



Sociological Theory: Classical and Contemporary Approaches

W2017

About Sociological Theory: Classical and Contemporary Approaches

Social theory has a reputation of being one of the most difficult courses for majors. It also has a reputation of being one of the most difficult courses to teach. Students are confronted by their own limitations to read and digest challenging texts, are intimidated by the prospect of “thinking theoretically,” and struggle to find a writing voice that is “theoretical.” As an instructor, it is difficult to identify exactly what aspect of each theory to focus on, and challenging to present a unified vision of social theory. I have worked to design a course that, if you stick to it and do the work, will help you develop your ability to read challenging texts, write confidently in a theoretical voice, and to engage with the robust tradition of predominantly western intellectual discourse. I hope, by the end, you will feel comfortable with social theory and understand how essential it is for sociology.

Course Information

Soci 370 001: Sociological Theory: Classical and Contemporary Approaches

Lecture: Tu/Th 9:30-10:50
Location: Term 1: LASR 104; Term 2 Buch B213

Instructor: Dr. Kerry Greer
Office: ANSO 124
Email: kerry.greer@ubc.ca
Office Hours: Thurs 11:15-12, Fri 1:30-2:30

TA: Max Chewinski
Office: ANSO
Email: max.chewinski@alumni.ubc.ca
Office Hours: Thursdays 11-12 or by appointment

Learning Objectives

This course is designed to provide students with an overview of social theory, and to depart the core sociological traditions that define our discipline. By the end of this course students will be able to:

1. Identify and discuss core theoretical traditions in sociology;
2. Link theoretical ideas to historic events, particularly the Industrial Revolution;
3. Become fluent in the language of theory and capable of following complex arguments, both in relation to historical events and preceding philosophical discourse;
4. Write with a theoretical and reflective voice;
5. Link theoretical traditions to methodological strategies;
6. Develop the ability to “theorize” about society and to write about these theories in relation to established social theories; and
7. Develop a critical stance regarding the limitations of particular theories.

Course Texts

Lemert, Charles (editor). 2016. *Social Theory: The Multicultural, Global and Classic Readings, 6th edition*. Westview Press.

One additional book, to be determined early in term 2.

Additional course materials will be made available by Connect.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

	DATES	POINTS	TOTAL
Exams (x3)	Oct 24, Jan 25, March 22	100 points each	300 (30%)
Essays (x3)	Oct 31, Nov 30, April 5	125, 150, 175 points	450 (45%)
Blog discussion (x2)	Date Assigned	40 points each	80 (8%)
Participation	Oct 26, Nov 28, Feb 15 + March 27 + unannounced	100 points	100 (15%)
End of term discussion	March 27, 29, April 3	20-20-30 (day)	70 (7%)

Final grades will be assigned in the following way (this is standard for UBC):

900-1000	A+	760-799	B+	640-679	C+	500-549	D
850-899	A	720-759	B	600-639	C	0-499	F
800-849	A-	680-719	B-	550-599	C-		

Note that students have to earn the minimum number of points for each letter grade. I do not round up a letter grade.

According to the UBC Guidelines:

An A grade is “Exceptional performance: strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.”

A B grade is “Competent performance: evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.”

A “D to C” grade is “Adequate performance: understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material; acceptable but uninspired work, not seriously faulty but lacking style and vigour.”

Description of Course Requirements

Exams

Regular attendance is essential for doing well on exams. Class time will be spent reviewing key sociological concepts and clarifying the meaning of the assigned text(s). Through a variety of in-class exercises, formative assessments, discussions, media, and lecture, students will practice engaging with social theory, and their proficiency will be assessed on three examinations.

Each exam will assess students understanding of the assigned theorists from the preceding section (non-cumulative), their ability to compare and contrast concepts from one theorist to those of another, and to engage in an in-depth discussion about one theoretical area. Exams will be composed of approximately ten multiple choice questions, 4-5 short answer (paragraph) questions, and one essay question.

Students must bring their ID cards to each exam. Bags will be placed in the front of the room, and students will be assigned seats. Students are allowed to bring 1 pen and 2 pencils, an eraser, and a white out device to their seats. No pencil cases, water bottles, coffee cups, etc. are allowed during exams. Students are not allowed to leave during the last 20 minutes of the exam period.

