**Theory & Intensive Writing**

**Sociology 355, Spring 2017**

**Monday, Wednesday, & Friday: 01:30PM - 02:20PM**

**Class Location: Oldfather 207**

**Kirk Dombrowski**

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**206 Benton Hall Phone: (402) 472-3205**

**Office Hours: Tues & Thurs: 2:00-3:00 and by appointment**

## Required Texts:

Main Text: Longhofer, Wesley and Daniel Winchester. 2016. *Social Theory Re-wired: New Connections to Classical and Contemporary Perspectives, 2nd Edition.* Routledge: New York.

The textbook has an accompanying website: <http://routledgesoc.com/>. This website is a great source of additional information on the theories/theorists that we discuss in class.

In addition, both the midterm and final exams are based on analyses of a text not written by a sociologist. This assignment is described below and will be discussed in class.

Midterm: Chafe, William Henry. *Civilities and civil rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the black struggle for freedom*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1981.

Final Exam: Vance, J. D. *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. Harper Books, 2016.

**Overview**

The goal of this class is to provide students with an introduction of sociological theorists. As a social science discipline committed to the scientific study of societies, the core focus of sociology is the organization of societies, the interrelations among various groups and institutions across societies, and the nature of social change. Sociological theories offer us explanations of how varying relationships, circumstances, and forces shape our daily lives and our social world. Thus, sociological theory provides us with a framework for social analysis.

This class is also structured to allow you to apply the theories assigned in class to the world around you. 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.

**Class Structure & Assignments**

This 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.

***Theory Application:*** *Seeing Sociology in the World around You*

The theory assignments will require you to explain, in writing, how a theory (or bundle of theoretical ideas) applies to a specific scenario or issue presented in class. Theory application assignments generally require you to look at phenomena through the lens of theory and the eyes of a particular theorist. Ask yourself, what would the theory understand or predict ("have to say") about a particular situation or phenomenon. How would that theory “divide up” what you see and hear, in order to reveal hidden structures or relationships? To practice this skill, most weeks you will be required to craft an essay in class that applies the readings of that week to a new scenario. Each of these essays is worth 5 points. Most essays writing will take place on Fridays and will be handed in via blackboard at the end of the class period. Essays are open book, and will be graded on insight, thoroughness, clarity, and overall quality of writing.

***Examination Analysis:***

In addition to the in class writing, all students will be required to write two 8-10 page scholarly interpretive analyses based on books assigned above for midterm and final exams (double-spaced; 1 inch margins; 12-point font; Times New Roman). Your task will be to apply the concepts covered in class in order to interpret and better explain the subject matter of the book. Neither of these books is written by a sociologist, and neither makes explicit use of sociological theories. But both books discuss recent historical events whose elements correspond to the elements of theory discussed in our main text. The point of the essay, like the short essays in class, are to apply the sociological theory, terms, and concepts learned throughout the semester to the events in the text. (Further instruction will be provided detailing the specifics of the analysis.) The analyses are due at the beginning of class on **February 20th** and before 3pm **May 4th**. Late essays lose 1 point per calendar day from the raw score beginning with one point deducted for being late to class that day or arriving past 3pm on May 4.

***Attendance and Participation***

This course involves both lecture and discussion. While a portion of each class will be devoted to lecture, class discussions will be critical to developing a deeper understanding of the material. This format will provide us with opportunities to engage the readings, allow for questions and intellectual exchange. Regular class attendance and participation are therefore critical for the fulfillment of this portion of your grade.

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| --- | --- |
| A+ | 100-114 |
| A | 90-99 |
| B | 80-89 |
| C | 70-79 |
| D | 65-69 |
| F | <65 |

**Course Requirements and Grades (130 points total): Grading Scheme:**

Attendance & Participation (1 pt each class) 34

Weekly Theory Application Essays (5 pts each) 50

Analysis (2 @ 15 pts each) 30

Total: 114 pts

**Plagiarism**

All work that you turn in should be your own work. Plagiarism is a serious offense, and will not be tolerated. Please note:

* Those who are caught will receive a “0” for the assignment,
* All incidents of academic dishonesty will be reported
* Judicial affairs will be notified of the occurrence in writing.

