

# OUTLINE Lecture 17. Sociology 621. March 15, 2017

## The State and Accumulation: functionality & contradiction

### I. The Functionalist Logic of the Theory of the State

1. The class character of the state and functionality
2. Key problem for functionalist explanation = feedback processes. Three connected processes:
  - *Political class struggle at pivotal conjunctures*
  - *Systemic pressures that reinforce or undermine state policy*
  - *Institutional learning and correction of mistakes*
3. The Bourgeois Political Utopia

### II. Problematic functionality: Three Types of contradictory functionality.

1. Legitimation vs. Accumulation = contradictions *between* state functions
2. Autonomy vs subordination: Contradictions *within* the accumulation function
  - 2.1 *Thesis 1*: the state must intervene to prevent capitalism from destroying itself economically.
  - 2.2 *Thesis 2*: the deeper the contradictions of accumulation, the more autonomy the state needs to contain them
  - 2.3 *Thesis 3*: The Frankenstein problem: To be able intervene effectively to protect capitalism the state needs to have a level of autonomy that also enables it damage capitalism
  - 2.4 Conclusion: *The Contradiction Thesis* = Various dynamics are set in motion which make it increasingly probable that the state will act dysfunctionally → *a crisis of crisis management.*
3. Contradiction between Internationalization of Capital accumulation and territorially-bounded State: erosion of basis for reconciling capitalism and democracy
  - 3.1 Streeck's argument
    - Trajectory of solutions by the state to crisis → sequence of self-undermining solutions → neoliberalism → globalization & financialization → incapacity to generate new state-driven solutions
    - Simultaneously: destruction of any potential collective agent to create alternative to capitalism
    - Result: extended interregnum of disintegration: Gramsci: "the old is dying but the new cannot yet be born" ... [ushering in] "an interregnum in which pathological phenomena of the most diverse sort come into existence"
  - 3.2 Alternative formulation: erosion of the conditions for a state mediated class compromise (from chapter 12 of *Understanding Class*):

