SYLLABUS DRAFT

Sociology 355: Theory and Intensive Writing
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Fall 2014

Professor: Dr. Kazyak
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Course Meeting Time and Location: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2-3:15pm, 120 Burnett

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:
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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 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 October 7th. This exam will cover the readings and discussions from Part I and Part II of the course as well as the first day August 28th. Exam 1 is worth 20% of your overall grade. Your second exam will take place on November 18th. Exam 2 will cover the readings and discussions from Part III and Part IV of the course. Exam 2 is worth 25% of your overall grade. Exam 3 will take place during our final exam time: December 18th from 1-3pm. Exam 3 is worth 15% 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 (25%)
Exam 3 (15%)

TOTAL 100%

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.

August 26: Welcome and Introductions
August 28: What Is Sociological Theory?

Preface

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

September 2: Classical: Durkheim

Durkheim “The Division of Labor in Society”
Durkheim “The Elementary Forms of Religious Life”

September 4: Durkheim

Durkheim “The Rules of Sociological Method”

September 9: Classical: Martineau

*Readings posted on Blackboard
Martineau “Overview” (p. 31-39)
Martineau “How to Observe Morals and Manners”

September 11: Contemporary: Garfinkel

Garfinkel “Studies in Ethnomethodology”

September 16: Contemporary: Berger and Luckmann

Berger and Luckmann “The Social Construction of Reality”

Section II: Networks of Capital: Dimensions of Global Capitalism

September 18: Classical: Marx

Marx and Engels “The Manifesto of the Communist Party”
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September 23: Classical: Marx
Marx “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844”
Marx and Engels “German Ideology”

September 25: Classical: Addams
*Readings posted on Blackboard
Addams “Overview”
Addams “Settlement Labor Movement”

September 30: Contemporary: Bettie
Bettie “Women Without Class: Girls, Race, and Identity”

October 2: Contemporary: Bourdieu
Bourdieu “The Forms of Capital”

October 7: EXAM 1
Section III: Pathway to Meltdown: Theorizing the Dark Side of Modernity

October 9: Classical: Weber
Weber “Bureaucracy”

October 14: Classical: Weber
Weber “Basic Sociological Terms”
Weber “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”

October 16: Classical: Gilman
*Readings posted on Blackboard
Gilman “Overview”
Gilman “Women and Economics”

October 21: Fall Break
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October 23: Contemporary: Marcuse
Marcuse “One-Dimensional Man”

October 28: Contemporary: Foucault
Foucault “Discipline and Punish”

Section IV: Excluded Standpoints, Alternative Knowledges

October 30: Classical: Du Bois
Du Bois “The Souls of Black Folk”

November 4: Classical: Beauvoir
Beauvoir “The Second Sex”

November 6: Contemporary: Omi and Winant
Omi and Winant “Racial Formation in the United States”

November 11: Contemporary: Collins
Collins “Black Feminist Thought”

November 13: Contemporary: Queer Theory
*Readings posted on Blackboard
Seidman “Queer-Ing Sociology, Sociologizing Queer Theory: An Introduction.”
Fuss “Inside/Out”

November 18: EXAM 2

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

November 20: Classical: Mead
Mead “The Self”

November 25: Classical: Simmel
Simmel “The Metropolis and Mental Life”
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November 27: Thanksgiving Break

December 2: Contemporary: Goffman
Goffman “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life”

December 4: Contemporary: Bauman
Bauman “From Pilgrim to Tourist: or a Short History of Identity”

December 9: Course Reflections and Evaluations

December 11: Review Day

December 18: Exam 3
1-3pm