

**Sociological Theory**  
Soc 335, Spring 2009  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:20-11:30; PPHAC 235

*Professor Daniel Jasper*

*PPHAC 316*

*Office Hours: Tuesdays 8:00-9:00; Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:05-3:00; other times by appointment*

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**Course Overview:** This course is designed to introduce students to the dynamic field of social theory. On one hand, theory is a distinct subfield of sociology. On the other hand, theory is a mode of inquiry, analysis, thinking and debate that spans all sociological subfields. Through this course, students will engage both of these traditions of sociological 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

**Course Goals:** By the end of the course students will:

- Develop a familiarity with theoretical logic and argumentation in sociology
- Read and become 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.
- improve their ability to construct and analyze academic arguments
- further develop their writing and oral presentation skills
- further develop their ability to work collaboratively

**Course Requirements and Expectations (and Repressive Policies):** It is expected that all students will participate in this course as theorists. This means that the focus will be on *reading* texts closely, *analyzing* these texts and the arguments made in them, and *writing* theoretic arguments. A number of supplementary texts have been placed on Reserve in Reeves Library to assist in these tasks. Students are expected to consult these, and other outside texts, regularly. I will be happy to suggest additional texts on particular topics of interest to any student.

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.

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

**Student Assessment:** This course is a collective exercise in textual explication and theoretical argumentation. All participants, therefore, have an equal responsibility for the success of this course. Everyone is expected to regularly contribute to in-class discussions with reactions and responses that deal directly with the issues and texts being considered. This *engagement* will count for 24% of the final grade. For this portion of their grade, students will be evaluated on the quality as well as the quantity of their interventions. Students will also have the opportunity to share their insights in writing through weekly *reading questions* (see attached guidelines). Reading questions will be posted to the course Blackboard site and account for 16% of the final grade. Each student, with a colleague, will also have the opportunity to serve as a *seminar leader* (see attached guidelines). Leading our seminar will account for 10% of the final grade. Students will complete a *Midterm Exam* (10% of final grade) and a *Final Exam* (15% of final grade). Students will also prepare a *comparative theory essay*, staged throughout the semester. The combined stages of this will account for 25% of the final grade (see attached guidelines). It is within the instructor's purview to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades for an assignment or for the course. A detailed grading sheet is appended to this syllabus.

**Students should expect to spend approximately 10 hours per week on this course.**

**Required Texts:** The following texts are available in the bookstore.

Calhoun, Craig, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk, Eds. 2007. *Classical Sociological Theory* 2E. Malden, MA: Blackwell. (Referred to in course schedule as *Classical*.)

Calhoun, Craig, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk, Eds. 2007. *Contemporary Sociological Theory* 2E. Malden, MA: Blackwell. (Referred to in course schedule as *Contemporary*.)

**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.

Adams, Bert. 2002. *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. Pine Forge.

Coser, Lewis. 1997. *Masters of Sociological Thought*. HBJ.

Farganis, James. 2007. *Readings in Social Theory*, 5E. McGraw Hill.

Giddens, Anthony. 1971. *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*. Cambridge  
 Hughes, J.A. 2003. *Understanding Classical Sociology*. Sage.  
 Lemert, Charles. 1993. *Social Theory: the Multicultural and Classic Readings*.  
 Westview.  
 Mommsen, Wolfgang. 1989. *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber*.  
 Chicago.  
 Ritzer, George. 1990. *Frontiers of Social Theory*. Columbia.  
 Seidman, Steven. 2004. *Contested Knowledge: Social Theory Today*. Blackwell.

**Course Schedule**

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

*Week 1* (January 20<sup>th</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>) **Darius Rejali**

**Read:** Rejali “Torture Makes the Man” *South Central Review* 24.1 (Spring 2007).

**Nota Bene:** Dr. Rejali will be joining us for class on January 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Attend:** Public Lecture “Why Torture” by Darius Rejali. January 20<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm  
 Prosser Auditorium.

