

Contemporary Sociological Theory
Sociology 314
01:920:314
Spring 2017
Tues/Thurs 4:30-5:50
Murray Hall 213
Tues or Thurs 6:25-7:20
Scott Hall 114 (Tuesday) 115 (Thursday)

Instructor: Jason Torkelson
Email: jtorkelson@sociology.rutgers.edu
Office Hours: by appointment. Before or after class around College Ave campus, or in Davison Hall earlier in the day
Office: Davison Hall 119 (Douglas campus)

Goals/Objectives: We all theorize about the social world around us. We attempt to explain why certain things happen, what is going on in the world, and why we have seen various social changes. In this way, social theorists think about many of the same things we all do, albeit they tend to do so in a much more comprehensive and organized way. Although the ways social theorists do develop, discuss, and elaborate their perspectives can indeed be quite abstract at times, these nonetheless can have very real implications for our understandings of how society shapes our everyday lives. Central to sociological theory are questions surrounding things like agency and structure, creativity and conformity, resistance and power, and the extent to which we possess the capacity to consciously navigate and transform these dynamics. In this course, we will overview and reflect upon some of the more recent developments in sociological theory—and often their classical progenitors as well—that grapple with such questions, as well as many others.

Many of the readings will be difficult. If you don't fully "get" the readings your first time through, that's ok, just keep at them. The more exposure you have to the material via reading, rereading, attending class, free in-class writing, group quizzes, discussions, looking over your notes etc, the more you will understand and the better you will do in this class. I can imagine that some of you might feel a bit lost at times and/or overwhelmed, but I am here to help you stay on track. If you need help, do not hesitate to ask me either inside or outside of class. To that end, the course textbook features overviews of various theorists and the theoretical tradition(s) they come from to serve as an orienting road map of sorts to the primary course texts should you find it useful.

Email: If you email me, I'd rather not accidentally delete your email, so please type SOCIOLOGY 314 or SOCIAL THEORY (or something similar) in the subject line and also include your name somewhere in the body of the email. I will attempt to check my email regularly and I should be able to respond to you promptly under most circumstances.

Text(s): Appelrouth, Scott; Edles, Laura. *Sociological Theory in the Contemporary Era: Text and Readings* Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press

*There are additional readings interspersed throughout the course/reading schedule, and these are available on sakai or online. To access these readings, go to sakai.rutgers.edu, log in to our class page, and click on “resources” on the left-hand toolbar; links and/or readings are provided there.

Class Requirements:

Your grade will be calculated as follows:

Participation ☺	10%
Highest 4 Group Quizzes ☺	20%
Lowest Group Quiz ☹	0%
Highest 7 Exam Essays ☺	70%
Lowest 2 Exam Essays ☹	<u>0%</u>
	100%

Participation: Participation is divided into three components, the weight of which will be determined by how the class dynamic unfolds: 1) *in-class thought pieces* 2) *daily reading question* 3) and your more *general participation* in class.

As for *in-class thought pieces*, I will at times give one or two short answer questions that pertain to course readings and topics that I expect you to provide handwritten responses to in class (in many cases a few sentences should suffice for answers so long as they are thoughtful and well-structured). In-class thought pieces will typically come at the start of class, though they may, at times, come at the end (or middle) as well. There are several benefits to getting you to write in class: it gets your creative juices flowing; it helps you make connections between theorists; it helps you become more comfortable engaging and critiquing social theory; it lays a foundation for class discussion; it can also provide you an avenue to reflect upon how social theory can apply to your own life and inform your understanding of the social world around you.

It is not my intention to test you or evaluate you with in-class thought exercises in any rigorous manner so much as help you become more confident with the course material. To that end, I also do not wish to surprise you with anything. A list of possible short answer questions will be posted to sakai prior to the time you read the course material so you will know what I might ask you before you even delve into the readings. I will upload a list of potential questions to the resources folder on sakai for each section of the course prior to our going over them in class. I will also note that some of these questions will form the base for exam questions; hence, your life might be easier come exam time if you pay attention to these questions as we move throughout the course. In-class thought

pieces will certainly be evaluated on content, though a greater emphasis will be placed on the effort, thoughtfulness, and care you put into your responses.

