

# **Sociology 355: Theory and Intensive Writing**

University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
Spring 2016

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## **Course Description and Objectives**

This course is designed to introduce you to sociological theory. The course is divided into five sections that correspond to major themes in social theory:

- 1) Emergence through Convergence: The Puzzle of Social Order
- 2) Networks of Capital: Dimensions of Global Capitalism
- 3) Pathway to Meltdown: Theorizing the Dark Side of Modernity
- 4) Shifting the Paradigm: Excluded Standpoints, Alternative Knowledges
- 5) Rise of the Avatar: Connecting Self and Society

In each section, we will cover both classical and contemporary theories that address the theme.

In our discussions, our goals will be to learn key concepts offered by these theorists and to compare each theorist's view of things like society, individuals, inequality, and social change. When we cover the contemporary theories, we will also consider how insights and concepts from contemporary theory extend ones from the classical sociological tradition.

The course is also designed to allow you to *apply* the theories we read to the world around you. In our discussions, we will use the theories to analyze a number of "cultural objects." These discussions will give you the opportunity to learn the course material while linking it something of interest to you. They will help us see how sociological theory is relevant to our everyday lives.

After taking this course, you should be able to:

- 1) Identify key concepts and contributions made by sociological theorists.
- 2) Compare, contrast, and critically evaluate sociological theories.
- 3) Describe the relationship between classical and contemporary theories.
- 4) Apply sociological theories to the world around you.

## **Course Materials**

Required Textbook:

Wesley Longhofer and Daniel Winchester, Editors. 2012. *Social Theory Re-Wired: New Connections to Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Routledge: New York.  
ISBN: 978-0-415-88654-3.

The textbook has an accompanying website: <http://theory.routledgesoc.com/>

On the website, you will find required readings and also supplementary material that will help you understand the course readings.

All other required readings will be available online on our Blackboard site.

Although not required, I encourage you to familiarize yourself with online news sources (e.g. nytimes.com, washingtonpost.com, journalstar.com, wsj.com, latimes.com). These can be one potential source for you to find a “cultural object” - though you are not limited to using a newspaper articles.

### **A Note About My Teaching Methods**

The teaching methods I use in the classroom are informed by the fact that I want you to be able to understand *and* apply the course material. This is a discussion-based class. In my classroom, I stress “active learning” – you will learn through doing activities, discussing, and asking questions. I use a variety of methods in the classroom that encourages you to go beyond merely summarizing the material and asks you to creatively assess and apply the material. Depending on the cultural objects you choose, we will be engaging in a variety of activities, including: analyzing depictions in movies, TV, and newspaper articles. There will also be times when you free-writes or work in small groups.

I also stress “experiential learning” – you will be encouraged to draw on your own experiences and interests when making sense of the course material and choosing your cultural objects. The diversity of students in the classroom will enhance our understanding of the course material if you are able to bring these experiences and perspectives to bear on class discussion and activities.

### **Course Assignments**

Your grade in this class will be determined by your performance on the following three activities: 1) Writing Out Loud 2) Cultural Object Theory Application 3) Exams

#### **Writing Out Loud**

You will have “writing out loud” (WOL) responses due weekly. These are responses to one question that is associated with each reading that we do. In other words, each week you will be responsible for answering one question about one reading. This assignment is designed to meet the course objective of learning the key contributions of each theorist. The readings can be lengthy and difficult: the writing out loud assignment will allow you engage with the readings and gain a better understanding of them.

The WOL questions are on our Blackboard site. You will enter your writing out loud responses to these readings on our Blackboard site.

This assignment is worth 20% of your overall grade. Your performance will be assessed by the quality and comprehensiveness of your responses.

### **Cultural Object Theory Application**

The cultural object assignment is designed to achieve the course goal of being able to apply the theory you read to the world around you. Each class, we will have a “cultural object” that we discuss and analyze using the theory reading assigned to that class.

Once over the course of the semester, you will be responsible for bringing in a “cultural object.” You will lead discussion about your cultural object as well as turn in a two-page paper that analyzes your cultural object.

#### *Leading Discussion*

The cultural object must be tangible – we have to be able to read it (like a newspaper article or website), watch it (like a video), or hear it (like a song). The cultural object must relate to the theoretical readings. It should be something that can help us learn the concepts from the reading. Once you find the cultural object you want us to analyze, you will be responsible for generating at least three discussion questions about it that incorporate the readings. On the day you lead discussion, you will be responsible for showing us your cultural object (e.g. having us read, listen, or watch something) and using your discussion questions to generate an analysis of it.

#### *Paper*

In addition to leading discussion, you will also write a two-page page paper about your cultural object. The paper is designed for you to show me that you understand two things: 1) the assigned theory reading and 2) how the assigned theory reading applies to your cultural object. The papers are due the day we discuss your object.

This assignment is worth 20% of your overall course grade. Your performance on the leading discussion component of the assignment will be assessed by the cultural object you choose, the discussion questions you generate, and your engagement in leading discussion. Your performance on the paper component of the assignment will be assessed by how well you address the paper requirements.

