

CULT 818: SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS  
Prof. Roger Lancaster, Fall 2016  
Mon, 4:30—7:10, Robinson Hall A243

Office Hours M 2—4  
and by appointment  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Enterprise H

**PREAMBLE:** In the social sciences, the term “social institution” refers to relatively stable patterns of collective activity involving *rules, values, and roles or offices*. These include durable structures of everyday life such as family, kinship, money, and race. They also include a subset of persistent modern bureaucratic forms, more or less deliberately organized in the pursuit of some conscious collective goal, such as the prison, the hospital, the corporation, and welfare programs.

Everyone agrees that institutions do not “express” but rather *shape* such things as will, affect, and desire. Durkheim, who described sociology as “the science of institutions,” puts it this way: Institutions “crystalize” or “institute” “certain modes of action and certain ways of judging which are independent of the particular individual will considered separately.” Mary Douglas takes this thought further: “[An] institution is only a convention”; it has the effect of “turning individual thought over to automatic pilot,” essentially “constructing a machine for thinking and decision-making....”

A great many of the things we call institutions are not freestanding entities but are webbed or networked with other institutions: Marriage, the family, and kinship are difficult to extricate from each other because the one is invariably involved with the other. Some of the things we call institutions are actually assemblages of institutions: government, a meta-institution, is comprised of the prison system, the legal system, welfare, the military, and so on.

Social institutions are enduring—But they not timeless. Every institution has a history. Conflicts are endemic to them, and equilibrium is not guaranteed. Perturbations or disruptions in one institutional framework will necessarily affect the stability and functioning of others. Institutions can cease to exist, if the conditions of their birth and reproduction change sufficiently. And if the scholarly literature sometimes seems wishy-washy on basic definitions, this is perhaps because institutions are usually understood to mediate or “stand in between” the one thing and the other: individual and group; part and whole; agency and structure; efficacy and restriction; economic base and cultural superstructure....

In this course, we will first try to understand what an institution is and how theorists have fashioned it as an object of study. We will pay special attention to how institutions confer (or withhold) legitimation, to how they mediate and reproduce other social relations, and to how they endure or cease to exist. We will examine key social institutions—kinship, education, law and law enforcement—more closely, with special focus on their role in producing or maintaining social inequalities. Not least, we will ask: How might inequalities be minimized, and how might more just social institutions be built?

**GRADES:** Grades will be based on class participation (including facilitation of presentations) (40%) and a course project (60%). The syllabus includes several special packets (in grey boxes); you will select *one* for a crisp 15-minute in-class presentation. (These packets either tell a story or lay out a spread of approaches to a question. Your job here is to briskly summarize the issues, map the debates, and track the controversies.)

**PROJECT:** Recuperate the course readings by applying them to an institution of your choosing and constructing a rigorous argument. For instance, you may thread a question about how that

institution functions, what it mediates, how it connects with other institutions, or even (in difficult cases) why it ought to count as an institution. Appx. 5,500 words or ten pages.

#### BOOKS:

Jane Collins and Victoria Mayer, *Both Hands Tied: Welfare Reform and the Race to the Bottom in the Low-Wage Labor Market*

Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*

Angela McRobbie, *Be Creative*

Göran Therborn, *The Killing Fields of Inequality*

Jodi Dean, *Crowds and Party*

## 0. Introductions (29 August)

### *Part One: Key Concepts in Social Theory*

#### 1. What is a Social Institution? (12 September)

- Emile Durkheim, “What is a Social Fact?” from *The Rules of Sociological Method*
- Mary Douglas, “Institutions are Founded on Analogy” and other excerpts from *How Institutions Think*
- Mary Douglas, “The Two Bodies,” from *Natural Symbols*

#### 2. Solidarity, Sociality, & Fellow-Feelings (19 September)

- Emile Durkheim, Ferdinand Tönnies, “An Exchange Between Durkheim and Tönnies on the Nature of Social Relations,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 77, No. 6 (May, 1972), pp. 1191—1200.
- Georg Simmel, “The Sociology of Sociability,” *American Journal of Sociology*
- A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, “On Joking Relationships,” *Africa*
- Adam Smith, Part I, Section I, “The Sense of Propriety,” from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/15/opinion/we-take-care-of-our-own.html>