I also ask that you provide at least one *question* or *comment/critique* you have about readings prior to class on your recitation day. This can simply be a specific issue with the reading(s) you are having difficulty with, a question as to how a particular day's readings pertain to one another or those from other class meetings, or questions about the extent of various concepts' applicability to contemporary society. Likewise, feel free to ask questions that are critical of various theorists or that interrogate certain assumptions theorists might be making. These questions and comments are important for a few reasons. For one, it helps me get a sense of how the course material is resonating with the class as a whole. For another, it provides openings to discuss concepts as a group during lectures. And finally, it keeps you actively engaged with the course material.

***Post your question to the sakai site no later than one hour prior to each class (3:30pm) meeting in the module labeled "blog" (we can decide as a class what works best for us).**

For more *general participation*, I will simply be mindful of who is putting forth effort to engage the course material in the classroom. You will have room to speak up in class to share your thoughts as well as ask questions (to me and/or the class more generally) that you think might be relevant. Here, you should express questions, interests, or problems you have related to readings and lectures (chances are you are not alone). Bringing your concerns into the arena of the classroom and posing questions to the class can be of great benefit to both you and your classmates.

Group Quizzes: We will periodically have group quizzes in recitation. Each quiz will consist of about 25 multiple choice, true/false, and possibly some short answer questions related to the course material covered that week. Quizzes will be both open note and open book. Some of the questions will be relatively straightforward; however, other questions will be quite difficult and require you to think a good deal to arrive at the best answer. It is my hope that the act of debating, collectively sifting through your materials, and ultimately parsing out the finer nuances of various social theorists as a group will help you better absorb their theories and make them more "second nature" to you. **There will be five quizzes in total and only your highest four grades will count (I will drop the lowest). There are absolutely no make-up quizzes under any circumstances** as the group dynamic involved is central to their underlying pedagogical philosophy.

Exams: There will be three essay-type take-home exams. In each of these, you will be asked to answer up to three questions of your choosing out of four or five possibilities. At minimum, you will receive possible exam questions three days in advance of the exam date/due date. Exams will be open book/open notes, and each essay will count for 10 percent of your final grade. Only your highest 7 essays of 9 possible opportunities will count toward your final grade. Thus, you can opt out of writing two if you so wish, or I

will simply drop your two lowest scores. Exams will be due on Fridays, both so you have the opportunity to ask questions and get extra time to write on the immediately preceding Thursday.

You will be required to submit an electronic copy that will be evaluated with anti-plagiarism software via the module entitled “assignments2” on sakai. Any usage of unattributed material (e.g. text without quotes or references) written by someone other than yourself constitutes plagiarism. Be aware that this also includes material taken from websites and material written primarily by others in which a few words or sentences have been changed or moved. **Use your own words at all times**, unless you are directly quoting an author! Plagiarized exams will be given a grade of zero with no opportunity for a make-up. I will report all cases of plagiarism to the Office of Student Conduct where you will be subject to University sanctions as well. Additional information on plagiarism is provided in the following two pages.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is essential to the success of the educational enterprise and breaches of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the academic community. Every member of that community bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld. Only through a genuine partnership among students, faculty, staff, and administrators will the University be able to maintain the necessary commitment to academic integrity.

The University administration is responsible for making academic integrity an institutional priority and for providing students and faculty with effective educational programs and support services to help them fully understand and address issues of academic integrity. The administration is also responsible for working with other members of the academic community to establish equitable and effective procedures to deal with violations of academic integrity.

Students are responsible for understanding the principles of academic integrity fully and abiding by them in all their work at the University. Students are also encouraged to report alleged violations of academic integrity to the faculty member teaching the course in which the violation is alleged to have occurred.

Various ways in which academic integrity can be violated are described below. The comments and examples within each section provide explanations and illustrative material, but do not exhaust the scope of possible violations.

