

Sociological Theory
Soc 335, Fall 2012
Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:10-2:20; PPHAC 235

Professor Daniel Jasper

PPHAC 316

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:30 – 3:30, Tuesdays 4:30 – 6:00; 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.

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
- Improve their ability to present academic concepts and ideas to others
- Further develop their writing and oral presentation skills
- Further develop their ability to read closely
- Further develop their ability to debate intellectual and contemporary issues
- Further develop their ability to work as part of a team

Course Structure and Work: This course is organized into four interconnected modules. Each module will focus on one broad social theoretic theme. In each module, students will read a variety of classical and contemporary texts, for which they will need to demonstrate a deep understanding of the arguments. We will work in groups, and as a class, to understand how these texts fit together as part of the larger body of social theoretic thought. Each module will culminate with a project. The first three projects will be completed in small groups. The final project will be completed individually as your final ‘take-home’ exam.

A note on reading: For many of you, the readings for this course will be more complex and more difficult than you are used to reading. It has been my experience that this proves incredibly frustrating for many students, especially at the beginning of the semester. I am happy to work with all students in order to help you find effective reading strategies. The most important thing, however, is that you must be willing to put in the time, concentration, and seriousness necessary with these texts. Again, this is especially true at the beginning of the term.

A note on participation: This course is a collective endeavor to understand complicated texts and a complicated history of thought and argumentation. Students are expected to demonstrate their ability and willingness to work through challenging ideas in class. All students are expected to participate in course discussions. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that the classroom environment is conducive to all member's participation. Everyone shares the responsibility to arrive on time, with all of the necessary materials—unnecessary items should be left behind. (If you must have a cell phone with you, for example to be accessible to childcare providers, please see me at the beginning of the semester.) Everyone should bring a professional demeanor respectful of differing ideas.

A note on group work: Theoretic work is best understood as part of a dialogue. Therefore, much of the work in this course is designed to be completed through dialogue with others. All students are expected to collaborate fully with their peers in groups. It is each group and student's responsibility to ensure that group projects are completed before deadlines.

A note on upper division Sociology courses: This course is designed for Junior and Senior Sociology students at Moravian College. It is taken for granted that all students in this course are familiar with basic sociological concepts, perspectives, and methodologies. In addition, it is taken for granted that students are familiar with how to conduct library research and how to evaluate sources. If any student does not feel competent in these areas, they should schedule a meeting with the professor at the beginning of the semester to 'get up to speed'.

A note on Academic Honesty: 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.

A note on Accommodations: Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, assistant director of learning services for academic and disability support at 1307 Main Street, or by calling 610-861-1510. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

Student Assessment: This course is a collective exercise in textual explication and theoretical argumentation. Assessment mechanisms are designed to measure (1) how well students are able to read, comprehend, and engage with theoretic arguments; (2) the contributions of each student to the collective work of the class; (3) how well students develop and apply theoretic arguments. These areas will be measured by (1) Reading Comprehension Quizzes and Short Essays; (2) Course participation including in-class activities and writing; and (3) culminating projects for each module. The first three projects will be completed in small groups, the final project will be a 'take-home' final exam due no later than the scheduled beginning of the exam period for this course.

Final Grades will be calculated as follows:

Reading Comprehension Quizzes/Short Essays	25%	
Course Participation/In-class Activities	25%	
Group Projects	30%	(10% each)
Final Project	20%	

It is within the instructor's purview to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades for an assignment or for the course.

Final Grades

	87-89.9 = B+	77-79.9 = C+	67-69.9 = D+
93-100 = A	83-86.9 = B	73-76.9 = C	63-66.9 = D
90-92.9 = A-	80-82.9 = B-	70-72.9 = C-	60-62.9 = D-
Below 60 points = F			

Required Texts: The following text is required and available in the Moravian College bookstore.

Longhofer, Wesley and Daniel Winchester, Eds. 2012. *Social Theory Re-wired*. New York: Routledge. (on the course schedule, this is listed as STR)

There is a companion website for this text that we will use—all students should create an account.

There is also a blackboard site for this course. Assignment guidelines, supplemental readings, and course announcements will be posted to the site. Students are expected to check the site daily. Students should enroll in the blackboard site using the password 'Fall12Theory'.

I will communicate through the announcements feature of blackboard and through Moravian email—it is expected that all students will check these regularly. Please note that I do not open emails without a subject heading. When you send me an email, please include a subject heading.

Course Schedule

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

Week 1 (August 28th & 30th) An Introduction to the Course, and to Social Theory

Read: STR, Preface & Section 1 Introductory Essay; This Syllabus; Student Handbook on Academic Honesty

Explore: STR Companion Website, Course Blackboard Site.

Module 1: What is the 'Social' and is it 'ordered'?

Project: Demarcating the social

Week 2 (September 4th & 6th) Emile Durkheim

Read: STR, Chs. 1-3

Week 3 (September 11th & 13th) Moral Order?

Read: STR, Chs. 4 & 25

Convocation on September 13th: Winona La Duke

Week 4 (September 18th & 20th) The Underpinnings of Order

Read: STR, Chs. 5-7

Module 2: Modern Capitalism and the Order of Conflict

Project: The historical contexts of social theoretic ideas.

Week 5 (September 25th & 27th) Karl Marx's Humanist Thought
Read: STR, Chs. 8, 11, 9

Week 6 (October 2nd & 4th) Reproducing Social Divisions
Read: STR, Chs. 14, 15, 27, 28

Week 7 (October 9th & 11th) Political Economy
October 9th: No Class Fall Break
Read: STR, Chs. 10, 12

Week 8 (October 16th & 18th) TBD

Module 3: Selves in Society
Project: Telling stories of our lives.

Week 9 (October 23rd & 25th) G. H. Mead & Georg Simmel
Read: STR, Chs. 32-4

Week 10 (October 30th & November 1st) Who we are
Read: STR, Chs. 35 – 38

Module 4: Rationality and its Consequences
Project: What is knowledge, what is theory?

Week 11 (November 6th & 8th) Max Weber
Read: STR, Chs. 16-18

Week 12 (November 13th & 15th) Interrogating Rationality
Read: STR, Chs. 21, 22, 24

Week 13 (November 20th & 22nd) Presentations.
No Class on Nov. 22: Thanksgiving

Week 14 (November 27th & 29th) Rethinking Knowledge
Read: STR, Chs. 29-31

Week 15 (December 4th & 6th) Complicating our understandings
Read: STR, Chs. 20, 23

Scheduled Final Exam Time: Tuesday, December 11th @ 8:30: All exams must be submitted by this time.