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**Introduction to Historical Sociology (W2202)**  
**MW 5:40-6:55, 325 Pupin**

Much of what sociologists aspire to explain happened a long time ago. This seems like a trivial point, but it has enormous consequences for the practice of historical sociology, whose “subjects” can neither be observed nor questioned. The field consequently must make use of whatever artifacts remain to reconstruct the past: what people did, what order they did it in, what their reasons were, and so on. The class, which will be conducted in a part-lecture, part-discussion format, will focus on the process of historical reconstruction – of causes, reasons, relations, worldviews, practices, identities, and events – focusing on the in-depth analysis of sociological texts, and with particular emphasis on the relationship between sociological theory and historical evidence.

Requirements:

1. Participation. Students are required to complete all readings according to the attached schedule, and to participate in class discussions (30%).
2. A book report on one of the assigned books (20%). See instructions below.
3. A final paper (50%). See instructions below.

Readings

Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. (Labyrinth and on-reserve.)

William Brustein, *The Logic of Evil: The Social Origins of the Nazi Party, 1925-1933*. (Labyrinth and on-reserve.)

Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. (Labyrinth and on-reserve.)

Roger Gould, *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune*. (Labyrinth and on-reserve.)

William Sewell, “Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille.” *Theory and Society* 25: 841-81, 1996. (Labyrinth and on-reserve.)

Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*. (Labyrinth and on-reserve.)

Eiko Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*. (Labyrinth and on-reserve.)

Book report (6-8 double-spaced pages)

Pick one of the assigned books and answer the following questions:

- a. What does this book try to explain?
- b. What variables, mechanisms, or factors does the author invoke as explanatory?
- c. How does the author reconstruct conditions, reasons, relations, worldviews, practices, identities, and/or events as needed to make his/her argument?
- d. What are the weaknesses in the argument, and in the way in which evidence is brought to bear in support of it?

The report is due a week after we have finished discussing the associated book in class.

Final paper (18-22 double-spaced pages)

Read a sizeable historian's account of some historical period or event, or several shorter accounts. Construct a sociological argument on the basis of these "secondary" sources, describing the part played by sociological "variables" such as reasons, relations and identities. Be sure to have your specific topic approved by the instructor. *I will insist that everyone write on a different topic*, so the sooner you act to declare a topic, the more choices you will have.

Three classes are set aside for the discussion of paper topics and work-to-date. Be prepared to give a 10 minute summary of your paper at that time (see below). You will not be graded on this presentation (though participation points will be deducted for gross ill-preparation); rather, you should look at this as an opportunity to get useful input from the instructor, TA, and other students.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Due</b>
Jan. 17	Introduction		
Jan. 22	Reconstructing causes/conditions	Skocpol, <i>States &amp; Social Revolutions</i> , pp. 3-157, 233-5, 275-283	
Jan. 24			
Jan. 29			
Jan. 31			
Feb. 5	Reconstructing reasons	Brustein, <i>Logic of Evil</i> , pp. 1-184	
Feb. 7			Skocpol report
Feb. 12			
Feb. 14			
Feb. 19	Reconstructing worldviews	Ginzburg, <i>Cheese &amp; the Worms</i> , pp. xi-xxvi, 1-128	
Feb. 21			Brustein report
Feb. 26	Reconstructing relations	Gould, <i>Insurgent Identities</i> , pp. 1-206, 213-228	
Feb. 28			Ginzburg report
March 5			
March 7			
March 12	Spring break		
March 14			
March 19	Events	Sewell, "Historical Events as Transformations..."	Gould report
March 21			
March 26	Reconstructing practices	Elias, <i>Civilizing Process</i> , pp. 42-178, 314-355, 443-460	
March 28			
April 2			
April 4			
April 9	Paper presentations		Elias report
April 11			
April 16			
April 18	Reconstructing identities	Ikegami, <i>The Taming of the Samurai</i> , pp. 1-378	
April 23			
April 25			
April 30	Wrap-up		Ikegami report, Term paper