SOC 4030: CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

CRN 21929 – Fall 2016
T/Th 9:00-10:15 AM – SS113
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Contact information
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Course Description
This course introduces the contemporary theories in sociology and the lives of the contemporary theorists. We will explore how sociological theories have developed after the classical era and focus on, for example, how the "canon" of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim has shaped contemporary theorizing, while new societal conditions have called for new theoretical approaches. Much like the classical theorists, the contemporary social thinkers grappled with the burning questions of their own time (the late-20th century). They attempted to understand the operations and outcomes of modernity and the postmodern society that followed. For example, they focused on the social unrest of the 1960s, the women's movement, the identity politics based on race and ethnicity, and the emergence of mass media and global culture. Their ideas help us understand the key social processes that occurred in the post-war era, where the once heavily industrialized United States transformed into a post-industrial, service society and the ensuing globalization necessitated new ways of understanding social change.

We begin our journey by reviewing the main theories of the mid-century—structural functionalism and critical theory. We then discuss the individual-level theories of social exchange, rational choice, and symbolic interactionism. The second half of the course introduces students to feminist and gender theorizing and to the key ideas of postmodernism. The re-entrance of European thought into American sociology will be evident as we finish the semester with contemporary theorists who synthesize various theoretical approaches—Pierre Bourdieu (French), Jürgen Habermas (German), and Anthony Giddens (British). The final section explores theories of the on-going economic and cultural globalization. We will read both edited summaries of the theories as well as the theorists' original writings in order to gain an in-depth understanding and to engage in stimulating and thoughtful class discussion.

Required Reading
- Appelrouth, Scott & Edles, Laura Desfor. 2011. *Sociological Theory in the Contemporary Era: Text and Readings, 2nd edition.* Los Angeles: Sage. ISBN 978-1-4129-8761-5 (pbk.)
- Hand-outs given in class or posted on Canvas (http://canvas.weber.edu) Note also that the Canvas page will serve as an information central throughout the semester. *In case of an unexpected event, such as campus closure or the professor's illness, instruction and course work will continue through the Canvas page.*

Class Objectives and Learning Outcomes*
After taking this course, students will be able to:
1. Describe the core ideas (and critiques) of the key contemporary sociological theorists.
2. Explain how societal developments of the 20th century have influenced social theorizing.
3. Apply (orally and in writing) the theories to describe the causes and consequences of today's social issues.
4. Relate the ways in which social theorizing informs sociological research.

(* each learning outcome is connected with assignments and exam questions)

Note on Special Needs
A student requiring accommodations or services due to a disability must contact Services for Students with Disabilities, located in the Student Service Center http://www.weber.edu/ssd

Course Format
The course consists of assigned readings, classroom discussions, lectures, films, and written and oral assignments (both in-and out-of-class). I teach this course in a seminar style where everyone is expected to contribute to class discussion. This means that you must complete all assigned readings before class so you can discuss the material. My role in this class is to facilitate and evaluate the discussion. In general, discussion will be open and everyone's views are to be respected. Our goal is to critically consider different viewpoints without offending anyone. For the exams, you are expected to be familiar with the substantive contents of all class materials and discussions.

Evaluation
Take home exams (30% each) [* Leaning outcomes 1-4]
There will be two take-home exams (a midterm and a final) each worth 30% of your final course grade. The exam questions will be given out a week before they are due. Each exam question sheet also includes detailed instructions on how to write essay questions and how to correctly cite what you have referenced in your response in order to avoid plagiarism (see class policy below.)

Discussion question writing (6X3) (10%) [* Learning outcome 3]
Each student will prepare *a set of three discussion questions* based on the readings *six times* during the semester.

Instructions for question writing assignment

- After completing all assigned reading (chapter and original writings) of the theorist, write three questions that will generate class discussion. Remember to focus on the ideas of the theorists (not their biography).
- Your questions must show that you have (a) understood the concepts and ideas and that you can (b) apply them to the social trends, issues, and/or events of today.
- In the first round of questions, you can work together with another student, but the rest of them are independent work.
- The questions will be evaluated based on how well they capture the theorist's ideas and generate class discussion.
- Questions should be submitted by e-mail to mollilainen@weber.edu by the designated due date/time (see the class schedule). They will be discussed and evaluated in class.
- For full credit, each question set must include three questions (that are not about the same idea/concept) and you should have turned in six sets by the end of the semester. You may turn in additional question sets (even all of them, if you wish), I will count your best six sets.