### **Exams**

You will have three exams in this class. Your first exam will take place on *February 25<sup>th</sup>*. This exam will cover the readings and discussions from Part I and Part II of the course as well as the first day January 14<sup>th</sup>. Exam 1 is worth 20% of your overall grade. Your second exam will take place on *March 17<sup>th</sup>*. Exam 2 will cover the readings and discussions from Part III of the course. Exam 2 is worth 15% of your overall grade. Exam 3 will take place during our final exam time: *May 4<sup>h</sup> from 1-3pm*. Exam 3 will cover the readings and discussions from Part IV and Part V of the course. Exam 3 is worth 25% of your overall course grade. The exam format for all of the exams will be short-answer and essay.

***The final grade breakdown:***

Writing Out Loud	20%
Cultural Object Theory Application	20%
Leading Discussion (10%)	
Paper (10%)	
Exams	60%
Exam 1 (20%)	
Exam 2 (15%)	
Exam 3 (25%)	
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>	<b><i>100 %</i></b>

**Grading Scale**

A + = 97-100%	B + = 87 – 89%	C + = 77 – 79%	D + = 67 – 69%
A = 93 – 96%	B = 83 – 86%	C = 73 – 76%	D = 63 – 66%
A – = 90 – 92%	B – = 80 – 82%	C – = 70 – 72%	D – = 60 – 62%

F = 59 % or below

**Attendance**

Regular attendance is crucial for succeeding in this class. If you cannot commit right now to coming to every class and coming on time, barring illness or emergency, this is not the right class for you. If you miss 6 classes you will fail the class. If you miss 4 or 5, your final grade will be lowered by one step (i.e. “B” becomes “B-“).

**IS Course**

This course is an Integrated Studies Course. Integrative Studies is a UNL experience requirement intended to engage students in actively developing their ability and desire to analyze, evaluate and communicate complex material and positions.

**Services for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact me for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

**READING SCHEDULE**

**\*Please note this schedule is tentative. I might make adjustments to the schedule to better meet the needs of the class.**

**January 12: Welcome and Introductions**

**January 14: What Is Sociological Theory?**

Preface

*Section I: Emergence Through Convergence: The Puzzles of Social Order*

**January 19: Classical: Durkheim**

Durkheim “The Division of Labor in Society”

Durkheim “The Elementary Forms of Religious Life”

**January 21: Durkheim**

Durkheim “The Rules of Sociological Method”

**January 26: Classical: Martineau**

*\*Readings posted on Blackboard*

Martineau “Overview” (p. 31-39)

Martineau “How to Observe Morals and Manners”

**January 28: Contemporary: Garfinkel**

Garfinkel “Studies in Ethnomethodology”

**February 2: Contemporary: Berger and Luckmann**

Berger and Luckmann “The Social Construction of Reality”

*Section II: Networks of Capital: Dimensions of Global Capitalism*

**February 4: Classical: Marx**

Marx and Engels “The Manifesto of the Communist Party”

**February 9: Classical: Marx**

Marx “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844”

Marx and Engels “German Ideology”

**February 11: Classical: Addams**

*\*Readings posted on Blackboard*

Addams “Overview”

Addams “Settlement Labor Movement”

**February 16: Contemporary: Bettie**

Bettie “Women Without Class: Girls, Race, and Identity”

**February 18: Contemporary: Bourdieu**

Bourdieu “The Forms of Capital”

**February 23: REVIEW for Exam 1**

**February 25: EXAM 1**

*Section III: Pathway to Meltdown: Theorizing the Dark Side of Modernity*

**March 1: Classical: Weber**

Weber “Bureaucracy”

**March 3: Classical: Weber**

Weber “Basic Sociological Terms”

Weber “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”

**March 8: Classical: Gilman**

*\*Readings posted on Blackboard*

Gilman “Overview”

Gilman “Women and Economics”

**March 10: Contemporary: Marcuse**

Marcuse “One-Dimensional Man”

**March 15: Contemporary: Foucault**

Foucault “Discipline and Punish”

**March 17: EXAM 2**

**March 22: SPRING BREAK**

**March 24: SPRING BREAK**

*Section IV: Excluded Standpoints, Alternative Knowledges*

**March 29: Classical: Du Bois**

Du Bois “The Souls of Black Folk”

**March 31: Classical: Beauvoir**

Beauvoir “The Second Sex”

**April 5: Contemporary: Omi and Winant**

Omi and Winant “Racial Formation in the United States”

**April 7: Contemporary: Collins**

Collins “Black Feminist Thought”

**April 12: Contemporary: Queer Theory**

*\*Readings posted on Blackboard*

Seidman “Queer-Ing Sociology, Sociologizing Queer Theory: An Introduction.”

Fuss “Inside/Out”

*Section V: Rise of the Avatar: Connecting Self and Society*

**April 14: Classical: Mead**

Mead “The Self”

**April 19: Classical: Simmel**

Simmel “The Metropolis and Mental Life”

**April 21: Contemporary: Goffman**

Goffman “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life”

**April 26: Contemporary: Bauman**

Bauman “From Pilgrim to Tourist: or a Short History of Identity”

**April 28: Course Reflections and Evaluations and Review for Exam 3**

**Wednesday May 4: EXAM 3  
1-3pm**