Cheating: Cheating is the use of impermissible and/or unacknowledged materials, information, or study aids in any academic activity. Using books, notes, calculators, conversations with others, etc. when their use is restricted or forbidden, constitutes cheating. Similarly, students may not request others (including commercial term paper companies) to conduct research or prepare any work for them. Students may not submit identical work, or portions thereof, for credit or honors more than once without prior approval of the instructor to whom the work is being submitted for the second or

subsequent time.

Fabrication: Fabrication is the falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic work. "Invented" information may not be used in any laboratory report or other academic work without authorization from the instructor. It is improper, for example, to analyze one sample in an experiment and "invent" data based on that single experiment for several more required analyses. Students must also acknowledge the actual source from which cited information was obtained. A student should not, for example, reproduce a quotation from a book review and claim that the quotation was obtained from the book itself.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic work. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks, or by appropriate indentation, and must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline. Acknowledgment is also required when material from any source is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one's own words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: to paraphrase Plato's comment... and conclude with a footnote or appropriate citation to identify the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material. Information that is common knowledge, such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc, need not be cited; however, the sources of all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, other materials that contribute to one's general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography.

Sometimes, plagiarism can be a subtle issue. Students should be encouraged to discuss any questions about what constitutes plagiarism with the faculty member teaching the course.

Facilitating Violations of Academic Integrity: It is a violation of academic integrity for a student to aid others in violating academic integrity. A student who knowingly or negligently facilitates a violation of academic integrity is as culpable as the student who receives the impermissible aid, even if the former student does not benefit from the violation.

*For more detailed information on academic dishonesty go to
<<http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>.

Disabilities: If you have a disability and require accommodations please let me know as soon as possible.

ORGANIZATION OF COURSE

We might think of the course being broken into the following—not necessarily even or always mutually exclusive—themes with corresponding authors listed below:

- 1) *Big 3 Classical Refresher/Crash Course*
-Durkheim, Marx, & Weber
- 2) *American Structural-Functionalism*
-Parsons & Merton
- 3) *Power and Social Reproduction in Culture*
-Horkheimer/Adorno & Bourdieu
- 4) *Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnomethodology*
-Mead, Goffman, & Garfinkel
- 5) *Postmodernity, and Poststructuralism*
-Harvey, Baudrillard, Lyotard, & Foucault
- 6) *Feminist Theory*
-Hill-Collins & Butler
- 7) *Neoliberalism and Global Sociality*
-Harvey, more TBA

Reading List

The following outlines which readings correspond to each author; **required readings appear in bold text** while potentially helpful—and very optional—orienting supplementary readings from the Appelrouth and Edles reader are listed in plain text:

-Durkheim

- Durkheim, Emile “On Mechanical and Organic Solidarity” pp. 46-50
*available on sakai
- Durkheim, Emile “Anomic Suicide” pp. 57-63
*available on sakai

-Marx

- Marx, Karl “Alienated Labor” pp. 12-19
*available on sakai or online
<<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>>
- Marx, Karl “Manifesto of the Communist Party” pp. 26-33
*available on sakai or online
<<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm>>

-Weber

- Weber, Max “Bureaucracy” pp. 89-94
*available on sakai
- Weber, Max “Class, Status, Party” pp. 102-107
*available on sakai

-Parsons

- Parsons, Talcott; Shils, Edward A “Categories of the Orientation and Organization of Action” pp. 38-46
*In Appelrouth and Edles
- Parsons, Talcott “The Functional Prerequisites of Social Systems” pp. 194-198
*available on sakai
- Appelrouth and Edles pp. 22-35

-Merton

- Merton, Robert “Manifest and Latent Functions” pp. 62-68
*In Appelrouth and Edles
- Merton, Robert “Social Structure and Anomie” pp. 2-12
*available on sakai or online
<<http://people.uncw.edu/kozloffm/merton%20on%20anomie.pdf>>
- Appelrouth and Edles pp. 56-60

-Horkheimer

- Horkheimer, Max “Traditional and Critical Theory” pp. 402-406
*available on sakai
- Horkheimer, Max “Eclipse of Reason” pp. 95-102
*In Appelrouth and Edles