If you are unaware of what constitutes academic dishonesty, please refer to the University Student Handbook or and academic advisor.

**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.

**SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Section I Emergence Through Convergence** | | |
| 1 | 1/09 | **Introduction: What is social theory? What are we doing here? Who cares?** |
| 2 | 1/11 | Introductory Essay: *This Deserted Island is Out of Order* (Longhofer and Winchester) |
| 3 | 1/13 | *The Rules of Sociological Method* ***and*** *Suicide* (Emile Durkheim) |
| ***No Class Monday January 16th in observance of MLK Day*** | | |
| 4 | 1/18 | *The Division of Labor in Society* ***and*** *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Emile Durkheim) |
|  | 1/20 | **In Class Essay One** |
| 5 | 1/23 | *Manifest and Latent Functions* (Robert Merton)***and*** *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Harold Garfunkel) |
| 6 | 1/25 | *Mixing Humans and Nonhumans Together: The Sociology of a Door-Closed* (Bruno Latour)  ***and*** *The Social Constructions of Reality* (Peter Berger & Thomas Luckman) |
|  | 1/27 | **In Class Essay Two** |
| **Section II Networks of Capital: Dimensions of Global Capitalism** | | |
| 7 | 1/30 | Introductory Essay: *Salvaging What Wall Street Left Behind* (Longhofer and Winchester)  ***and*** *The German Ideology* (Karl Marx) |
| 8 | 2/1 | *To be determined…* |
| 9 | 2/3 | *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Marx and Engels) ***and*** *Capital* (Karl Marx) |
| 10 | 2/6 | *Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Karl Marx) |
| 11 | 2/8 | *The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System* (Immanuel Wallerstein) |
|  | 2/10 | **In Class Essay Three** |
| 12 | 2/13 | *Materials for an Exploratory Theory of the Network Society* (Manuel Castells) ***and*** *The Forms of Capital* (Pierre Bourdieu) |
| 13 | 2/15 | *Distinctions* (Pierre Bourdieu) ***and*** *Capitalism: The Factory of Fragmentation* (David Harvey) |
|  | 2/17 | **In Class Essay Four** |
| **Section III Pathway to Meltdown: Theorizing the Dark Side of Modernity** | | |
| 14 | 2/20 | ***Mid-term Book Analysis Due***(discussion) |
| 15 | 2/22 | Introductory Essay: *Your Smart Phone Might Be and Evil Genius* (Longhofer and Winchester) |
| 16 | 2/24 | *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Max Weber) |
| 17 | 2/27 | *Basic Sociological Terms; The Types of Legitimate Domination* (Max Weber) |
| 18 | 3/1 | *Bureaucracy* ***and*** *Class, Status, & Party* (Max Weber) |
|  | 3/3 | **In Class Essay Five** |
| 19 | 3/6 | *One Dimensional Man* (Herbert Marcuse) |
| 20 | 3/8 | *Toward a Rational Society* (Jurgen Habermas) |
|  | 3/10 | **In Class Essay Six** |
| 21 | 3/13 | *Discipline & Punish*  (Michael Foucault) |
| 22 | 3/15 | *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Zygmut Bauman) |
|  | 3/17 | **In Class Essay Seven** |
| **March 20- March 24: Spring Break No Classes** | | |
| **Section IV Shifting the Paradigm: Excluded Voices, Alternative Knowledges** | | |
| 23 | 3/27 | Introductory Essay: *Webs of Knowledge in the Digital Divide* (Longhofer and Winchester)  ***and*** *The Souls of Black Folk* (W.E.B. Du Bois) |
| 24 | 3/29 | *The Second Sex* (Simone de Beauvoir) |
|  | 3/31 | **In Class Essay Eight** |
| 25 | 4/3 | *Racial Formation in the United States* (Michael Omi and Howard Winant) ***and*** *Black Skin White Masks* (Frantz Fanon) |
| 26 | 4/5 | *Orientalism* (Edward Said) |
| 27 | 4/7 | *The Conceptual Practices of Power* (Dorothy Smith) ***and*** Black Feminist Thought (Patricia Hill Collins) |
|  | 4/10 | **In Class Essay Nine** |
| **Section V The Rise of the Avatar: Connecting Self and Society** | | |
| 28 | 4/12 | Introductory Essay*: Through the Looking Glass of Facebook* (Longhofer and Winchester)  ***and*** *Self* (George Herbert Mead) |
| 29 | 4/14 | *The Metropolis and Mental Life & The Stranger* (Georg Simmel) |
| 30 | 4/17 | *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Erving Goffman) |
| 31 | 4/19 | *The History of Sexuality* (Michael Foucault) |
|  | 4/21 | **In Class Essay Ten** |
| 32 | 4/24 | *Gender Trouble* (Judith Butler) |
| 33 | 4/26 | *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Anthony Giddens) |
| 34 | 4/28 | ***Wrap-up, questions, discussion*** |

