



JUNIOR THEORISTS SYMPOSIUM

August 15, 2014 - UC Berkeley - 60 Evans Hall

8:30 – 9:00 | Coffee and Bagels

9:00 – 10:50 | Culture, Action, and Difference

- Michael Halpin (University of Wisconsin – Madison) – “Science and Sociodicy: Neuroscientific Explanations of Social Problems”
- Ellis Monk (University of Chicago) – “Bodily Capital: Capturing the Role of the Body in Social Inequality”
- Daniel Sherwood (The New School) – “Acting through the Margin of Freedom: Bourdieu as a Social Movement Theorist”
- *Discussant*: Omar Lizardo (University of Notre Dame)

10:50 – 11:00 | Coffee

11:00 – 12:50 | Measures of Worth

- Alison Gerber (Yale University) – “Tradition, Rationalization and Worth: A Theory of Decommensuration”
- Katherine Kenny (University of California – San Diego) – “The Biopolitics of Global Health: Life and Death and Neoliberal Time”
- Brandon Vaidyanathan (Rice University) – “A Cultural Theory of Differentiation”
- *Discussant*: Marion Fourcade (University of California – Berkeley)

12:50 – 2:00 | Lunch

2:00 – 3:50 | Place and Perspective

- Hillary Angelo (New York University) – “From the City as a Lens to Urbanization as a Way of Seeing: Refocusing Social Categories for an Urban Planet”
- Jennifer Carlson (University of Toronto) – “Citizen-Protectors: Guns, Masculinity and Citizenship in an Age of Decline”
- Victoria Reyes (Princeton University) – “Global Borderlands: A Case Study of the Subic Bay Freeport Zone, Philippines”
- *Discussant*: Saskia Sassen (Columbia University)

4:00 – 5:30 | After-panel: The Boundaries of Theory

- Stefan Bargheer (University of California – Los Angeles)
- Claudio Benzecry (University of Connecticut)
- Margaret Frye (Harvard University)
- Julian Go (Boston University)
- Rhacel Parreñas (University of Southern California)

5:30 – ? | Theory in the Wild: Beer, wine, and good conversation (off-site)

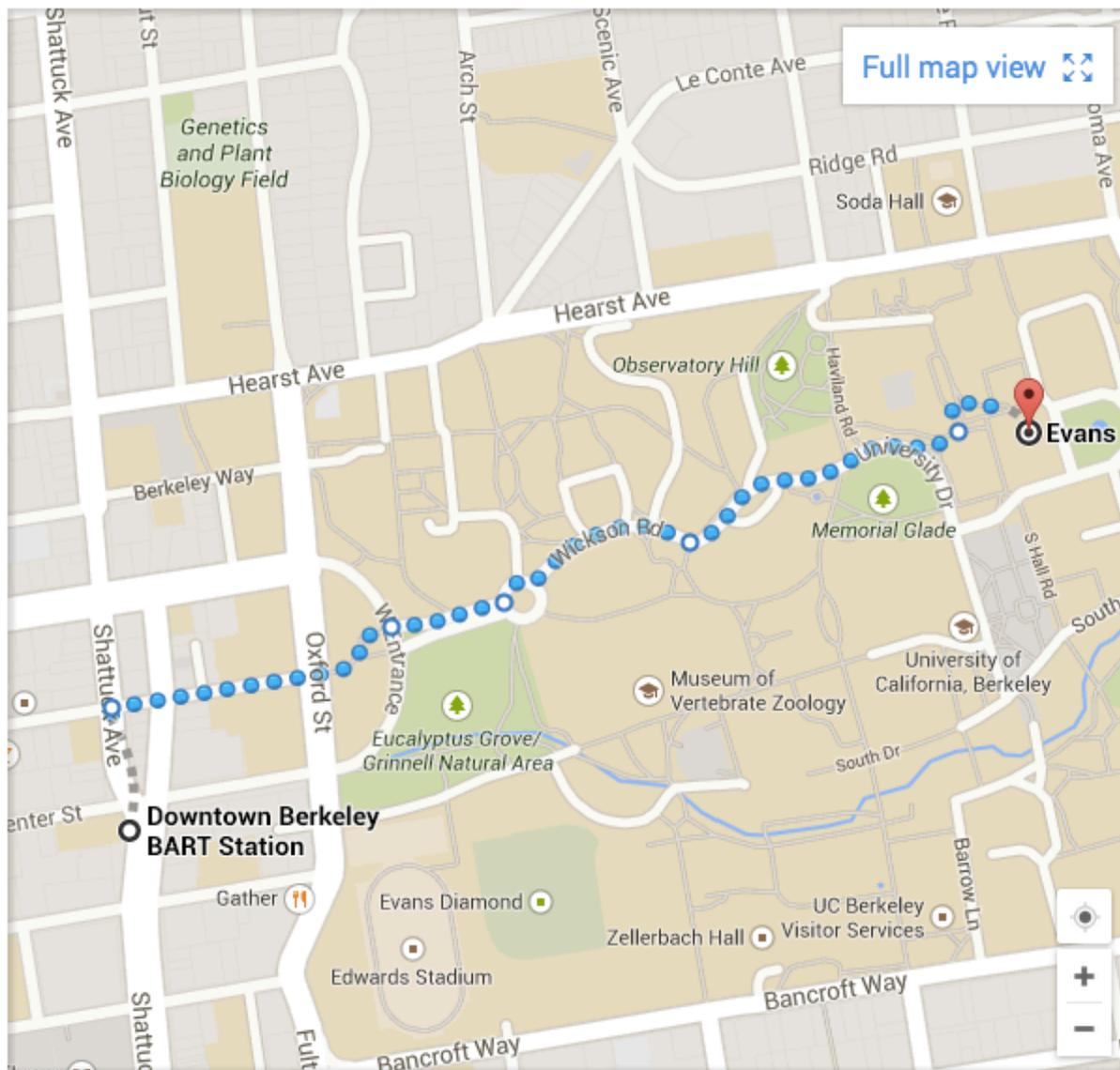
The Junior Theorists Symposium is an open event. To facilitate planning, please RSVP by sending an email to juniortheorists@gmail.com with the subject line JTS RSVP. We suggest an on-site donation of \$20 per faculty member and \$10 per graduate student to cover event costs.

