

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

AND INTENSIVE WRITING

SOCIOLOGY 355

SUMMER 2015

 Class: MTWRF 11:00-12:35 in Burnett Hall 205	 Instructor: Kristen An Horton, MA, JD
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A THEORY COURSE?!? BUT I HATE THEORY!

Many of us get queasy when we hear we have to take a theory course. Theory means dense, six-inch-thick books by long dead white men, right? Well ... yes. Sometimes. But that's not the whole story. Let's keep it simple: theory explains. Scholars create theories trying to explain everything from the possibility of life on Mars to what caused the global financial crisis. You probably create theories all of the time. Maybe you have a theory on why rich, successful men often have young beautiful wives but not vice versa. Or why the U.S. intervenes in some foreign conflicts but not others. Or why *Mad Men* and similar shows have become so popular. You are already a theorist. However, social science provides us tools for asking critical questions and for refining our theories so they better explain 'what's really going on.' Sociology, as the scientific study of society and human behavior, is not simply an academic or scientific discipline; it is a way of life, a way of seeing the world. Sociology provides a lens to analyze the world around you, to understand your position in society. This course will teach you to refine your theoretical skills, think even more deeply about social life, and apply what you learn to your own reality. To accomplish this task, we examine the spectrum of sociological theory, from classical to contemporary. Think of this class as a greatest hits of theory compilation – you get a small, but excellent, taste of each thinker.

University Description: Theory and Intensive Writing- Survey of 19th and 20th century writers whose ideas have had a strong impact on the development of contemporary sociology and sociological theory, ranging from Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim to W.E.B. DuBois, Patricia Hill Collins and Harold Garfinkle. *Intensive Writing Activity Leading to a Social Research Paper*. This Course is a Prerequisite for SOCI 396- Research Experience

WARNING!

This course is very reading and writing intensive. To make matters worse, some of the original material can initially be very difficult to understand. I don't mean to scare anyone off, I just want you to have a bit of an idea regarding what you're in for. You know how most semesters you have a few classes that take a lot of time and a few that you can sort of slide through? This class is one of the time-intensive ones. And we only have a short five weeks!

Required Book: *Introduction to Sociological Theory: Theorists, Concepts, and their Applicability to the Twenty-First Century* (2nd edition) by Michelle Dillon.

PROMISES OF THE COURSE

∂ Should you make a commitment to really engage the course material, you will leave familiar with the breadth of sociological theory. You will have the tools to think more carefully and critically about many, many topics.

- I want you leave the class more comfortable reading and thinking about sociological theory. Along with this, I hope you become a more confident theorist.
- ÷ I hope to create a space where you feel challenged to think about your life in connection to sociological theory. I want this class to be useful to you beyond a grade and beyond the end of the course. I hope this class transforms, in ways big or small, how you think, act, and feel.
- ≠ Together, I believe we will form a community of students (myself included) in which we feel comfortable discussing questions that are important to us.
- ≡ Finally, I want to help you excel in this course. This course will be challenging, and my goal is to help you meet that challenge.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- ❖ Understand and be able to explain and evaluate the various sociological theories.
- ❖ Demonstrate knowledge of how these theories function in the social world by using sociologically relevant examples.
- ❖ Be able to compare and contrast various sociological theories and theorists.
- ❖ Understand how the development of sociological theories is connected to historical context.
- ❖ Develop scientific writing skills, such as how to format research papers, gather and appropriately utilize resource materials, and how to write literature reviews.

Attendance policy

Attendance is vital to this class, both for your own learning and for our growth as a community. **I believe learning is a communal process; we all help and teach each other.** Therefore, attendance is mandatory. Every absence equals a 2 point deduction, or 2 percent of your grade. On the other hand, it's an easy 10 points if you make it to every class! Since this is a short, five week course, missing 5 classes will result in an automatic failure of the course.

That said, I realize that we all have struggles and priorities beyond this class. This policy is not meant to punish you for having to attend a family situation; it's to give you that extra push on those days that you have no excuse but just don't feel like showing up, despite your good intentions. I want to be clear that family comes first. If you must miss class I appreciate an e-mail the night before (if possible). Please e-mail me at some point, as that's the easiest way for me to keep track of excused absences.

You may feel that since you (or your parents) pay tuition, you should have the option of missing class whenever you like. I understand and respect your point of view; however, I disagree. I am happy to discuss my thoughts with you.



SAFE ZONE

This space respects all people regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, age, social class, religion, ethnicity, or ability.

