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Earliest syllabus

SOCIAL INVENTION

The Analysis and Evaluation of Attempts
to Develop an Applied Social Science

(Syllabus of a Seminar offered in the Departments of Government and Sociology, New York University, Second Semester, Academic Year 1958-9, by Professor Alfred de Grazia.)

NOTE ON SEMINAR PROCEDURE: So far as possible, each of the sixteen topics of the outline to follow will receive the attention of one weekly meeting of the seminar. In connection with each topic, the student is expected to read the listed materials, and to prepare a brief paper on the described problem. At the meetings of the seminar, members are encouraged to contribute ideas and facts based upon their readings and papers, among other things; individual members will be called upon to read their papers from time to time. The papers should be prepared neatly, kept in a binder and turned in at the last meeting of the seminar or whenever called for.

An extensive bibliography on social invention will be distributed separately from the present syllabus. It may prove useful in supplementing the required readings and preparing the papers. Only required readings are being placed on reserve.

Members of the seminar are cordially invited to consult privately with the instructor on problems related to their studies.

OUTLINE OF COURSE

1. INTRODUCTION: Why invention is important, how it relates to social change in general, and how it forms an important part of man's intellectual equipment and hope for the future. Discussion of bibliography and course procedures.
2. SOCIAL CHANGE:
The poles of action: creative and routine activity
Human nature, social structure, and social change
Are there universal laws of change in science, poetry, management, politics, etc.?
Unconscious change
Conscious change
Factors fostering or inhibiting change
Ethics of social change

READ: William Ogburn, Social Change (All)

PROBLEM: Prepare a list of 100 social inventions, assigning an approximate date to the climax of the development of each.

3. PURPOSIVE CHANGE:

Rationality in social change

Unforeseen Consequences of purposive action

Common law and positive law

Means and ends

Planning change

Process of change: in macroscopic and microscopic situations

READ: Ronald Lippitt, Jeanne Watson and Bruce Westerley, The Dynamics of Planned Change (All); Robert Redfield, The Primitive World and Its Transformations, Chap. 5; Robert K. Merton, "The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action," Amer. Soc. Rev. (Dec. 1936), 894-04.

PROBLEM: Procuring a "fact-finding-and-recommendations" type of report issued by a government agency, a legislative committee or a voluntary citizens' group, relating to a political or social question, criticize its assumptions, proceedings, method, and recommendations, especially with regard to their instrumental rationalism.

4. INVENTION: PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL:

Social principles governing "hardware" inventions

Analogy between physical and social inventions

"Protection" of the inventor's rights

Comparative growth and rate patterns

The cumulative phenomenon

Must social inventions be written

READ: S. C. Gilfillan, The Sociology of Invention (pp. 1-158); W. Ogburn and Gilfillan, "The Influence of Invention and Discovery," pp. 122-66 in Recent Social Trends, Vol. I.

PROBLEM: Describe the social inventions attributable to or related to the invention of photography.

5. SOURCES OF SOCIAL INVENTION:

Psychology of social invention

Types of social invention: concepts, practical fictions, myths (doctrines), data-collecting, data-processing, human relation systems and arrangements, rationalizations, data discovery.

Areas of social invention: marketplace, government, family, etc.

Individual and group Research

READ: J-M. Montmasson, Invention and the Unconscious, Introduction, chaps. IV, V, VII, and pp. 320-6; John Jewkes, David Sawers, and Richard Stillerman, The Sources of Invention, chap. IX.

PROJECT: Trace the genesis and history of a specific social invention (3000 words limit).

6. THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS IN APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCE:
Hypothesis and theory in pure vs. applied science
Social research in relation to social action organization

READ: Graham Wallas, The Great Society, chaps. I, X-XIII; John Dewey, The Public and Its Problems, chaps. IV, V, VI; R.K. Merton and Daniel Lerner, "Social Scientists and Research Policy," pp. 282-310 in D. Lerner and H. Lasswell, The Policy Sciences.

PROBLEM: Prepare a description of an applied research organization (whether commercial or non-profit, independent or part of a larger agency); what do you consider to be the limits of its theoretical work?

7.UTOPIAS:
Utopias as applied political and social science
Utility of utopian writing
Possible improvements in new utopian writing

READ: Lewis Mumford, The Story of Utopias (all).

PROBLEM: Read, and criticize the recommendations of, one twentieth century utopia.

8. PLANNED SOCIETIES
Plan or No Plan?
Potential Scope of Planning
Planning as the obverse of Invention
Planning that provides for Invention

READ: Leonard Doob, The Plans of Men, pp. 3-16, 171-385; Charles Merriam, "The National Resources Planning Board," Amer. Pol. Sci. Rev. (1944), 1075-88.

PROBLEM: Describe the social inventions of the Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia in 1787.