Location:

University of California (Berkeley) - 60 Evans Hall

Evans Hall is on the northeast side of campus on University Drive. From Berkeley Downtown BART you can walk through campus following University Drive from Oxford Street. It is a fifteen minute walk from the BART station or a ten minute bus ride on the 52 or F lines.

Walking Map From Downtown Berkeley BART



Paper Abstracts

9:00 – 10:50 | Culture, Action, and Difference

Michael Halpin (University of Wisconsin – Madison)

“Science and Sociodicy: Neuroscientific Explanations of Social Problems”

The critique of individualistic explanations of social problems is central to sociological thought. Drawing on Weber’s concept of theodicy and Bourdieu’s notion of sociodicy, my paper continues this tradition by critically evaluating neuroscientific explanations of social problems. My argument has three elements. First, I describe neuroscientific explanations of two social problems: obesity and gender differences. I argue that such explanations are indicative of a neurodicy, or the framing of social issues as having a neurobiological etiology. Second, I review the interventions that are associated with the neurodicy of these two issues, which situate obesity as a target of neurobiological intervention, while naturalizing gender differences. Third, I argue that neurodicy obscures sociological explanations of social problems, which can legitimate the status quo and de-emphasize the need for social or institutional change. I conclude by discussing broader theoretical issues and advocating for a multi-dimensional approach towards the study of social problems.

Ellis Monk (University of Chicago)

“Bodily Capital: Capturing the Role of the Body in Social Inequality”

In this article, I put forward a revised and extended theory of *bodily capital* aimed at conceptualizing the body as a *central locus of social inequality*. Bodily capital refers to an assortment of physical attributes such as height, weight, skin tone, and relatedly, notions of beauty, which vary in their salience and consequentiality depending upon the social context, or more precisely, the *fields* within which individuals act and the outcomes under examination. I illustrate how physical appearance is often a critically important, yet understudied vector of heterogeneity and differentiation within and across the much more well-studied categories of race, ethnicity, and gender. In fact, some studies show that differences in life chances are similar or even larger on the basis of physical attributes than in terms of the categorical differences the vast majority of social science examines (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender). I explain how this work challenges us to extend and re-think prevailing theories of intersectionality, better integrate social status into the study of social inequality, and rethink gender and ethnoracial inequality. I conclude by sketching the outlines of an *integrated domain* for the study of social inequality vis a vis the body, which draws upon recent advances in the sociology of culture and cognition, and entails the examination of the salience and consequences of *bodily capital* within and/or across a variety of social milieu, within and/or across social categories, utilizing various methodologies at multiple levels of analysis.