Participation

I think participation is too difficult to grade directly. However, I will use it to ‘bump you up’ if you’re on the borderline of a grade. Participation means speaking out in class, taking risks, engaging your classmates, being open to new ideas, sharing your own ideas and enthusiastically engaging the processes I take you through. Try on this idea: what you share may profoundly impact one of your classmates. I’m serious! And please remember to be respectful of others and open-minded to other opinions and viewpoints.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

I’ve designed assignments that reflect and expand on the work we do in class and keep you actively engaged throughout the course. I do not think exams are appropriate for this course; therefore, **there will be no exams**. Before you jump for joy, let me point out that **there is a great deal of reading and writing involved**. The assignments require intense effort and thought.

Grading is good and bad. It’s good because almost all of us need some extra motivation to excel. It’s bad because it doesn’t always accurately measure your effort and knowledge and because we often emphasize grades so much that they become more important than actually learning. In this class, if you complete the assignments well and attend each class you can probably expect a ‘B’. If you attend most classes, demonstrate reasonable effort, and complete most assignments, you will be in the ‘C’ range. If you go **above and beyond** the requirements, push yourself, and exceed my expectations, you will likely earn an ‘A’. I am very open to discussing your grade with you and helping you achieve your goal. We can create options for you to improve if you feel your grade does not reflect your understanding and effort.

Remember, your grade reflects neither what I think of you nor your potential as a human being.

This class will be a combination of lecture and group discussion. My responsibility is to provide you with an introduction to the theory/theorist and to clarify any confusion. Your responsibility is to come to class having done the assigned reading and to participate in class and group discussions.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Percent of total</u>		<u>Final grading</u>	
Attendance & participation:	10	10%		A = 93-100	C = 73-76
Theorist Presentation:	5	5%		A- = 90-92	C- = 70-72
Weekly Writing Assignments:	20	20%		B+ = 87-89	D+ = 67-69
Daily Questions:	15	15%		B = 83-86	D = 63-66
Final Written Project:	40	40%		B- = 80-82	D- = 60-62
Final Project Presentation:	10	10%		C+ = 77-79	F = 0-59
Total:	100	100%			

In-Class Theorist Presentation (5 points)

Each student will be required to do ONE presentation on the biography of a theorist. These presentations will be given at the start of class on the day that we discuss that particular theorist and should be 5-10 minutes long. You will be graded on presentation skills as well as on accurate information. Think of these presentations as a *National Enquirer* article. I want you to

“dig up the dirt” and bring these theorists to life. You must create a PowerPoint presentation to present your findings.

Weekly Writing Assignments (4x5=20 points)

You will be writing a research paper throughout the course of the class. There will be a writing assignment every Friday (July 17: proposal, July 24: outline, July 31: annotated bibliography, August 7: rough draft). There will be a total of 4 writing assignments, worth 5 points each, for a total of 20 points. These assignments should be typed and double-spaced in 12 pt. Times New Roman font. At the end of the class, you will have a draft of your entire paper. Students are expected to use my comments to help “polish” a final draft that will be turned in at the end of class.

Daily Chapter Questions and Concept Map (15x1=15 points)

Over the course of the semester you will complete 15 daily chapter questions and concept maps. For each assignment you will complete 2 of the given questions (generally 3-4 questions to pick from) and complete a concept map of the terms associated with that theory or theorist. For the questions you will answer each question in 200-300 words with in text citations (in ASA style) to support your answer. For the concept map you will construct a diagram connecting the terms. Each connection between terms should be explained. An example will be given on the first day of class.

Final Written Project (40points)

The final project is your opportunity to creatively apply what you’ve learned in class. You will choose one or two theorists/theories to help you explain an issue or question *you* find interesting. For example, you might use Max Weber’s theory of rationalization to discuss modern “megachurches” or C. Wright Mills’ theory of the power elite to discuss campaign finance. This project will result in an approximately 8-10 page, double spaced essay. I’ll say more about this throughout the semester. The paper will have the following components: title, abstract, introduction, literature review, theory section, data and methods review, discussion, conclusion, and references. The paper must be typed, double-spaced, and written in 12-pt Times New Roman font using standard margins. The reference section must be in ASA format. It is **due on Thursday, August 13 by 2:00pm** to me in my office (409 Oldfather Hall).

Examples of final projects

- Use Erving Goffman’s theory of presentation of self to analyze a politician’s behavior.
- Discuss gay characters in the media (e.g. *Modern Family* sitcom) using queer theory.
- Think about what critical theorists might say regarding reality TV shows.
- Use Karl Marx’s theories to analyze debates about undocumented workers and immigration.
- Choose several films considered “postmodern” and explain what makes them so.

Final Project Presentation (10 points)

On the last day of class students will be scheduled to present their paper. Presentations should be between 10-12 minutes with 3-5 minutes for questions. Presentation will be graded for theoretical correctness, application, and quality of presentation. Presentations should use Prezi, PowerPoint, or another approved program. Before presentations are given, a copy of the presentation should be emailed to kristenanhorton@huskers.unl.edu, no later than 10:30 am on Thursday, August 13.

SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE: JULY 13-17

MONDAY JULY 13: Welcome. Let the journey begin...

Explanation of the class, getting to know each other, theory groups

TUESDAY JULY 14: Introduction to sociological theory

What to read for this class:

Introduction (pgs. 1-29)

WEDNESDAY JULY 15: Karl Marx

What to read for this class:

Ch. 1 (pgs. 31-75)

Manifesto of the Communist Party by Marx and Engels (on BB)

What is due today:

2 Daily Chapter Questions for Review (pg. 73)

Background: Marx and Engels trace the ongoing conflict between the owners of the means of production (the bourgeoisie, or the rich) and the workers (the proletariat, or the poor). They outline the problems of capitalism and predict an inevitable revolution ending in a classless society.

THURSDAY JULY 16: Emile Durkheim

What to read for this class:

Ch. 2 (pgs. 78-116)

“Social Rituals and Sacred Objects” by Durkheim (on BB)

What is due today:

2 Daily Chapter Questions for Review (pg. 114)

Background: By studying aboriginal peoples, Durkheim tried to discover the very building blocks of religious life. God is actually the symbol of society and its moral power over individuals. It serves an important function by maintaining social cohesion. He makes a distinction between the sacred and the profane. For example, to some people, a crucifix is almost meaningless; to others it is full of sacred meaning.

Reflection opportunity: discuss your own religious upbringing, describing examples of rituals and the sacred and profane.

FRIDAY JULY 17:

What to read for this class:

Writing Workshop Day

What is due today:

Final Paper Proposal due by 2:00 pm (Oldfather Hall 409)

WEEK TWO: JULY 20-24

MONDAY JULY 20: Max Weber

What to read for this class:

Ch. 3 (pgs. 117-153)

“The Spirit of Capitalism and the Iron Cage” by Weber (on BB)

What is due today:

2 Daily Chapter Questions for Review (pg. 153)

Background: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is Weber’s grand attempt to explain why capitalism emerged in the West rather than elsewhere. He connects religion and economics, ideology and material reality. The piece ends with a chilling portrayal of an ‘iron cage,’ in which we are trapped in a hyper-rationalized world and forced to work in a ‘calling’ that has little meaning for us.

Reflection opportunity: watch the film *Brazil* and discuss examples of rationalization, McDonaldization, and the iron cage.

TUESDAY JULY 21: Functionalism and Modernization

What to read for this class:

Ch. 4 (pgs. 155-186)

“The Unit Act of Action Systems” by Parsons (on BB)

“Action Systems and Social System” by Parsons (on BB)

What is due today:

2 Daily Chapter Questions for Review (pg. 184-185)

WEDNESDAY JULY 22: Critical Theory

What to read for this class:

Ch. 5 (pgs. 187-220)

“The Culture of Industry as Deception” by Horkheimer and Adorno (on BB)

“Emancipatory Knowledge” and “Social Analysis and Communicative Competence” by Habermas

What is due today:

2 Daily Chapter Questions for Review (pg. 219)

THURSDAY JULY 23: Conflict, Power, and Dependency in Macro-Societal Processes

What to read for this class:

Ch. 6 (pgs. 221-243)

selections from *The Power Elite* by C. Wright Mills (on BB)

What is due today:

2 Daily Chapter Questions for Review (pg. 242)

Reflection opportunity: apply Mills' theory to the film *Inside Job*. Who are the power elite? What did they use their power to do?

FRIDAY JULY 24:

What to read for this class:

Writing Workshop Day

What is due today:

Final Paper Outline due by 2:00 pm (Oldfather Hall 409)

WEEK THREE: JULY 27-31

MONDAY JULY 27: Exchange, Exchange Network, and Rational Choice Theories

What to read for this class:

Ch. 7 (pgs. 246-271)

Selections from *exchange and Power in Social Life* by Blau (on BB)

What is due today:

2 Daily Chapter Questions for Review (pg. 269)

TUESDAY JULY 28: Symbolic Interactionism

What to read for this class:

Ch. 8 (pgs. 273-299)

“On Face Work” by Erving Goffman (on BB)

What is due today:

2 Daily Chapter Questions for Review (pg. 297-298)

WEDNESDAY JULY 29: Phenomenology and Ethnomethodology

What to read for this class:

Ch. 9 (pgs. 301-325)

“Society as Human Product” by Berger and Luckmann (on BB)

What is due today:

2 Daily Chapter Questions for Review (pg. 323-324)

THURSDAY JULY 30: Feminist Theories

What to read for this class:

Ch. 10 (pgs. 327-367)

“Black Feminist Thought in the Matrix of Domination” by Hill Collins (on BB)