**Read:** (For January 22<sup>nd</sup>) Course Syllabus; Classical, General Introduction.

*Week 2* (January 27<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>) **Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels**

**\*Read:** Classical, Part II

Seminar Leaders for January 27<sup>th</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_

*Week 3* (February 3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>) **Emile Durkheim**

**\*Read:** Classical, Part III

Seminar Leaders for February 3<sup>rd</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_

*Week 4* (February 10<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>) **Max Weber**

**\*Read:** Classical, Part IV

Seminar Leaders for February 10<sup>th</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_

*Week 5* (February 17<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>) **Mead, Simmel, and Du Bois**

**\*Read:** Classical, Part V

Seminar Leaders for February 17<sup>th</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_

**Due:** February 17<sup>th</sup>. Comparative Theory Essay – Statement of Interest

*Week 6* (February 24<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>) **Taking Stock and Assessing**

**Read:** Contemporary, General Introduction

**Midterm Exam:** February 26<sup>th</sup>.

*Spring Break* (March 3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>) **No Class**

*Week 7* (March 10<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>) **Structural-Functionalism**

**\*Read:** Classical, Part VII

Seminar Leaders for March 10<sup>th</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_

*Week 8* (March 17<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>) **Micro Analysis**

**\*Read:** Contemporary, Part I

**Due:** March 17<sup>th</sup>, Comparative Theory Essay – First Draft (No Late Drafts Accepted. Bring Two (2) copies to class.)

**Peer Review Day:** March 19<sup>th</sup>. Bring two copies of reviewer comments to class.

*Week 9* (March 24<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>) **Critical Theory**

**\*Read:** Classical, Part VI

Seminar Leaders for March 24<sup>th</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_

*Week 10* (March 31<sup>st</sup> & April 2<sup>nd</sup>) **Analyzing Difference**

**\*Read:** Contemporary, Part VII

Seminar Leaders for March 31<sup>st</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_

*Week 11* (April 7<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>) **Michel Foucault**

**\*Read:** Contemporary, Part IV

Seminar Leaders for April 7<sup>th</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_

**Due:** April 9<sup>th</sup>: Comparative Theory Essay – Final Revised Draft

*Week 12* (April 14<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>) **Pierre Bourdieu**

**\*Read:** Contemporary, Part VI

Seminar Leaders for April 14<sup>th</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_

*Week 13* (April 21<sup>st</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>) **Jurgen Habermas**

**\*Read:** Contemporary, Part VIII

Seminar Leaders for April 21<sup>st</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_

*Week 14* (April 28<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>) **Course Conclusion**

**Take Home Final Exam due at the beginning of the scheduled exam period: Friday May 8<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 pm.**

## Guidelines for reading questions

For each primary author discussed, students should prepare reading questions. Reading questions are brief statements that highlight and contextualize key topics from the texts that call for further thought, analysis, and discussion. Each question should (1) clearly articulate—in your own words—a key idea from the text. (2) Show—by citing or pointing to a key passage in the text—where you find this idea. And (3) clearly state the question as to what needs to be further thought about and discussed. (These questions should be theoretical questions that address the key arguments of the text(s) and link these arguments to the wider body of social theoretic thought. Questions should not be factual or content specific.) It will often be helpful to include (4) a justification as to why this question is worth pursuing.

**Please Note:** you should not quote or paraphrase the introductory comments by Calhoun, et. al. or any other source. Your response should be directed to the primary source material that we will be discussing.

Reading questions are to be posted to the course **blackboard** site. They are due on **Mondays** before **10pm** of the week we will be discussing the text(s). All reading questions should include your name and a proper citation for the text. Notes will be graded on a scale (0 – 2) for a possible total of sixteen points. Notes lacking a proper citation will receive no credit (0). You may turn in reading notes on any day with assigned readings (noted in the course schedule with an asterisk [\*]). Thus, there are eleven possible weeks to turn in a reading note, you may turn in ten, the eight highest scoring will be included in your final grade.

### **Guidelines for leading a seminar discussion**

Each student, with a colleague, will be responsible for leading a seminar discussion on one theorist or school of theoretic thought. Students will be expected to lead the collective analysis and discussion of the class. This should consist of a brief (approx. 10 minutes) contextualizing of the theorist(s) ideas and perspective; leading the discussion during the class period; and maintaining a focus on the textual evidence.

In preparing to lead the seminar, it is **required** that each student consult supplementary texts—both primary and secondary. An outline of the orienting discussion should be submitted, along with a preliminary list of reading questions, via email **at least one week before** the scheduled presentation. It is highly recommended that students meet with me as they prepare their seminar.

**Nota Bene:** Visual aids (e.g. powerpoint) are unnecessary. If you desire, you may provide a one page handout with an outline of your main points and/or questions to the seminar participants.