9. INVENTION IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION:
Sources of innovation in communities
Gemeinschaft vs. Gesellschaft dicotomy
Community organization patterns: is all such invention re-invention?
Diffusion of practices in and among communities

READ: Saul Alinsky, Reveille for Radicals, scan all and chap.11; Alfred de Grazia, ed., Grass Roots Private Welfare, essays by Lane (p. 7), Stevenson (p. 23), Huber (p. 45), Cotton (p. 123), Doyle (p. 152), Thierman (p. 168), Roth (p. 185), Einstein (p. 235), Herbert (p. 263), Wilsnack (p. 267), Brandon (p. 285).

PROBLEM: Write an account of an incident in your life connected with the development of a group policy, plan, or program. Explain specifically the sources of and reasons for routine suggestions, creative suggestions, and the final decision.

10. SCHEMES OF INSTITUTIONAL REFORM:

Were any historical institutions invented in any significant part?
The study of social movements
Differences between successful and unsuccessful reform proposals
Is a new institution conceivable?
The major step: routinization of institutional invention

READ: Louis O. Kelso and Mortimer J. Adler, The Capitalist Manifesto, introductory and summary portions; Alfred de Grazia, "Mathematical Derivation of an Election System," ISIS, 44 (June, 1953), 42-51; M. S. McDougal and L. Lipson, "Perspectives for a Law of Outer Space," Amer. Journal of Int'l. Law, LII (July, 1958), 407-31.

PROBLEM: Read a political biography or journals of a political, military or other social leader and describe one set of actions corresponding as closely as possible to a political invention by the principal.

11. INVENTION IN LEGISLATION

Positive legislation: the beginnings of the invention concept in lawmaking
Where invention can enter different legislative processes
Origins of some important pieces of legislation

READ: S.K. Bailey and H. D. Samuel, Congress at Work, chap. 8; S. K. Bailey, Congress Makes a Law, Chap. 3; L. K. Chamberlain, The President, Congress and Legislation (summary reading).

PROBLEM: Describe the continuous chain of social invention connected with the struggle of leading elements in the Southern states to control Negro liberties since the Civil War.

12. INVENTION IN WORK RELATIONS:

Taylorism and human engineering
Human relations in industry
Manager-consultant-research staff relations
Patterns of diffusion of novel practices

READ: F. J. Roethlisberger, Morale (all); Gladys Baker, The County Agent (on origins and functions of the agent).

PROBLEM: Viewing articles in professional journals as a kind of patent claim, scan the literature of applied administration of any and all kinds over the past year and present what you regard as the most original and potentially most useful invention.

13. INVENTIVENESS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE METHODOLOGY: *Scientific method as an invention.*

Science as the administration of accepted hypotheses
New methods of social study
Diffusion of new methods
Differences between general methods and specific techniques

READ: Stuart Chase, The Proper Study of Mankind, Chaps. 1, 2, 3, 9, 15, 16-19, 25; Dorwin Cartwright, "Social Psychology in the United States During the Second World War," Human Relations, I (1948), 333-52.

PROBLEM: List 20 inventions in social science methodology. For any one of these ascertain, if possible, its time and circumstances of origin Then describe, if possible, its path of increased use and influence

14. THE INVENTION OF BETTER WAYS OF SOCIAL INVENTION:

Support of social invention

Obstacles to social invention

Organization and administration of new social forms

READ: Florian Znaniecki, Social Role of the Man of Knowledge, chap. 2; L. A. Dexter, "The Policy Sciences and Limited Warfare," PROD, I (July, 1958) 17-19; Harry Alpert, "The Knowledge We Need Most," Sat. Review, Feb. 1, 1958; Pendleton Herring, "Expand the School!" Ibid.; "National Support for Behavioral Science," PROD, I (May, 1958), pp. 7-11; Lasswell, H. D., "Current Studies of the Decision Process: Automation versus Creativity," Western Pol. Quarterly, vol. 8, 381-99.

PROBLEM: What effects will the currents of social inventions of the present generation have upon physical inventions?

15. ETHICS OF SOCIAL INVENTION:

Ideology of social inventiveness

Quis custodes custodet?

Expert vs. Layman

Social controls over invention

READ: Thomas Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," in Critical and Miscellaneous Essays or Works; John Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct, especially Part III, chap. 1; H. D. Lasswell, "The Normative Impact of the Behavioral Sciences," Ethics, LXVII (1957), 1-42.

PROBLEM: Reviewing the news of the past year or two, find an incipient or realized social invention that, you believe, will have adverse consequences, and justify your position. Do the same for one that will apparently have "good" consequences.

16. THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL INVENTION:

Projection of the present course of invention

Growing integration of social inventors with the existing social system

Probably lines of advance and retrogression

READ: Chase, op. cit., chap. 28; Charles Merriam, The Role of Politics in Social Change (all); H. D. Lasswell, "The Political Science of Science," Amer. Pol. Sci. Review, L, 961-79.

PROBLEM: List 25 political-social inventions that are needed and that will probably be practically developed in the near future.