

**Sociological Theory**  
Soc 335, Fall 2015  
Fridays 11:45 – 2:20; PPHAC 113

*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.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** By the end of the course students will:

As a 300 level sociology course, students will:

- Cultivate their sociological imaginations as they learn to apply social theories.
- 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.

In terms of the content of this 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.
- Develop unique contributions to social theoretical thought.

**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 Tutoring and Accommodations:** The Academic Support Center houses Disability Support and Greyhound Tutoring on the first floor of Monocacy Hall and can be reached at 610-861-1401. Greyhound Tutoring provides course-specific tutors to Moravian students, free of charge. If you would like to work with a Greyhound Tutor to boost your academic success, please request a tutor through <http://bit.ly/NeedTutorMC> (case-sensitive). Plan ahead! It takes 2-3 business days to connect you with a tutor. Please email Dana Wilson ([wilsond@moravian.edu](mailto:wilsond@moravian.edu)), Tutor Coordinator, for more information about tutoring. Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Laurie Roth ([rothl@moravian.edu](mailto:rothl@moravian.edu); 610.861.1401), Director of Academic and Disability Support, for more information about disability support. 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 Reading Responses to our reading—these will be of different types, completed typically through blackboard, and due before our first class meeting each week (though some may be in-class quizzes); (2) Course participation including in-class discussions, activities and writing, and including discussions on blackboard after class meetings; 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 Reading Responses/Quizzes	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.

**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 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. The detailed course schedule linked through Blackboard will contain the most up-to-date course schedule. Unless otherwise noted, all readings for a week should be completed **before** our first class meeting of the week (i.e. Tuesday).

**Week 1** (September 4th): 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: *Foundational Concepts: Social Order and Self*.

**Week 2** (September 11th): Durkheimian Functionalism and Social Construction

**Read:** STR, Chs. 2, 1, and 7

**Week 3** (September 18th): Understanding Selves and Interaction (Mead, Goffman, & Garfinkel)

**Read:** STR, Chs. 32, 35, and 6

**Week 4** (September 25th): A break to think about Religion in the Modern World using Durkheim and Weber.

**Read:** STR, Chs. 4 and 16

**Listen:** to Karen Armstrong

**Cohen Convocation Lecture: Karen Armstrong**

**Thursday September 24th @ 11:00 am Johnston Hall**

**Project 1 Due on Monday, September 28th before 11:59 pm.**

Module 2: *Social Reality, beyond Functionalism and Conflict*

**Week 5** (October 2nd): Karl Marx and the foundations of Conflict Sociology

**Read:** STR, Chs. 8, 11, 9

**Review:** STR, Chs. 2 & 7

**Week 6** (October 9th): Extending the Conflict Model (Bourdieu, Marcuse, and Foucault)

**Read:** STR, chs. 15, 21, and 23

**Week 7** (October 16th): Understanding political economy (Marx, Wallerstein, Bourdieu)

**Read:** STR, Chs. 10, 12, and 14

**Week 8** (October 23rd): Max Weber

**Read:** STR, Chs. 17, 18, 20

**Module 2 Projects Due on Monday, October 26th before 11:59 pm.**

**Tuesday, October 27th**

**Lecture by Irshad Manji @ 7:00 pm**

Module 3: *But, what about our differences?*

**Week 9** (October 30th): Thinking about Race (Du Bois, Omi & Winant, Fanon)

**Read:** STR, Chs. 25, 27, 28

**Week 10** (November 6th): Thinking about Gender (Smith, Collins, Butler)

**Read:** STR, Chs. 30, 31 and 37

**Week 11** (November 13th): Thinking again about how Selves are shaped by Society (Simmel, Foucault)

**Read:** STR, Chs. 33, 34, & 36

Module 4: *Putting it all together: Selves, Institutions, Society.*

**Week 12** (November 20th): Liquid Modernity (Baumann)

**Module 3 Projects Due:** We will begin this class by sharing our presentations.

**Read:** STR, Ch. 38

**Week 13** (November 27th): No Class for Thanksgiving Recess

**Week 14** (December 4th): A rational Society? A global Society? (Habermas, Castells)

**Read:** STR, Chs. 22 & 13

**Week 15** (December 11th): Making Connections.

**Reread:** STR, Chs. TBD

**Week 16:** Tuesday December 15th at 1:30 pm.

**Module 4 Projects are due before this time.**