

Sociological Theory
Soc 335, Fall 2014
Fridays 1:10 – 3:45; PPHAC 338

Professor Daniel Jasper

PPHAC 316

Office Hours: Posted on blackboard and by office door

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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:

- Learn how to read a specialized literature
- 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 unique contributions to social theoretical thought.
- 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: Most professional fields, from Law to Medicine, from Marketing to Policing, have a specialized literature that practitioners must master. Each professional literature has its own conventions, genres, and language. In this course, students are expected to learn how to read such a specialized literature—in this case, Social Theory. Though the majority of students will not confront this literature in their professional lives after Moravian, learning how to function within this literature will allow students to develop the skills necessary to read and comprehend whatever specialized literature that they will work with in their professional lives.

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 some 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 to work 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 participation by all members of the course. Everyone shares the responsibility to arrive on time, with all of the necessary materials—unnecessary items should be left behind. 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 teams. It is each team's 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 work produced for this course 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 must contact Ms. Elaine Mara, assistant director of academic support services for academic and disability support, at the lower level of Monocacy Hall, or by calling 610-861-1401. 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) Weekly Responses to our reading—these will be of different types, completed typically through blackboard, and due before our weekly class meeting; (2) Course participation including in-class activities and writing; and (3) culminating projects for each module. The first three projects will be completed by teams; 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:

Weekly responses	25%
Course Participation/In-class Activities	25%
Group Projects	30%
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. (Search for professor DJasper.)

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 regularly. Students should enroll in the blackboard site using the password ‘2014Theory’.

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 that includes a reference to our course (e.g. SocTheory; Soc335; etc).

Course Schedule

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

Week 1 (August 29th) An Introduction to the Course, and to Social Theory

Most of our work today will be spent on how to approach 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: *Selves in the Social World* (Mead, Goffman, Garfinkel, Simmel)

Week 2 (September 5th) Understanding Selves and Interaction

Read: STR, Chs. 32, 35

Week 3 (September 12th) Rethinking the role of the ‘social’

Read: STR, Chs. 33, 6, 36

Thursday, September 11th: Opening Convocation @ 11:45 in Johnston Hall. Nobel Peace Prize Winner Jody Williams.

Week 4 (September 19th) The ways the social works

Read: STR: 15, 21, 38

Project 1 Due on Monday, September 29 before 11:59 pm.

Module 2: *What is Social Reality? Functional, Conflict, or Constructed?*

Week 5 (September 26th) Durkheimian Functionalism

Read: STR: 1, 2, 4

Week 6 (October 3rd) Introducing Karl Marx

Read: STR, Chs. 8, 11, 9

*Wednesday, October 8th | 7:00 PM | Foy Hall - (Class participation in this program is highly encouraged) **Hispanic Heritage Month Keynote: Journalist Maria Hinojosa - "Preparing Our Society for 2043"***

Week 7 (October 10th) Capital

Read: STR, Chs. 10, 14, 12

Week 8 (October 17th) Is Reality Constructed?

Read: STR, Ch. 7 and complete activity on Blackboard.

We will not meet as a group during this class session; you should use this time to meet with your teams to work on your papers for Module 2.

Module 2 Projects Due on Tuesday, October 21st before 11:59 pm.

Module 3: But, we are all different, right?

Week 9 (October 24th) Thinking about Race

Read: STR, Chs. 25, 27, 28

Week 10 (October 31st) Thinking about Gender

Read: STR, Chs. 26, 30, 31

Week 11 (November 7th) Thinking again about Selves in Society

Read: STR, Chs. 34 & 37; re-read Chs. 36 & 38

Module 4: Selves, Societies, Institutions, Society?

Week 12 (November 14th) Introducing Weber

Read: STR, Ch. 16

Module 3 Projects Due: We will begin this class with our 'Staff Meeting'.

Week 13 (November 21st) Max Weber

Rad: STR, Chs. 17, 18, 20

Week 14 (November 28th) No Class For Thanksgiving Recess

Week 15th (December 5th) A rational Society? A global Society?

REad: STR, Chs. 22 & 13

Week 16 (December 8th - 12th): Final Exam scheduled for Wednesday, December 10th @ 8:30 am.
Module 4 Projects are due before this time.