#### **Further Readings on Law, Morality, & Punishment:**

- Roger Lancaster, “Punishment,” *Companion to Moral Anthropology*
- William K. Wright, “The Psychology of Punitive Justice,” *Philosophical Rev*
- George H. Mead, “The Psychology of Punitive Justice,” *American J. of Sociology*
- Edward Westermarck, “Remarks on the Predicates of Moral Judgments,” *Mind*
- John Gardner, “Law and Morality,” *Routledge Companion to Ethics*

#### 3. Power, Authority, & Legitimation (Or, Weber for Beginners) (26 September)

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Ruling Class and Ruling Ideas”
- Max Weber, “Power and Domination” and “The Types of Legitimate Domination,” from *Economy and Society*
- Max Weber, “Class, Status, and Party,” *Politics*
- Max Weber, “What is Politics?” (excerpt)
- Max Weber, “Characteristics of Modern Bureaucracy”

**Further Reading:**

- Max Weber, from “Basic Sociological Terms

**4. Legitimation Crisis (3 October)**

- Jurgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*

**BREXIT:**

- <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-36616028>
- <http://www.spectator.co.uk/2016/07/brexit-voters-are-not-thick-not-racist-just-poor/>
- <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=nwK0jeJ8wxg>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/10/opinion/sunday/why-the-eu-had-it-coming.html>
- <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article38304>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/28/opinion/marine-le-pen-after-brexit-the-peoples-spring-is-inevitable.html?>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/30/brexit-disaster-decades-in-the-making>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/30/world/europe/the-eu-is-democratic-it-just-doesnt-feel-that-way.html?>
- <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/06/28/its-time-for-the-elites-to-rise-up-against-ignorant-masses-trump-2016-brexit/>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/28/opinion/revolt-of-the-masses.html>
- <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/07/brexit-uk-eu-leave-farage-johnson-ukip-tories-immigration-labour-corbyn/>
- <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/06/brexit-eu-uk-leave-farage-johnson-lexit-referendum-vote-sovereign-will/>
- <http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2733-on-the-hideous-whiteness-of-brexit-let-us-be-honest-about-our-past-and-our-present-if-we-truly-seek-to-dismantle-white-supremacy>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2016/jun/30/labour-is-partly-to-blame-for-the-racists-capture-of-the-eu-debate>
- <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/06/britain-referendum-remain-leave-farage/>
- <https://www.thenation.com/article/keep-calm-and-carry-on-why-the-angst-over-brexit/>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/22/brexit-property-right-left-eu-expert>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/20/brexit-fake-revolt-eu-working-class-culture-hijacked-help-elite>
- [http://www.perc.org.uk/project\\_posts/thoughts-on-the-sociology-of-brexit/](http://www.perc.org.uk/project_posts/thoughts-on-the-sociology-of-brexit/)
- <https://youtu.be/dIzL3wDLYXk>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/24/brexit-democracy-i-voted-leave-divisions-campaigns?>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/23/labour-traditional-voters-progressive-values-working-class-ukip>
- <https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2016/06/24/brexit-stern-rebuke-arrogant-elites/Uz5BLaweyL71MHWITeVobL/story.html>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/01/opinion/the-coming-political-realignment.html>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/03/opinion/sunday/the-myth-of-cosmopolitanism.html>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/10/opinion/sunday/are-we-unraveling.html>

**Further Reading:**

- Charles Taylor, “Legitimation Crisis,” *Philosophical Papers 2*
- Graham Scambler, “Habermas and Crisis Tendencies,”  
<http://www.grahamscambler.com/habermas-and-crises-tendencies/>

**Bonus Packet: Social Movements:**

- Jurgen Habermas, “New Social Movements,” *Telos*
- Edward Andrew, “Class In Itself and Class against Capital,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science*
- AFC Wallace, “Revitalization Movements,” *American Anthropologist*
- Roger Lancaster, “Panic,” from *Sex Panic and the Punitive State*
- Henry Abelow, “How Stonewall Obscures the Real History of Gay Liberation”