Presentation (15%) [* Learning outcomes 1, 3 & 4]
Students will work individually to prepare and present a problem, issue, or a social condition using the work of one contemporary theorist. Each student can choose the theorist whose ideas they will apply to the problem/issue. The key here is to demonstrate to your classmates how a particular theory or theories are useful for understanding current social issues. Students will turn in a short proposal for their presentation topic by November 10th. The last two classes of the semester are reserved for student presentations and discussions.

Class participation: Reading guides and discussion leadership (15%) [* Learning outcome 1 & 3]

- *Reading guides (6)*: Students turn in six reading guides (a series of questions about the article) for the assigned readings. There will be a guide for each article from the Reader and/or Canvas. A reading guide for each article will be posted online at least two days before it is due. Having read and thought about the article will help us discuss it in class. Reading guide responses should be typed (no hand-written entries) and they are due in class the same day the reading assignment is due. A late entry will be graded a whole letter grade lower (for each class day after due date).

- *Discussion leadership (2):* Each student will be designated as a discussion leader on assigned articles twice during the semester.

Grading scale for course performance:

A	= 100-93%	A-	= 92-90%		
B+	= 89-87%	B	= 86-83%	B-	= 82-80%
C+	= 79-77%	C	= 76-73%	C-	= 72-70%
D+	= 69-67%	D	= 66-63%	D-	= 62-60%
E	< 59%				

CLASS POLICY

1. Attendance

Attendance is integral to your performance. Therefore, if you do not meet the requirement for minimum 80% attendance (if you missed more than 20% of classes), *each additional absence will reduce your final grade by 5%*. This is non-negotiable.

2. Late exams and assignments

Exams and assignments must be submitted on time. Late work receives a lower grade; 5% reduction per day late, including weekends.

3. Extra credit

There is no scheduled extra credit in this class.

4. Professionalism and soft skills

Taking this course comes with a set of expectations for the students and the professor:

- Timeliness – Class will start and end on time. Students are expected to come to class and stay the entire 75 minutes.
- Technology – Laptops are not allowed in this seminar because researchers have found that notes taken by hand will improve your understanding and recollection of the course material. Check out the recent research findings on note-taking here and here.
- Cell phones and earphones do not belong in class. You will be asked to put them away or leave the room.

5. WSU Student Code

Students are expected to be familiar with the WSU Student Code and abide by it. The Code may be reviewed on line at http://www.weber.edu/ppm/Policies/6-22_StudentCode.html. All necessary steps will be taken to enforce the Student Code to guarantee fairness to all students.

6. Plagiarism

As you write your exam essays, make sure you cite other people's work appropriately. Plagiarism (i.e., using someone else's work, ideas, or wording as your own without citing) is considered cheating at Weber State (see student code, section IV.D.2b) and will result, at minimum, in failing your assignment. This also includes getting ideas from your class mates, working on exams together, and copying from the Internet. We will review in class some basic rules of using citations and writing essay exams before the midterm.

WSU subscribes to TurnItIn.com, an electronic service that verifies the originality of student work. Enrollment in this course may require you to submit some or all of your assignments to it this semester, and documents submitted to TurnItIn.com are retained, anonymously, in their databases.

Class Schedule

(Mark your assigned article to lead discussion on the right)

Week 1		
T 8/30	Syllabus and introductions: What to expect from this semester; a short review of classical theories.	
H 9/1	Which theories are "contemporary" and who are the theorists behind them? Read: Syllabus and Ch. 1; Navigating contemporary social theory and semester organization	
Week 2	Structural Functionalism—Macro Systems and Micro Roles	
T 9/6	Read: Ch. 2 Parsons (20-35) and Merton (pp. 54-59) *Pair-work on Parsons and Merton questions*	
H 9/8	Read: (Parsons) "Sex Roles in the American Kinship System" (Merton) "Social Structure and Anomie" *Discussion on structural functionalism questions*	_____ _____
Week 3	Critical Theory—Taking on rationality, modernity, and culture	
T 9/13	Read: Ch. 3 Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse (pp. 75-97) *Critical theory questions due midnight*	
H 9/15	Critical theory cont. (Horkheimer) "Eclipse of Reason" (Marcuse) "One-Dimensional Man" *Discussion on critical theory questions*	 _____ _____
Week 4	Exchange and Rational Choice Theories	
T 9/20	Read: Ch. 4 Homans (pp. 120-126), Blau (pp. 136-143); and Coleman (pp. 154-162) *Exchange and Rational Choice questions due midnight*	
H 9/22	Read: (Coleman) "Social Capital in the Creation of Cultural Capital" *Discussion on Exchange and Rational Choice questions*	_____
Week 5	Symbolic Interactionism and Dramaturgy	
T 9/27	Read: Ch. 5 Blumer (175-183) and Goffman (pp. 194-206) *Blumer and Goffman questions due at midnight*	
H 9/29	Managing impressions Read: (Blumer) "The Methodological Position …" (Goffman) "Asylums" *Discussion on Blumer and Goffman questions*	 _____ _____
Week 6	Emotion management	
T 10/4	Read: Ch. 5 Hochschild (pp. 233-260) *Hochschild questions due at midnight*	
H 10/6	Emotion management cont. (Hochschild) "Working on Feeling" and "The Managed Heart" *Discussion on Hochschild questions* **Midterm exam (Chs. 1-5) given out in class**	 _____ _____

