Aims and objectives
This course offers students the opportunity to pursue their interests in contemporary social theory at an advanced level. The course encourages students to use social theory in order to think creatively, constructively and critically about the ways in which the social and political world is changing today. The course takes for granted an intermediate level of knowledge of classical and contemporary social theory; students are expected to develop and extend their knowledge of key thinkers by reading their work in greater depth. However, the course itself is organized around problems and issues, not around thinkers and texts. The emphasis is on encouraging students to practise social theory by thinking theoretically about particular problems and issues. The course seeks to bring social theory alive by getting students to draw on the resources of social theory in order to understand the world of the 21st century and how it is changing.

Course aims:
- To enable students to pursue their interests in social theory at an advanced level.
- To enable students to read a selection of theoretical texts in detail.
- To encourage students to use social theory to analyze particular aspects or characteristics of contemporary societies.
- To encourage students to think creatively, constructively and critically about how the social and political world is changing today.

Course organization
The course is organized in terms of discrete modules – i.e., clusters of lectures or seminars. Each module consists of around four hours of lectures or seminar-based teaching, often scheduled as two two-hour sessions. The modules are focused on particular problems or themes and are taught by leading practitioners of social theory today. The content of the modules will vary from year to year, depending on the availability of members of staff. In 2014-15 the following modules will be offered:

**Michaelmas 2013**
- Dr Filipe Carreira da Silva and Dr Mónica Brito Vieira, ‘Performance and power’
- Professor Sarah Franklin, ‘The biological and the technical’
- Dr Marcus Morgan, ‘Collective trauma’

**Lent 2014**
- Professor Richard Sennett and Professor Henrietta Moore, ‘Rethinking culture’
- Dr Véronique Mottier, ‘Race and the politics of sexuality’
- Professor Manuel Castells, ‘The crisis of Europe’

**Easter 2014**
- Professor Michael Mann, ‘War and militarism’
Supervision
Supervision will be provided either by the individual(s) teaching the modules or by other supervisors who have agreed to supervise for this paper. One or two contacts are given for each module and they will either do the supervision or help arrange it. If students or Directors of Studies encounter difficulties they should contact the Course Organizer.

Revision
A one-hour revision class will be scheduled at the beginning of Easter Term.

Assessment
The course will be assessed either by means of a three-hour examination paper or by means of two 5000-word essays. A list of long essay questions will be posted separately.

Brief description of modules and reading lists

1 Performance and Power – Dr Filipe Carreira da Silva and Dr Mónica Brito Vieira

The aim of this module is to look at the “performative turn” in contemporary social theory. Performance studies are a broad church, including speech act theory (Austin and Searle), dramaturgy (Kenneth Burke, Goffman), feminist thinking (Butler), cultural anthropology (Turner) and cultural sociology (Alexander). Our focus in this module is on the politics of performativity, with particular reference to Afro-American authors, starting with Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois famously defined double consciousness, "in which an individual is both representative of and immersed in two distinct ways of life", "an American, a Negro", as the performative duality in which African Americans found themselves inevitably engaged. This module explores the emancipatory potential of the performative enactment of the position of double consciousness as well as its limits. In the first two-hour session we will examine the main features of the "performative turn" in social theory. In the second two-hour session we will concentrate on some of Du Bois’s main writings to see how the performance of double consciousness may be deployed to expose what it does to the oppressed group and therefore to overturn the arguments of the oppressor. Du Bois’s "staging of dissensus" and his conception of black politics will then be contrasted with Douglass'.

Reading
Session 1

See also:

**Session 2**

See also:

**Essay questions**
1 How does the politics of performance affect the performance of politics?
2 Has the notion of “double consciousness” lost any of its validity?

**Supervision**
Contact Dr Filipe Carreira da Silva at fcs23@cam.ac.uk

**2 The Biological and the Technical – Prof Sarah Franklin**

This module will review recent debates in the social study of bioscience and biomedicine addressed to the changing status of the ‘biological’ as it becomes increasingly subject to technological intervention – sometimes referred to as the ‘remaking of life’. In the first two-hour session we examine Paul Rabinow’s contention that ‘nature will be remade as technique’ and that new forms of ‘biosociality’ will emerge in response to projects such as the Human Genome initiative. As we shall see, this hypothesis can be productively compared to earlier arguments from both Marx and Engels, as well as Darwin. We also look at this question ethnographically in order to explore what, exactly, is meant by ‘biology’ in the context of the new reproductive and genetic technology? How do we separate the biological and the social in such contexts – or is this no longer a meaningful distinction? In the second part of this module, we examine new biological tools, such as genes, embryos and cells. If biology is becoming more ‘technologized’, does this also suggest a more biological model of technology? Specifically, we look more closely at how biological tools are being made and used. In what way might we reconceptualise both biology and technology, now that they appear to be increasingly merged?

**Reading**
Session 1
See also:

Session 2
See also:

Essay questions
1 Is biology socially constructed?
2 Has human reproduction been changed by technology?