### **Guidelines for Comparative Theory Essay**

Theoretic arguments are developed by building upon the work of previous theorists. The purpose of this essay is for students to develop theoretical arguments through a close and thorough reading of different theoretical perspectives. In other words, you will develop your own theoretical perspective addressing a contemporary social issue by synthesizing existing social theoretic knowledge and logic. Your theoretical perspective can be applied to a wide array of issues: policy concerns, cultural analysis, intellectual gymnastics, etc.

For this essay, it is best to begin with the question or issue that will be theorized. Once this ‘problem’ is established, it will be possible to identify useful theoretical positions. Course texts may be utilized, but **all essays must include outside theorists**. Worthwhile places to look for theorists include the supplementary texts on reserve and the Sociological Journals available through Reeves Library, especially *Sociological Theory* and *Theory and Society*. I will also be happy to suggest theorists to address particular problems.

In developing your theoretical stance, you should build it upon the extant theoretical work that you are drawing and building upon. In presenting the theorist’s arguments, make sure that you do so accurately and fully. This means that you should recognize their larger project even if focusing only on a small part of their insights. In doing this, be sure to base your analysis and argumentation in primary texts. Therefore, you should quote or paraphrase their words as you see fit, but always include proper citations and a list of references. In synthesizing, show how the theorists differ, where they overlap, and how the theorists shed new light on other perspectives.

Practicalities:

As always, all written work should include proper citations for all works consulted. Citations and references can follow either MLA or APA format, but please be consistent throughout.

Essays should be typed, double spaced, and include page numbers. There are no formal length guidelines; rough length guidelines: 2500-3000 words. I am available to discuss ideas, suggest theorists, and review outlines or drafts.

Students will work on their essays throughout the semester, turning in the following:

**Statement of Interest and Preliminary list of texts Consulted (3 points)**

This should be a concise, but clear, statement of the ‘problem’ to be addressed. You should lay out how the problem/question can be addressed in a social-theoretic way. It should also include brief statements of how different theorists or theoretical perspectives will be brought to bear on the issue. A preliminary bibliography should be included listing texts consulted.

**Due: February 17<sup>th</sup>**

**First Draft (7 points)**

This should be a fully developed essay with all arguments clearly presented and developed. It should include an abstract of approximately 200 words that succinctly presents the arguments of the essay.

**Due: March 17<sup>th</sup>. Two Copies Due; No Late Papers Accepted.**

**Peer Review (3 points)**

Each student will prepare written comments for a peer whose paper they will be reviewing. While these comments may include copy editing suggestions, they should be primarily substantive. That is, they should address the theoretic arguments that are developed and how they are developed. These comments should identify strengths and weaknesses in the arguments with the goal of improving the essay.

**Due: March 19<sup>th</sup>. Two Copies Due; No Late Papers Accepted.**

**Final Revised Draft (12 points)**

This is the final draft submitted and should incorporate substantive revisions to the first draft. Revisions should be based upon further thinking, further refinement of the argument, and incorporating comments from reviews of earlier drafts.

**Due: April 9<sup>th</sup>.** When submitting revised drafts, please include a copy of the statement of interest, the first draft, reviewers comments, and the final submitted version.

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Grading Sheet

Weekly Reading Questions:	$\frac{\quad}{2} \quad \frac{\quad}{2} \quad \frac{\quad}{2} \quad \frac{\quad}{2} \quad \frac{\quad}{2} \quad \frac{\quad}{2} \quad \frac{\quad}{2} \quad \frac{\quad}{2}$	=	$\frac{\quad}{16}$
Seminar Leadership:			$\frac{\quad}{10}$
Seminar Participation :	$\frac{\quad}{\text{Midterm (10)}} \quad + \quad \frac{\quad}{\text{End-term (14)}}$	=	$\frac{\quad}{24}$
Midterm Exam			$\frac{\quad}{10}$
Final Exam			$\frac{\quad}{15}$
Comparative Theory Essay			
Preliminary Statement & Bibliography			$\frac{\quad}{3}$
First Draft			$\frac{\quad}{7}$
Review Comments for Peer			$\frac{\quad}{3}$
Revised Draft			$\frac{\quad}{12}$
<b>Total:</b>			$\frac{\quad}{100}$

**Possible points = 100**

**Final Grades**

94-100 = A	87-89.9 = B+	77-79.9 = C+	67-69.9 = D+
90-93.9 = A-	83-86.9 = B	73-76.9 = C	63-66.9 = D
	80-82.9 = B-	70-72.9 = C-	60-62.9 = D-
Below 60 points = F			