Essays

Writing requires practice. Essays are opportunities for students to practice theorizing about society and to apply social theories to contemporary phenomenon. Students will be given wide latitude on the topic that they write about (they are encouraged to select a topic that they already know about as they are not expected nor rewarded for doing additional research on the topic), and are expected to apply concepts from one classical theorists and two other theorists from each course section (i.e. the Marxist Tradition) to a topic area.

Essays are laddered so that each subsequent effort is worth a larger percentage of the final grade for the course. For each essay, students are required to hand in a detailed outline/draft, which will provide an opportunity for feedback before students turn in their final papers. Papers (printed copies) are due at the start of class on their due date and must

be submitted to “Turn It In” by 9am on the day essays are due. Late papers will be accepted up to five days after the due date with 5 points deducted/day. Detailed information regarding the essays will be provided to students.

Blog Discussion

One way students will gain practice writing about social theorists is through a course blog site. During the first week of class students will be assigned to a group and each week two groups (~5 students/group) will develop a strategy for presenting their understanding of the assigned social theorist. Students will compose Blog Entries of about 500 words that explain/clarify a concept, and then tie the concept to a contemporary social issue and show how the theory helps use make sense of social phenomena. All students in class are invited to comment on and engage with the postings (see participation below). Students are required to complete their posts by Sunday at 5pm the week the readings are assigned. Students are also required to turn in a printed copy of their contribution, including comments, responses to comments, and a description of their contribution clarifying their role and contribution. This is due the morning that the assigned readings are due.

End of Term Discussion

During the final two weeks of class students will select 1 of 4 contemporary sociological texts (i.e. *Unequal Childhoods* by Lareau, *Strangers in their Own Land* by Hochschild; *Evicted* by Desmond + 1 TBD) which they will then read. In “small groups” of 20 or so students, Max and I will hold 40-minute discussion sections where students will engage in a theoretically informed way with the selected text. This will give students an opportunity to demonstrate their growing abilities to “talk theory” in a setting where you have become comfortable and confident. The three meetings together are worth 7% of your final grade.

Participation

Learning to apply theory requires that students develop their ability to “talk theory” as well as write and think using theoretical constructs. While I can help student dissect social theory, build their reading skills, and help guide their writing, students themselves need to engage with the material. Throughout the course, more immersive forms of participation will become increasingly expected as students gain confidence. Participation can include contributing substantively to course discussion, commenting on and engaging in theoretical discourse on the Wiki site, providing insights and helping classmates understand material through small group discussion.

At a minimum, participation means attending class and being prepared by having read the assigned theorists and doing assigned writing prompts. In this sense, participation will be measured through small in-class assignments. This portion of participation accounts for 20 points (2% of the final grade).

The primary way participation will be evaluated through four self-assessments that students will complete (due Oct 26, Nov 28, Feb 15 + March 27). These “Participation Logs” are available on Connect. These assessments offer students the opportunity to reflect and assess their own activities in the course, and how they have participated in the classroom and online (80 points or 8% of your final grade). Participation includes contributing to classroom discussion in large and small groups and engaging with the blog site (not just as a contributor, but by making comments).

Attendance and Lateness

Attendance for the entire class period is required. You are requested to arrive on time. Repeated tardiness will be penalized. **I will not excuse absences**, so please do NOT email me to tell me you will not be in class.

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed from a classmate, and if you need clarification, to come to office hours. While I will sympathize with ill students, I do not wish to see doctor notes—I consider this to be your business. However, if you have a family emergency or a major illness that causes you to miss class, please contact your academic advisor and they will be in touch with me directly. If an exam is missed, you must apply through the Registrar’s office to write a make-up exam – please refer to the UBC Calendar for details for “academic concession.”

Accommodation & Mental Health

Accommodation. The University accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Access and Diversity office. If you have other needs that might not qualify for formal accommodation, or you are having trouble

during the term, please consider discussing this with me during office hours. The University also accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance or scheduled exams. Please let us know during the first two weeks of class if you require any accommodation on these grounds. Other absences (e.g. varsity athletics, family obligations) are not part of University policy and you should not assume they will be accommodated.