**5. Determination, Hegemony, & Articulation (TUES, 11 October)**

- Karl Marx, Abstract from Preface of *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*
- Raymond Williams, “Base and Superstructure,” *NLR*
- Antonio Gramsci, “Workers’ Democracy,” “Conquest of the State,” “Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc”
- Jennifer Darryl Slack, “Theory and Method of Articulation”

**Special Supplement on Gramsci & the Current American Conjunction:**

- Perry Anderson, “The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci,” *New Left Review*
- Stuart Hall, “The Problem of Ideology”
- Eric Foner, “Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?”
- Greg Grandin, “Why Trump Now? It’s the Empire, Stupid”

*Part Two: Social Inequalities and the Institutional Nexus***6. On Money and Culture (17 October)**

- Angela McRobbie, *Be Creative*

**Bonus Packet: On Precarity**

- Michael Denning, “Wageless Life,” *New Left Review*
- Aaron Benanav, “Precarity Rising,” <https://viewpointmag.com/2015/06/15/precarity-rising/>
- Daniel Zamora, “When Exclusion Replaces Exploitation,” *Nonsite*
- Bryan Palmer, “Reconsiderations of Class: Precariousness as Proletarianization,” *Socialist Review*
- Kim Moody, “The State of American Labor,” <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/06/precariat-labor-us-workers-uber-walmart-gig-economy/>
- [https://www.buzzfeed.com/carolineodonovan/internal-uber-driver-pay-numbers?utm\\_term=.vuIM9Kyry#.xs05eYQEQ](https://www.buzzfeed.com/carolineodonovan/internal-uber-driver-pay-numbers?utm_term=.vuIM9Kyry#.xs05eYQEQ)
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/07/opinion/campaign-stops/how-falling-behind-the-joneses-fueled-the-rise-of-trump.html>

**7. Kinship & Marriage (24 October)**

- Jane Collier, Michelle Rosaldo, Sylvia Yanagisako, “Is There A Family?”
- David M. Schneider, “What is Kinship All About?”
- Robert Brain, from *Friends and Lovers*
- Roger Lancaster, “Selective Affinities: Commonalities and Differences in the Family of Man,” from *The Trouble with Nature*

**Further Reading:**

- Roger Lancaster, “Marriage is Not a Timeless Unchanging Institution,” from Civitas, *The Meaning of Matrimony*
- Evelyn Blackwood, “Wedding Bell Blues: Marriage, Missing Men, and Matrifocal Follies,” *American Ethnologist* 32 (2005), essay with commentaries

## 8. Hidden Genocides: Inequality & Health (31 October)

- Göran Therborn, *The Killing Fields of Inequality*

## 9. Health as Capability and Institution (Non-Foucauldian Readings) (7 November)

- Malcolm Bull, “Vectors of the Biopolitical,” *New Left Review* 45 (May-June 2007): 7—25.
- Amartya Sen, “Equality of What?” Stanford Lecture
- Martha Nussbaum, “Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements,” *Feminist Economics*
- Amartya Sen, “Why Health Equity?” *Health Econ.* 11: 659–666 (2002).
- Amartya Sen, “Health in Development,” Keynote, World Health Organization.

### Further Reading on Longevity Trends:

- “The Richer You Are, The Older You’ll Get,” <http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2014/04/18/the-richer-you-are-the-older-youll-get/>
- “Income Gap, Meet the Longevity Gap,” <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/16/business/income-gap-meet-the-longevity-gap.html>
- Anne Case and Angus Deaton, “Rising Morbidity and Mortality in Midlife Among White Non-Hispanic Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”
- “Black Americans See Gains in Life Expectancy,” <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/09/health/blacks-see-gains-in-life-expectancy.html>
- “US Suicide Rate Surges to a 30-Year High,” <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/22/health/us-suicide-rate-surges-to-a-30-year-high.html>

## 10. Race/Class (14 November)

- W.E.B. Du Bois, “Back to Slavery,” *Black Reconstruction*
- Theodor William Allen, “Class Struggle and the Origin of Racial Slavery,” <http://clogic.eserver.org/2006/allen.html>
- Kimberle Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum*
- Stuart Hall, “Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Domination”
- Adolph Reed and Merlin Chowkwanyun, “Race, Class, Crisis”