Supervision
Contact Prof Franklin at sbf25@cam.ac.uk

3 Collective Trauma – Dr Marcus Morgan
This module looks at how malevolent, disruptive, and painful social events can be transformed into collective traumas that define individual and group action and determine subsequent historical conflict. Psychoanalytic and realist approaches to social suffering will be contrasted with a cultural-sociological understanding, which emphasizes the constructed quality of collective events and the complexly performative nature of social action.
What makes the cultural sociological approach distinctive? What is the difference between an occurrence and the construction of an event? What is the nature of the classification process? How do good and evil, perpetrator and victim, get defined?
What roles do stratification and distribution of resources play? How do carrier groups address various audiences?

In attempting to answer these questions, we will work through historical examples of collective trauma, including the Holocaust, the ‘9/11’ attacks, and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

Reading

Session 1:
* Jeffrey Alexander Trauma: A Social Theory (Polity, 2012, Introduction, Ch1, Ch 2)
* Zygmunt Bauman, Modernity and the Holocaust (Polity, 1999)
* Cathy Caruth, Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History (Johns Hopkins, 1996)
* Kai Erikson, Everything in its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood (Simon and Schuster 1976).
* Edward Linenthal, Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create the Holocaust Museum (Viking 1995)

Documentary film:

Session 2:
* Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic (especially the conclusion), (London: Verso, 1993)
* Bruce Grant, ‘New Moscow monuments, or states of innocence’, American Ethnologist, Vol. 28(2), 2001

Documentary film:

**Essay questions**
1. Do disruptive events cause cultural traumas?
2. Evaluate the role played by symbolic representations in the construction of collective trauma.

**4 Race and the politics of sexuality – Dr Véronique Mottier**
This module will explore intersections between sexuality, gender, race and politics. The first 2-hour session examines the ways in which sexuality and sexual ‘purity’ have been mobilized politically. Focusing on the example of eugenic state regulation of reproductive sexuality in pre- and post-War European welfare-states, we analyse the intertwining of relations of power around sexuality with normative ideas about gender and race. The second two-hour session further pursues the analysis of politicisations of race and sexuality, focusing on contemporary controversies and collective mobilizations around sexual and reproductive ‘rights’.

**Reading**

Racial purity and eugenics (session 1)

Sexual and Reproductive ‘rights’ (session 2)

Essay questions
1 Is feminism compatible with sexual nationalism?
2 Does 'race' matter in the politics of sexuality?

Supervision
Contact Dr Anna Bull (bull.anna@gmail.com) or Dr Robbie Duschinsky (robert.duschinsky@northumbria.ac.uk).

5 The Crisis of Europe – Prof Manuel Castells
This module will focus on the crisis that has been unfolding in Europe over the last few years. While this crisis is connected to the financial crisis of 2007-08, we’ll take the view that the crisis affecting many countries today is fundamentally multi-dimensional in character and that its most profound consequences are currently being experienced in Europe, especially in the eurozone. We’ll argue that the interaction between the different dimensions of the crisis is amplifying its effects and leading to a deeper crisis – what we’ll call ‘the crisis of crisis management’. Financial crisis, the crisis of trust, the loss of legitimacy, political incompetence, social outrage, individual despair, political demagogy, and the questioning of existing political institutions, including the European Union, are feeding into each other in a spiral of destruction whose effects may be more profound and more lasting that most observers anticipate. Could this spiral of crisis, outrage and distrust turn out to have long-term debilitating consequences for political institutions in Europe and for the legitimacy of democratic institutions more generally?

The crisis of a model of capitalism (session one)
The economic origins of the current crisis: the development of global informational financial capitalism. The specificity of the crisis in Europe. The crisis of the euro.

From economic crisis to political crisis (session two)
Reading – Key Texts

Session one
Tett, Gillian, Fool’s Gold (London: Little, Brown, 2009)

Session two
*Castells, Manuel, Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age (Cambridge: Polity, 2012)
Beck, Ulrich, German Europe (Cambridge: Polity, 2013)

Additional Reading
Zaloom, Caitlin, Out of the Pits: Traders and Technology from Chicago to London (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006)

Essay questions
1 What is the connection, if any, between the information revolution associated with computation and digital communication networks, on the one hand, and the rise and crisis of global financial capitalism, on the other?
2 What is the connection, if any, between the financial crisis of 2007-08 and the anti-austerity protests in Athens, Lisbon, Madrid and other European cities from 2011 on?
3 Why was the euro created? Did the founders of the euro take sufficient account of the risks?
4 Are the problems in the eurozone creating a legitimation crisis for Europe?

Supervision
6 War and Militarism – Prof Michael Mann
This module will be concerned with aspects of war and military power in the 20th and 21st centuries. The first session will focus on war and revolution, and the second will focus on war in the nuclear age.

Reading

War and Revolution (session 1)
Skocpol, Theda 1979. States and Social Revolutions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

War in the Nuclear Age (session 2)

Essay questions
1 Would communism have existed without world war?
2 Is the United States an imperial power?
3 Is war obsolete, or has it been revived by terrorism and the United States?

Supervision
Contact Dr Jeff Miley at jim52@cam.ac.uk or Dr Hazem Kandil at hk376@cam.ac.uk