

## Sociological Theory

Soc 335

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:50 – 2:00; PPHAC 338

*Professor Daniel Jasper*

*PPHAC 316*

*Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 – 4:00, Fridays 9:30 – 10:15, or by appointment*

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**Course Overview:** This course is designed to introduce students to the dynamic field of social theory. To this end, we will trace the historical development of social theoretic thought and identify some of the current issues and debates that shape the field. Through this course, students will

- Have developed a familiarity with theoretical logic and argumentation in sociology
- Have read and be familiar with key social thinkers from both the classical and contemporary periods.
- Understand and be able to analyze key issues in the field.
- Cultivate their sociological imaginations as they learn to apply the theories.
- Develop their own theoretical contributions.

A common set of issues will guide our inquiry into the work of pivotal social theorists and schools of social thought. What is the relationship between social action and social structure? How is social power produced, exercised, and challenged? How are social identities forged, articulated, and recognized in the modern world?

**Course Requirements and Expectations:** In addition to written work, for students to do well in this course, they will need to read and think systematically about social theory over the course of the semester. Towards this end, it is expected that students regularly consult supplementary texts—such as those on reserve. I will be happy to suggest additional texts on particular topics of interest to any student. It is expected that all students will have thoroughly and thoughtfully completed the weekly readings, and be prepared to discuss these, by our first meeting of each week. Since many of arguments presented are complex and multi-faceted, it is expected that students read and re-read the assigned texts closely and conscientiously. This course will be conducted primarily as a seminar, all students are expected to regularly contribute to in-class discussions with reactions and responses that deal directly with the issues and texts being considered. This participation will count for 15 % of the final grade. Students will also have the opportunity to share their insights in writing through weekly reading logs (these will be discussed the first week of class). Reading logs will be collected only on the first course meeting of each week, graded on a gpa scale (0 – 4), with the ten highest scoring counting for 15 % of the final grade.

Other requirements:

Midterm Exam	— 20 % of final grade
Final Exam	— 20 % of final grade
Deepening Theory Essay	— 15 % of final grade
Applied Theory Essay	— 15 % of final grade

Students who wish to submit their writing assignments through electronic mail may send it to my email address only as an attached Word document. Assignments submitted in this way must be received by 10:00pm the evening **before** the due date. No late reading logs will be accepted, other late assignments will be penalized 10 % per day.

**Repressive Policies and other mechanisms of social control:** As a professional and collective endeavor, there should be no need for repressive policies. That is, we all share the responsibility for the success of this course. Therefore, we should plan on attending all class sessions. We shall arrive on time, having completed the shared readings, and be prepared to collectively explicate, interrogate, and expand the arguments. We should arrive with the texts, our notes on the texts, and the necessary tools of scholarship. We should leave unnecessary distractions, such as cell phones, in our private ‘backstage’ regions.

The most important part of conducting oneself as a professional scholar involves following the conventions of scholarly citation. All members of this course should read, re-read, and familiarize themselves with the college policy on Academic Honesty included in the student handbook. All written work must include full and proper citations. There are no exceptions, including ignorance. Cheating and plagiarism will result in failing this course.

Anyone unable to consent to these shared principles should not participate in this course.

**Required Texts:** The following text is available in the bookstore.

Farganis, James. (2004). *Readings in Social Theory*, 4E. McGraw Hill.  
(Referred to in schedule as Far)

**Supporting Texts:** The following are on reserve in the library. These resources will prove useful by providing different analyses and perspectives on the theorists we cover. All students are highly encouraged to consult these resources regularly.

Craig Calhoun, et. al. *Contemporary Sociological Theory*.  
Lewis Coser. *Masters of Sociological Thought*.  
Anthony Giddens. *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*.  
Charles Lemert. *Social Theory: the Multicultural and Classic Readings*.  
Wolfgang Mommsen. *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber*.  
George Ritzer. *Frontiers of Social Theory*.  
Steven Seidman. *Contested Knowledge: Social Theory Today*.

## **Course Schedule**

Please note, the outline below is merely a guide. Changes are possible as the semester progresses.

**Week 1** (August 29 & 31) **Course Introduction**

Far: Introduction

**Week 2** (September 5 & 7) **Karl Marx**

Far: Ch. 1

**Week 3** (September 12 & 14) **Emile Durkheim**

Far: Ch. 2

**Week 4** (September 19 & 21) **Max Weber**

Far: Ch. 3

**Week 5** (September 26 & 28) **Georg Simmel and George Herbert Mead**

Far: Chs. 4 & 5

**Week 6** (October 3 & 5) **From Classical to Contemporary Theory**

**Midterm Exam on October 3**

Readings: TBA

**Week 7** (Tuesday October 10) **No Class – Fall Break**

(October 12) **Functionalism**

Far: Ch. 7

**Week 8** (October 17 & 19) **Symbolic Interactionism**

Far: Ch. 11

**Week 9** (October 24 & 26) **Conflict Theory**

Far: Ch. 8

**Week 10** (October 31 & November 2) **Critical Theory**

Far: Ch. 13

**Week 11** (November 7 & 9) **Feminist Theory**

Far: Ch. 12

Patricia Hill Collins “Black Feminist Thought in the Matrix of Domination”

<http://www2.pfeiffer.edu/~lridener/courses/BLDFEM.HTML>

**Week 12** (November 14 & 16) **Michel Foucault**

Far: Ch. 14

Michel Foucault “Body/Power” <http://www.thefoucauldian.co.uk/bodypower.htm>

**Week 13** (November 21) **Exchange and Rational Choice Theory**

Far: Ch. 9  
(Thursday November 23) No Class Thanksgiving

**Week 14** (November 28 & 30) **Globalization**

Riva Kastoryano, “The Reach of Transnationalism”

<http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/kastoryano.htm>

David Held “Violence, Law, and Justice in a Global Age”

<http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/held.htm>

**Week 15** (December 5 & 7) **Course Conclusion**

**Final Exam during the scheduled exam period**