### Further Provocations:

- Adolph Reed on Identity Politics: Exposing Class Divisions in Democrats, <https://youtu.be/EE4unn3bPFQ>
- Adolph Reed, “Marx, Race, and Neoliberalism,” *New Labor Forum*
- Adolph Reed, “From Jenner to Dolezal: One Trans Good, the Other Not So Much”
- <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/06/karen-barbara-fields-racecraft-dolezal-racism/>
- Jill Stein, “Why Did White Workers Leave the Democratic Party?” <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/06/white-working-class-new-deal-racism-reagan-democrats/>

- <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/05/white-workers-bernie-sanders-clinton-primary-racism/>
- <http://www.orchestratedpulse.com/2016/07/we-are-the-left/>

#### **Special Packet on Policing:**

- Alice Goffman, "On the Run," *Amer Sociological Rev*
- George Kelling and James Q. Wilson, "Broken Windows," *Atlantic*
- James Q. Wilson, "Hostility in America," *New Republic*
- Alex Horton, "In Iraq, I raided Insurgents. In Virginia, the Police Raided Me."
- Nick Berardini and Matt Stroud, "A Shot to the Heart,"  
<https://theintercept.com/2016/06/07/tased-in-the-chest-for-23-seconds-dead-for-8-minutes-now-facing-a-lifetime-of-recovery/>
- Fatal Shootings by Police Surpass 2015 Rate, <http://wapo.st/29Spj8h>
- [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/07/11/arent-more-white-people-than-black-people-killed-by-police-yes-but-no/?utm\\_term=.d89d38eb1c0e](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/07/11/arent-more-white-people-than-black-people-killed-by-police-yes-but-no/?utm_term=.d89d38eb1c0e)
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/08/us/study-supports-suspicion-that-police-use-of-force-is-more-likely-for-blacks.html>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/12/upshot/surprising-new-evidence-shows-bias-in-police-use-of-force-but-not-in-shootings.html>
- <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/07/racecraft-barbara-karen-fields-philando-castile/>
- <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/07/dallas-police-shootings-castile-sterling-class-workers/>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/26/opinion/a-strategy-to-build-police-citizen-trust.html>

## **11. Welfare in Neoliberal Contexts (21 November)**

- Jane Collins and Victoria Mayer, *Both Hands Tied: Welfare Reform and the Race to the Bottom in the Low-Wage Labor Market*

#### **Further Readings on Neoliberalization:**

- Corey Robin, "The First Neoliberals"
- <http://www.epi.org/publication/income-inequality-in-the-us/>

#### **Value-Added Packet on American Prisons:**

- J. C. Oleson, "The Punitive Coma," *California Law Review*.
- James Q. Whitman, "What Happened to Tocqueville's America?" *Social Research*.
- Loïc Wacquant, "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration: Rethinking the 'Race Question' in the US," *New Left Review*
- James Forman Jr., "Racial Critiques of Mass Incarceration: Beyond the New Jim Crow," *New York University Law Review*
- Jonathan Simon, "Consuming Obsessions: Housing, Homicide, and Mass Incarceration Since 1950," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*
- Ekunwe and Jones, "Finnish Criminal Policy: From Hard Times to Gentle Justice," *J. of Prisoners on Prisons*

## **12. Education (28 November)**

- Henry Giroux, "Neoliberalism, Corporate Culture, and the Promise of Higher Education" *Harvard Education Review* Winter 2002;
- Doug Henwood, "I'm Borrowing My Way through College," *Left Business Observer*, <http://www.leftbusinessobserver.com/College.html>
- Tamar Lewin, "Once a Leader, US Lags in College Degrees," *NYT* July 23, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/23/education/23college.html>;

- Eduardo Porter, “Rethinking the Rise of Inequality,”  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/13/business/rethinking-the-income-gap-and-a-college-education.html>
- AAUP, “Tenure and Teaching-Intensive Appointments,” 2010 (2014),  
<https://www.aaup.org/report/tenure-and-teaching-intensive-appointments>

**Further Reading: Education as Social Control:**

- Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, Part I from *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*

**13. Crowds & Party (5 December)**

- Jodi Dean, *Crowds and Party*

FINAL PAPERS DUE: Sunday, 11 December, 5 PM