

## **Sociological Theory**

Soc 335, Spring 2015

Tuesdays & Thursday 2:35 – 3:45; Comenius 114

*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. Two of these will be completed in groups; for one project, students can

decide whether they want to work individually or collaboratively. The final project will be completed individually as your comprehensive 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 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 & Disability Support, at the lower level of Monocacy Hall, or by calling [610-861-1401](tel: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 first class meeting each week; (2) Course participation including in-class activities and writing and on-line blackboard discussions; and (3) culminating projects for each module. All student work is evaluated according to the criteria stated in the Course Grading Rubric.

Final Grades will be calculated as follows:

Weekly responses	25%
Course Participation/In-class Activities/BB discussions	25%
Module 1-3 Projects	30%
Module 4 Project	20%

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

<b>Final Grades</b>			
	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 provides a number of helpful resources. 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 self enroll in the blackboard site during the first week of the semester.

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. Unless otherwise noted, all readings for a week should be completed **before** our first class meeting of the week (i.e. Tuesday).

#### **Week 1** 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.

--Tuesday, January 20th: Most of our work today will be spent on how to approach social theory.

-- Thursday, January 22nd

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

#### **Week 2** Durkheimian Functionalism

**Read:** STR: 1, 2, 4; **Complete:** Weekly Response

-- Tuesday, January 27th:

Wednesday, January 28th: Michelle Alexander Lecture at Lehigh

-- Thursday, January 29th:

#### **Week 3** Race, Gender, and Order

**Read:** STR, Chs. 25, 27, 30, 31; **Complete:** Weekly Response

-- Tuesday, February 3rd:

-- Thursday, February 5th:

#### **Week 4** Understanding Selves and Interaction

**Read:** STR, Chs. 7, 32, 35; **Complete:** Weekly Response

-- Tuesday, February 10th:

-- Thursday, February 12th:

Module 2: *Modern Capitalism and the Order of Conflict*

**Week 5** Introducing Karl Marx

**Read:** STR, Chs. 8, 11, 9; **Complete:** Weekly Response

-- Tuesday, February 17th:

-- Thursday, February 19th:

**Week 6** Capital

**Read:** STR, Chs. 10, 14, 15; **Complete:** Weekly Response

-- Tuesday, February 24th:

-- Thursday, February 26th:

Eric Michael Dyson Lecture at Moravian

**Week 7** World Capitalist System

**Read:** STR, Ch. 12

-- Tuesday, March 3rd:

-- Thursday, March 5th: Group Presentations for Module 2 will be made today

**Week 8**

-- Tuesday, March 10th: No Class Meeting - Spring Break

-- Thursday, March 12th: No Class Meeting - Spring Break

Module 3: *Integrating Order and Conflict*

**Week 9** Introducing Max Weber

**Read:** STR, Chs. 16, 17, 18; **Complete:** Weekly Response

-- Tuesday, March 17th:

-- Thursday, March 19th:

**Week 10** - A detour to discuss Moral Injury and Just War

**Read:** Selections from Robert Emmet Meagher, *Killing from the Inside Out* (Cascade Books, 2014).

-- Tuesday, March 24th:

-- Thursday, March 26th:

Friday, March 27: Rober Emmet Meagher Keynote at Moravian

**Week 11** Interrogating Rationality

**Read:** STR, Chs. 21, 22; **Complete:** Weekly Response

-- Tuesday, March 31st:

-- Thursday, April 2nd:

**Week 12** Rethinking Knowledge

**Read:** STR, Chs. 20, 23; **Complete:** Weekly Response  
-- Tuesday, April 7th:  
-- Thursday, April 9th:

Module 4: *Returning to the self in modernity*

**Week 13** From Social Order to Selves in Society

**Read:** STR, Chs. 32, 33, 34; **Complete:** Weekly Response  
-- Tuesday, April 14th:  
-- Thursday, April 16th:

**Week 14** Rethinking Selves

**Read:** STR, Chs. 37, 36, 38; **Complete:** Weekly Response  
-- Tuesday, April 21st:  
-- Thursday, April 23rd:

[Lecture by James Lawson at Moravian College](#)

**Week 15** From Selves back to Social Order

**Read:** STR: 6, 13; **Complete:** Weekly Response  
-- Tuesday, April 28th:  
-- Thursday, April 30th:

**Week 16** *Exam Week*

Final Exam Scheduled for: Friday, May 8th at 8:30 am.