***Final book analysis essay due by May 4th at 3:00 pm***

***In Class Essay Rubric***

In the class time allotted to you, your assignment will be to apply the theories and ideas of the class material covered since the last essay to specific elements of film material shown in class. To do this, you should take careful notes of what happens in the films, and have a ready list of the ideas from the recent course material that you can apply to the film. All work is “open book” and “open notes” meaning that you can use whatever material you have with you to help with the assignment. All essays are graded on a scale of 0 to 5. When “applying” theory to material, your work is two-fold. First, you will have to use the analytical elements of the theory to break down the events or depictions in the film; that is, you must translate the events or material of the film into the language/terms of the theory. Second, you will have to show how the theory predicts or explains how the various elements of the film are connected.

So, by way of example, in his discussion of suicide, the sociological theorist Durkheim theorizes that individuals may suffer *anomie* or feelings of meaninglessness or detachment when their own personal social values do not align with the sorts of actions or attitudes that are rewarded by the group they are part of, causing them to act out against those around them in antisocial ways, or to act against themselves in self-destructive ways. To show how this theory might by applied, for example, a particular scene from the HBO series “The Wire”, one would point out that in the scene the character Dee becomes increasingly despondent as he recognizes a clash between his personal humanist values and those of the drug dealers he runs with, causing him, eventually, to confront his uncle (drug kingpin Avon Barksdale) and then snitch. By interpreting the events in their order via Durkheim’s theory, we can see that there are social elements, and not just personal elements to the events that take place. That is (as Durkheim would point out) moral dilemmas are sociological phenomenon.

In class essays will be graded on a 5 point scale as follows:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Essay Element | Grade Basis | Possible Points | Earned Points |
| 1) Clearly identify theorist and source | Correctly identify the author and source | .5 | ?/0.5 |
| 2) Clearly describe the elements of the theory and its predictions / explanations | Content of description when compared to written material and class discussion | 1 | ?/1.0 |
| 3) Clearly render one or more scenes in the terms used by theory | As above, specific elements of a scene should be re-described via the theoretical terms. Up to two points can be earned here based on the number of scenes and how thoroughly / accurately the elements of the theory are mapped to the scene(s) | 1.5 | ?/1.5 |
| 4) Use the elements of 3) and the predictions / explanations of 2) together to explain a subsequent scene or events that follow | As with (3), this section will be graded on how well the description of the scene and the description of the theory can be used together to explain what happens next (or what is shown next…or what happens later in the scene, etc). More than one example can be used, so points will be gained on the thoroughness, accuracy, and breadth of the argument. | 1.5 | ?/1.5 |
| 5) Quality of the writing | Here an overall assessment of the clarity and organization of the essay are evaluated above and beyond the success in rubric elements (1)-(4). | 0.5 | ?/0.5 |
|  | **Total** | 5pts | ?/5.0 |

Students are encouraged to bring a laptop to class to complete the essay. Wireless will be shut off for the essay, but written notes and reading material are allowed. Student with access to a laptop should bring detachable notebook paper and pens for use. Please note, typed material is preferred.

The rubric for the Midterm and Final Book essays will follow a similar format, but the expectation will be that multiple theorists and multiple theories from the class material will be applied to multiple examples from the assigned books. A full assignment rubric will be circulated prior to the due dates.