What is due today:

2 Daily Chapter Questions for Review (pg. 365)

FRIDAY JULY 31:

What to read for this class:

Writing Workshop Day

What is due today:

Annotated Bibliography due by 2:00 pm (Oldfather Hall 409)

WEEK FOUR: AUGUST 3-7

MONDAY AUGUST 3: Michel Foucault

What to read for this class:

Ch. 11 (pgs. 369-391)

“A Queer Encounter: Sociology and the Study of Sexuality” by Epstein (on BB)

What is due today:

2 Daily Chapter Questions for Review (pg. 390)

Reflection opportunity: watch the film *Paris is Burning* and discuss using the principles of queer theory and theories of the body. How do the people in the film disrupt conventions of body, sexuality, and gender?

TUESDAY AUGUST 4: Race, Racism, and the Construction of Racial Otherness

What to read for this class:

Ch. 12 (pgs. 393-426)

“Double-Consciousness and the Veil” by DuBois (on BB)

“Why do Millennials Not Understand Racism?” by Jamelle Bouie (on BB)

What is due today:

2 Daily Chapter Questions for Review (pg. 425)

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 5: The Social Reproduction of Inequality

What to read for this class:

Ch. 13 (pgs. 427-450)

“Structures, *Habitus*, Practices” by Bourdieu (on BB)

What is due today:

2 Daily Chapter Questions for Review (pg. 449)

THURSDAY AUGUST 6: Economic and Political Globalization

What to read for this class:

Ch. 14 (pgs. 451-490)

“The Global Network” by Castells (on BB)

“Toward a Feminist Analytics of the Global Economy” by Sassen (on BB)

What is due today:

2 Daily Chapter Questions for Review (pg. 488-489)

FRIDAY AUGUST 7:

What to read for this class:

Writing Workshop Day

What is due today:

Rough Draft of Final Paper due by 2:00 pm (Oldfather Hall 409)

WEEK FIVE: AUGUST 10-13

MONDAY AUGUST 10: Modernities, Cosmopolitanism, and Global Consumer Culture

What to read for this class:

Ch. 15 (pgs. 491-520)

“Simulacra and Simulations: Disneyland” by Baudrillard (on BB)

What is due today:

2 Daily Chapter Questions for Review (pg. 519)

TUESDAY AUGUST 11:

What to read for this class:

Movie Day

What is due today:

Work on your papers and presentations ☺

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 12:

What to read for this class:

Movie Day

What is due today:

Work on your papers and presentations ☺

THURSDAY AUGUST 13:

Final presentations are today. Presentations must be emailed to the instructor no later than 10:30 am. Final papers are due today, to the instructor, by 2:00 pm, in Oldfather Hall 409.

CONTENT IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE: THIS SYLLABUS IS A CONSTANT WORK IN PROGRESS, FLUID AND DYNAMIC. ADDITIONAL READINGS WILL BE POSTED ON BLACKBOARD AND YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED OF THE ADDITIONS AT LEAST THREE CLASSES PRIOR TO THE ADDITIONAL READINGS BEING DUE. ADDITIONAL READINGS MAY BE AVAILABLE FOR EXTRA CREDIT/REFLECTION POINTS.

Missed and Late Work

Due to the daily assignments in this class, you are allowed 3 late assignments to be turned in during the next class meeting. A fourth late assignment will result in the loss of points. If you know you are going to be absent for an excused reason (i.e., a university-related absence) assignments must be turned in ahead of time. If you are absent for an unexcused reason (i.e., alarm issues), this could count for one of the accepted late assignments.

Academic Integrity

Academic honesty should be exhibited in this and all courses. Academic dishonesty as defined by the UNL Student Code of Conduct section 4.2 (<http://stuafs.unl.edu/ja/code/three/shtml>) will not be tolerated. It is your responsibility to be familiar with UNL policies regarding academic dishonesty and to ensure that you know what constitutes academic dishonesty. If you are unsure whether an action for this course constitutes academic dishonesty, it is your responsibility to consult with the professor prior to taking that action. The penalty for the first act of academic

dishonesty will be an automatic “0” on the assignment or exam. A second offense will result in automatic failure of the entire course. Students committing academic dishonesty may also be subject to additional university disciplinary action. Consistent with the UNL Student Code of Conduct, complicity in academic dishonesty is equivalent to academic dishonesty and will be penalized accordingly.

Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty that many student struggle with. Taking someone else’s work/words and using them as your own is a serious offense. The Office of Graduate Studies has put together a nice website to help students better understand plagiarism and how to avoid it. If you are even unclear about what constitutes plagiarism or if you just want a refresher, please take advantage of this resource, which can be found at:
<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/plagiarism.shtml>.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor 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 or TTY.