Mental Health. During your time in this course, if you encounter medical, emotional, or other personal problems that affect your attendance or academic performance, please notify us, as well as your Academic Advisor. Please refer to the UBC Calendar for a discussion of academic concession. Also, look on Connect (under Course Content) for a list of Wellness Resources.

Early Alert Program. I participate in the Early Alert Program which helps me support students who are facing difficulties that are interfering with school. **If you are feeling stressed, please notify the TA or me** and indicate that you would like assistance. While we are not trained to help with personal problems, we can get you help from people who can assist you. Any information that they receive from you or us is strictly confidential and is in the interest of your academic success and wellbeing. For more information, please visit earlyalert.ubc.ca.

Classroom Etiquette and Expectations

I will not distribute my lecture notes, nor will I give permission to students to photograph or record any part of the lecture. I am MORE THAN HAPPY to slow down, or to return to a slide/point after class. Please do not hesitate to ask!

Electronic devices can be useful tools; however, they are also very distracting. For this reason **I do not want to see or hear** cell phones, cameras, ipods, laptops, or other electronic equipment in the classroom. That means they must be stowed away in a backpack or bag and **not** brought out during class time. I will ask students to leave the classroom if they cannot respect this policy.

Academic Dishonesty, including turning in work that someone else wrote, or work that you turned in for another class, improperly citing or not citing sources, copying someone else's work during an exam, not covering your own paper or answer key while taking an exam, or being dishonest about the work you have done is a serious issue and will not be tolerated. Please see the Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct for university policies on academic misconduct and academic dishonesty: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,0,0>

Office Hours are times that we have set aside to meet with students. The hours are listed at the top of the syllabus. I encourage you to come and visit during office hours. Come individually, or with friends. It's a chance to talk about the course, assignments, exams, study strategies, or whatever you would like to discuss. You don't have to have a *problem* to visit. If you find yourself having difficulty with the readings, or if you do not do well on an exam we definitely want to see you.

Communication Preferences. At times I will send out announcements via Connect. It is expected that students check their email account daily. In turn, I respond to emails quickly, however if you do not hear back from me within 24 hours, consider that your email might have ended up in my Spam folder. For this reason, I strongly suggest students use a UBC email account.

Peer Contact. It will be helpful for you to have the contact information of a classmate. Please take a moment to introduce yourself to your neighbor, and share your contact information. You should find a second partner during your discussion section and get their contact information as well:

Name: _____ email/phone: _____

WEEK ONE					
Tues	Sept.	5	Imagine Day	No Classes	
Thurs	Sept	7	Introduction to the course		
Week Two					
The Marxist Traditions and Extensions					
Tues	Sept	12	Kant	What is Enlightenment [1784] (Online: http://b.gatech.edu/2w0HR9d)	
Thurs	Sept	14	Marx + Engles	“Manifesto of the Communist Party (emphasize: pg 14-21, skim all) (http://bit.ly/1gPDLW4)	
Week Three					
Group 1 and 3					
Tues	Sept	19	Marx	Capital and the Values of Commodities (pg 40)	
Thurs	Sept	21	Marx	Capital and the Fetishism of Commodities (pg 46)	
Week Four					
Group 2 and 4					
Tues	Sept	26	Marx	Labour-Power and Capital (pg 48)	
Thurs	Sept	28	Marx and Addams	Estranged Labour (pg. 29); The Settlement as a Factor in the Labour Movement (pg 56)	
Week Five					
Group 6 and 8					
Tues	Oct	3	Marx + Engles	The Patriarchal Family (Connect)	
Thurs	Oct	5	Gilman; Martineau	Women and Economics (Connect); Woman (pg 58)	
Week Six					
Group 9 and 12					
Tues	Oct	10	de Beauvoir, Friedan	Woman as Other (pg 268-270); The Problem that has no name (pg 280-283);	
Thurs	Oct	12	Lorde	The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House (pg 340-342);	
Week Seven					
Group 5 and 7					
Tues	Oct	17	Butler	from <i>Gender Trouble</i> (Connect)	Outline Due
Thurs	Oct	19	Smith	Knowing a Society from Within: A Woman’s Standpoint (Connect)	
Week Eight					
The Durkheimian Traditions + Extensions					
Tues	Oct	24	EXAMINATION 1		
Thurs	Oct	26	Durkheim	Sociology and Social Facts (pg 63)	
Week Nine					
Tues	Oct	31	Durkheim	Forms of Social Solidarity (Connect)	Essay 1 due
Thurs	Nov	2	Durkheim	Mechanical and Organic Solidarity (pg 59)	
Week Ten					
Group 10 and 13					
Tues	Nov	7	Durkheim	Division of Labour (Connect)	
Thurs	Nov	9	Durkheim	Anomie and the Modern Division of Labour (pg 62)	
Week Eleven					
Group 11 and 16					
Tues	Nov	14	WEB Du Bois and Said	Double-Consciousness and the Veil (pg 130-134); Black Reconstruction and the Racial Wage (pg 190-193); Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals (pg 492-495)	
Thurs	Nov	16	Fannon and Gramsci	Black Skin, White Masks (Connect); Intellectuals and Hegemony (pg 209)	Outline Due
Week Twelve					
Group 15 and 14					
Tues	Nov	21	Simmel	The Stranger (Connect)	
Thurs	Nov	23	King and Newton and Seale	The Power of Nonviolent Action (pg 273-275); Black Panther Party: What We Want (pg 278-280)	