-Adorno

- Adorno, Theodore “The Culture Industry Reconsidered” pp. 103-107
*In Appelrouth and Edles
- Appelrouth and Edles pp. 77-87

-Bourdieu

- Bourdieu, Pierre “Social Space and the Genesis of Groups” pp. 462-475
*In Appelrouth and Edles
- Appelrouth and Edles pp. 448-458

-Mead

-Mead, George Herbert “Play, the Game, and the Generalized Other”

*available online

<http://www.brocku.ca/MeadProject/Mead/pubs2/mindself/Mead_1934_20.html>

-Mead, George Herbert “The ‘I’ and the ‘me’”

*available online

<http://www.brocku.ca/MeadProject/Mead/pubs2/mindself/Mead_1934_22.html>

-Goffman

-Goffman, Erving “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life” pp. 192-206

*In Appelrouth and Edles

-Goffman, Erving “The Nature of Deference and Demeanor” pp. 207-215

*In Appelrouth and Edles

-Appelrouth and Edles pp. 179-188

-Garfinkel

-Garfinkel, Harold “Studies in Ethnomethodology” pp. 301-310

*In Appelrouth and Edles

-Appelrouth and Edles pp. 295-300

-Harvey

-Harvey, David “Postmodernism” pp. 303-315

*available on sakai

-Baudrillard

-Baudrillard, Jean “Simulacra and Simulations” pp.420-428

*In Appelrouth and Edles

-Appelrouth and Edles pp.411-419

-Lyotard

-Lyotard, Jean-Francois “The Postmodern Condition” pp. 435-444

*In Appelrouth and Edles

-Appelrouth and Edles pp. 429-433

-Foucault

-Foucault, Michel “Discipline and Punish” pp. 396-411

*In Appelrouth and Edles

-Foucault, Michel “History of Sexuality” pp. 92-97; 103-108

*available on sakai

-Appelrouth and Edles pp. 389-393

-Hill-Collins

-Hill-Collins, Patricia “Black Feminist Thought” pp. 346-355

*In Appelrouth and Edles

-Appelrouth and Edles pp. 342-344

-Butler

-Butler, Judith “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire” pp. 373-377

*In Appelrouth and Edles

-Appelrouth and Edles pp.369-371

-Harvey

-“A Brief History of Neoliberalism” pp. TBA

*available online

<<http://www.sok.bz/web/media/video/ABriefHistoryNeoliberalism.pdf>>

The dates that we cover any author will ultimately depend on how fast we move through the class. Likewise, it is conceivable that we may not cover all the material listed here OR that some readings will be omitted and/or substituted by others not currently listed in this syllabus. That said, below is a very ROUGH and PRELIMINARY schedule. This class can be intense at times, particularly in the context of a summer session, so it is possible if we move through too quickly to take a breather day at some point (to be determined of course).

Week 1 (Jan, 17, 19) Introductions, Introductory Concepts/Modernity/Enlightenment

Week 2 (Jan 24, 26) Durkheim

Week 3 (Jan 31, Feb 2) Marx

Week 4 (Feb 7, 9) Weber

Week 5 (Feb 14, 16) Parsons

Week 6 (Feb 21, 23) Merton, Exam 1 Due Feb 24

Week 7 (Feb 28, Mar 2) Horkheimer/Adorno, Bourdieu

Week 8 (Mar 7, 9) Bourdieu, Mead

Week 9 (Mar 14, 16) SPRING BREAK

Week 10 (Mar 21, 23) Goffman, Garfinkel

Week 11 (Mar 28, 30) Garfinkel, Exam 2 Due Mar 31

Week 12 (Apr 4, 6) Harvey, Baudrillard, Lyotard

Week 13 (Apr 11, 13) Foucault

Week 14 (Apr 18, 20) Hill Collins, Butler

Week 15 (Apr 25, 27) Harvey (others TBA), Exam 3 Due April 28

***I reserve the right to alter any aspect of this schedule at any point**