Daniel Sherwood (The New School)

“Acting through the Margin of Freedom: Bourdieu as a Social Movement Theorist”

This paper reconstructs a neglected aspect of Pierre Bourdieu’s theoretical corpus, the consistent and recurring analysis of collective actor formation and mobilization that recur throughout his career. While the paper does not claim that Bourdieu should be properly reconceived as primarily a social movement theorist, it does claim that by examining Bourdieu’s theorization of collective actor formation and mobilization, we can gain a much

broader and more hermeneutically accurate sense of Bourdieu's ideas concerning social change, and in particular, social change effected by social agency. Beyond interest in Bourdieu's thinking itself, this paper suggests several ways in which Bourdieu's formulations of social movement processes articulate with, and perhaps shift the ground in contemporary research on social movements.

In particular, the paper unpacks the interrelated mechanisms that combine in unique ways across cases in Bourdieu's discussions of collective action. However, unlike other mechanisms based approaches, Bourdieu gives cultural meaning pride of analytical place. Finally, the paper points to the potentially productive role the concept social imaginary could play in expanding conceptions of the political underlying social movement scholarship. In addition to contests over material resources and symbolic recognition, the political can be conceived as a struggle over the *effective vision of the future*. Despite critics who suggest otherwise, this paper argues Bourdieu's theorizations of collective action possess vital resources for just such an expansion of our analytical vision.

11:00 – 12:50 | Measures of Worth

Alison Gerber (Yale University)

“Tradition, Rationalization and Worth: A Theory of Decommensuration”

This article extends Zelizer's work on social processes of valuation, Fourcade's discussion of divergent routes to commensuration, and Boltanski and Thevenot's research on diverse orders of worth. Using interview, ethnographic, and archival data on visual artists, the author considers diverse accounts of the value of artistic practice and develops a theory of decommensuration in working life, a process of individual and collective revaluation of objects and practices about which there exists significant social agreement regarding value. The process consists of three stages: as traditional practices undergo an occupational turn, tensions between old and new orders of worth come to be expressed in conflicts over valuation; diverse accounts of value proliferate; and finally, some accounts – those that draw on contemporary visions of traditional practice – achieve widespread resonance and become widely shared meanings.

Katherine Kenny (University of California – San Diego)

“The Biopolitics of Global Health: Life and Death and Neoliberal Time”

The opening years of the 21st century have witnessed the rise of ‘global health’ as the preferred label for attempts to govern the health of the global population. In this paper, I locate the epistemological roots of global health in the introduction of the Disability Adjusted Life Year (DALY) metric in the World Bank's 1993 *Investing in Health* report. I argue that the DALY metric accomplishes an *economization of life* by disaggregating lifetimes into component units of time and reassembling life as a revenue stream to be maximized through practices of self-investment in one's own health – configured here as a form of human capital. Life is reimagined as life/time and the individual is configured as a neoliberal *homo oeconomicus*: as an entrepreneur of the self. I argue that the DALY metric is best conceived as a biopolitical technology of power that underpins the contemporary neoliberal global health regime.

Brandon Vaidyanathan (Rice University)
“A Cultural Theory of Differentiation”

This paper aims to resolve the current theoretical impasse in the sociology of religion by rethinking secularization theory in light of recent advances in cultural sociology. While sociologists today accept differentiation to be the central valid core of the concept of secularization, the concept as currently understood is incapable of accounting for either the persistence of religion or religion’s ability to support and challenge secular spheres. I develop an alternative, phenomenological conceptualization of differentiation, informed by recent advances in cultural sociology. My argument has four components. First, I identify problems in the reigning model of differentiation that are rooted in its basis in Weber’s notion of “value spheres.” Second, I propose a new phenomenological approach, building on the cultural sociology of boundary-work between “experiential realms.” Third, I draw on dual-process theories of cognition to account for how these realms are internally sustained. Finally, I outline the modes of and conditions for overlap and separation of religious and secular realms. Drawing on empirical examples of boundary-work between the realms of religion and work, I offer an account of differentiation that need not entail religious decline, but instead allows diverse modes of interaction between religious and secular realms. How and why people in different contexts negotiate the relationship between these realms in particular ways becomes the new task for the study of secularization.