Week Thirteen				
Tues	Nov	28	Crenshaw	"Dimensions of Intersectional oppression (pg 421-424);
Thurs	Nov	30	Hill Collins	Black Feminist Thought and the Matrix of Domination (pg 413-421)
EXAMS: December 5-20				
Dec 25-Jan 2 Most UBC Services reduced/Closed				
Week One				
Tues	Jan	2	Parsons and Merton	The Unit Act of Action Systems (pg 163-165); Sex Roles in the American Kinship System (pg. 239); Manifest and Latent Functions (pg 242);
Thurs	Jan	4	Merton; Thomas and Znaniecki	Social Structure and Anomie (pg 180-190); Disorganization of the Polish Immigrant (pg 198)
Week Two				
Tues	Jan	9	Durkheim (Suicide)	Suicide and Modernity (pg 65)
Thurs	Jan	11	Foucault	The Panopticon (Connect)
Week Three				
Tues	Jan	16	Derrida and Lyotard	The Decentering Event in Social Thought (pg 319); The Postmodern Condition (pg 355)
Thurs	Jan	18	Simmel	The Metropolis and Mental Life (CONNECT)
Week Four				
Tues	Jan	23	Marcuse	Repressive Desublimation of One-Dimensional Man (pg 328-330)
Thurs	Jan	25	Exam 2	
Week Five				
Tues	Jan	30	Cooley and Mead	The Looking-Glass Self (pg 146-147); The Self, the I and the Me (pg 168-172)
Thurs	Feb	1	Goffman+ Erickson	Youth and American Identity (pg 259-261); Presentation of Self (Connect)
Week Six				
The Weberian Traditions		Group 8 and 3		
Tues	Feb	6	Weber	The Types of Legitimate Domination (pg 92)
Thurs	Feb	8	Weber	Class Status and Party (Connect)
Week Seven				
Tues	Feb	13	Weber	The Nation (Connect)
Thurs	Feb	15	Weber	Politics as a Vocation (Connect)
Reading WEEK	Feb 19- Feb 23 NO CLASSES!			
Week Eight				
Tues	Feb	27	Weber	The Spirit of Capitalism and the Iron Cage (pg 83)
Thurs	March	1	Piketty	The Central Contradictions of Capitalism: $r > g$ (pg 522);
Week Nine				
Tues	March	6	Wallerstein and Skocpol	The Modern World-System (Pg 308-313); The Modern World-System in Crisis (pg. 460-462); The State as a Janus-Faced Structure (Pg 313-315)
Thurs	March	8	Beck and Mbembe	World Risk Society (pg 482-485); Necropower and the Late Modern Colonial Occupation (pg 485-487)