Week 7	Phenomenology and Ethnomethodology: The Socially Constructed Reality	
T 10/11	Read: Ch. 6 Schutz (pp. 262-270) and Berger & Luckmann (pp. 277-284)	
	(B & L) "The Social Construction of Reality"	_____
	Schutz and Berger & Luckmann questions due at midnight	
H 10/13	Read: Ch. 6 Garfinkel (pp. 296-302) and	
	"Studies in Ethnomethodology"	_____
	Discussion on Schutz and Berger & Luckman questions	
	Midterm exam due in class	
Week 8	Feminist and Gender Theories	
T 10/18	Read: Ch. 7 Intro and Smith (pp. 313-324) and Hill Collins (pp. 332-336)	
	(Smith) "Everyday World as Problematic"	_____
H 10/20	Read: Ch. 7 Chodorow (pp. 346-351)	
	(Hill Collins) "Black Feminist Thought"	_____
	(Chodorow) "The Reproduction of Mothering"	_____
Week 9	Feminism/gender theories and the move toward postmodernism	
T 10/25	Read: Ch. 7 Connell (pp. 359-362) and Butler (pp. 372-375)	
	(Butler) "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire"	_____
	Feminism and gender theories questions due at midnight	
H 10/27	Feminism and gender theories wrap-up	
	No reading	
	Discussion on feminism and gender theories questions	
Week 10	Poststructuralism and Postmodernism	
T 11/1	Read: Ch. 8 Postmodernism intro, Foucault (pp. 382-397), and Baudrillard (pp. 413-420)	
	(Foucault) "Discipline and Punish"	_____
	Foucault & Baudrillard questions due at midnight	
H 11/3	Read: Ch. 8 Lyotard (pp. 428-433)	
	(Baudrillard) "Simulacra and Simulations"	_____
	Discussion on Foucault and Baudrillard questions	
Week 11	Synthesis theories: Pierre Bourdieu	
T 11/8	Read: Ch. 9 Bourdieu (pp. 444-458) and	
	"Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception"	_____
	ELECTION 2016, VOTE!	
H 11/10	Synthesis theories: Jürgen Habermas	
	Read: Ch. 9 Habermas (pp. 484-497) and	
	"Civil Society, Public Opinion …"	_____
	Presentation proposals due in class, students discuss their ideas	
Week 12	Synthesis theories: Anthony Giddens	
T 11/15	Read: Ch. 9 Giddens (pp. 520-529) and	
	"The Consequences of Modernity"	_____
	Synthesis theorists (Bourdieu, Habermas, and Giddens) discussion questions due midnight	

H 11/17 Synthesis theories wrap-up
Discussion of Bourdieu, Habermas, and Giddens questions

Week 13

T 11/22 Theories of Globalization
Read: Ch. 10 Wallerstein (pp. 556-574) and Sklair (pp. 585-589)

H 11/24 Thanksgiving Holiday, no class

Week 14 Globalization/Orientalism

T 11/29 Read: Ritzer (pp. 601-607) and Said (pp. 619-631)
(Ritzer) "Rethinking Globalization" _____
Globalization questions due at midnight

H 12/1 *Discussion on globalization questions*
Final exam (Chs. 6-10) given out in class

Week 15

T 12/6 *Student presentations*

H 12/8 *Student presentations*

T 12/13 **Final exam due @ 12:00 PM** in SS116 (my office) or SS114 (Soc & Anthro main office)
Emailed exams will not be accepted. Late exams will accrue penalties (see Class Policy above).

Question writing assignment due dates at a glance

Theories/theorists	**Disc. Questions due** (midnight)	**Grade**
Parsons, Merton	9/6 (in class)	
Critical theory	9/13	
Exchange & Rational Choice	9/20	
Blumer, Goffman	9/27	
Hochschild	10/4	
Schutz, Berger & Luckman	10/11	
Feminist/Gender theories	10/25	
Foucault, Baudrillard	11/1	
Bourdieu, Habermas, Giddens	11/15	
Globalization	11/29	