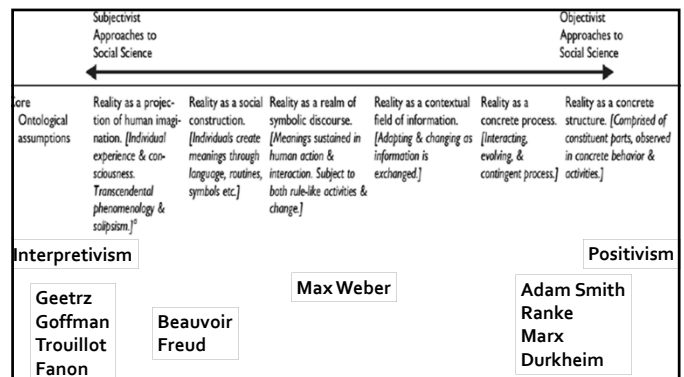
INTERPRETIVISM

- the researcher and the social world are **not independent** and therefore influence and have reciprocal impacts on each other
- the methods of the physical sciences are not appropriate because the social world is not governed by law-like regularities but is **mediated** through meaning and human agency;



INTERPRETIVISM

- consequently the social researcher is concerned to explore and understand the social world using both the participant's and the researcher's **understanding**
- facts and values are not distinct and findings are inevitably **influenced** by the researcher's perspective and values, thus making it impossible to conduct value free research; the researcher must explicitly state and be transparent about his or her assumptions



THEREFORE, IN THIS COURSE, YOU ARE
SUPPOSED TO ...

extrapolate the insights of a classical thinker to
understand the social dynamics of our society.

How are these insights delivered? What are the attending assumptions?

THEIR BIG QUESTIONS



MICHEL-ROLPH TROUILLOT



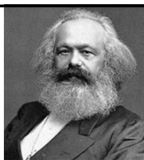
How are silences created?
What is historicity?
Why is there ambiguity in that?

ADAM SMITH



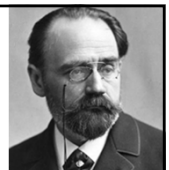
Can wealth be shared?
Do governments have a role in this?
What is the most efficient way ahead for commerce and
manufacturing ?

KARL MARX



How do we calculate labour hours?
How do capitalists exploit workers?
How can workers of the world better protect themselves?

EMILE DURKHEIM



How are societies organized?
What is the relationship between suicide and societies?
What is the moral role of society?

MAX WEBER



What is the role of religion in the creation of wealth?
 Why does all these lead to the 'iron cage'??
 What is rationalization?

CLIFFORD GEERTZ



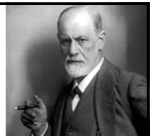
How is a "cock" fight relevant to me?
 What is thick description? Is there a thin one as well?
 What is the meaning of "web of significance"?

ERVING GOFFMAN



Why do people act differently ?
 How are misrepresentations useful?
 Why do politicians frequently use mystifications?

SIGMUND FREUD



How does your sub consciousness propel you to do certain things?
 How do you know you are not a perverted person?
 How do you know your boss (Dr Pang) is an anal person?

BEAUVOIR



What is a woman?
 How has her being been conditioned by society?
 How is the woman interchangeable with "the other"?

FANON



How is "blackness" constructed?
 What perpetuated inferiority complex?
 Why do people imitate the colonizer?

THANK YOU FOR THE ATTENTION!