2:00 – 3:50 | Place and Perspective

Hillary Angelo (New York University)
“From the City as a Lens to Urbanization as a Way of Seeing: Refocusing Social Categories for an Urban Planet”

This essay offers a historical perspective on a contemporary problem in urban social analysis by diagnosing conceptual interventions across three superficially distinct urban subfields as symptomatic of a persistent “city lens” both within contemporary urban studies, and which pervades the way we see social life. This lens, ground in the context of the nineteenth century metropolis but generalized as a set of practical and analytical categories that became part of the foundational assumptions of urban social science, interprets the world through a series of binary associations hung on the basic assumption that the city can be defined against a non-urban outside. I argue that while urban geographies have fundamentally changed since the turn of the last century, categories for urban social analysis have not. Through the old lens, contemporary urban geographies are experienced as the increasing intrusion of the city’s traditional ‘outsides’ on the urban, creating normative and analytical problems. The paper develops John Berger’s (2008 [1972]) idea of “ways of seeing” as a heuristic for understanding this situation; describes how the city lens sees and how it influences social analysis; illustrates why its assumptions will become only more problematic in contemporary environments; and concludes by discussing what a move towards “urbanization as a way of seeing” might look like by drawing on insights from incipient “planetary” approaches to urban studies.

Jennifer Carlson (University of Toronto)

“Citizen-Protectors: Guns, Masculinity and Citizenship in an Age of Decline”

Why are millions of Americans – disproportionately American men – choosing to carry guns as part of their everyday lives? And what are the effects of gun carry on contemporary notions of citizenship, governance and crime? Focusing on Southeastern Michigan, particularly Metro Detroit, as a window into broader processes of socio-economic decline in the US, this paper analyzes how men use guns to navigate contexts of socio-economic insecurity and how men’s use of guns is shaped by socio-legal structures supported by the National Rifle Association (NRA). It makes three claims: 1) that men’s embrace of guns is situated in broader processes of socio-economic decline, which have undermined men’s access to breadwinning masculinity; 2) that these processes of decline open up opportunities to forge – and practice – new definitions of masculinity and citizenship – what I call the ‘citizen-protector’; and 3) that the broad appeal of this gun-focused citizenship brings together wide swaths of men, including both white men and racial minorities, even as gun politics remain one of the most deeply divisive issues in American politics. In doing so, it theorizes the gendered impact of socioeconomic decline on everyday understandings of rights and citizenship.

Victoria Reyes (Princeton University)

“Global Borderlands: A Case Study of the Subic Bay Freeport Zone, Philippines”

By developing the concept of “global borderlands,” this article shifts the focus of globalization literature from elite global cities and cities on national borders to sites defined by significant social, cultural, and economic exchange. I analyze three processes within these sites: legal authority, socio-spatial organization, and inequality. The multi- method analyses reveal how the concept of global borderlands can help us better understand the interactions that occur in the contemporary era of globalization across people of different races, classes, and nationalities. First, I identify global borderlands and their macro-level distribution. Next, I use the empirical case study of Subic Bay Freeport Zone (SBFZ), Philippines to show (1) how the semi-autonomy of global borderlands provide different regulations depending on individual identity, (2) how its socio-spatial order directly and indirectly excludes the poor, and how moral categories (of who and what is “good” or “bad”) as well as practices related to order and disorder vary by location, whether within or outside the SBFZ and (3) how the semi-autonomy of these locales and their geographic and symbolic borders reproduce unequal relations within it. As home of the former U.S. Subic Bay Naval Base and current site of Freeport businesses and tourist resorts, it serves as a particularly strategic research location to examine the different forms of interactions that occur between groups. Beyond the insights it gives to globalization, this concept speaks to several areas of sociological interest, including culture, space and place, legal geographies, law and society, social boundaries, and economic sociology.