

SOC 3050
SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY
Section 001/501
CRN 17325/17401
0237 State Hall
Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:00 to 11:15

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Hours: Wednesdays 11:45-12:45, by appointment only

Description:

What is theory, why do we need it, what does it do? These are core questions everyone asks as they begin the journey of intellectual inquiry. Why do we need to know about theories that are so old, that do not seem to be current?

Second, we must ask, what does it mean to be a “sociologist” as a way of identifying ourselves and how we go about exploring and understanding society in all its micro- and macro-dimensions? What informs our “understanding” and the way we get to it?

To answer the first set of questions, we must consider that theory is a tool we use to construct a model of how society operates. Assessing patterns in society, theories are used a) to anticipate how society functions under different situations, and b) to provide a frame of reference from which to investigate social relationship (theories on a grand scale using large numbers in big places on one hand, or theories focusing on micro interactions of individuals in close interaction). In this course, we will focus on how to understand both the antecedents of contemporary theory and focus on the more macro aspects of social organization. Theory is important as we make implicit and explicit choices about what we study, how we collect data, and formulate the relationships or mechanisms constraining or promoting social actions and outcomes. Theories are implicit in all we do. By making an *a priori*, but theoretically informed, choice (whether we know it or not), we go about deciding what is “evidence” and then collect data to assess our assumptions (analysis of data is not the focus of this course).

This course is designed to reflect upon a range of core sociological theories that have driven the development of contemporary theories. Identifying traditions underlying contemporary theory helps us to adjudicate when we are faced with contradiction or oppositional explanations. Consider the following pair of statements:

- 1) You are poor because you are powerless.
- 2) You are powerless because you are poor.

One might ask “so what?” and assume this is just semantics; what difference does the order of these words make? Be prepared to discuss these two statements in class at our first

meeting. I'll ask you to argue about the statements' differences, and why those differences are important. Ask yourself, does theory help direct how we think about things?

Objectives:

By the end of the course, students will understand the role of theory in sociology; each student should be able to engage in structured weekly assessments that:

- define theory and describe its role in building sociological knowledge;
- compare and contrast basic theoretical orientations;
- show how theories reflect the historical context of the times and cultures in which they were developed; and
- describe and apply some basic theories or theoretical orientations in at least one area of social reality.

Required Texts:

All course readings will be available on CANVAS. There is no assigned text for this course, and because the reading material will be available throughout the semester, there will be no acceptable reason that you come to class unprepared for classroom discussion.

Course Organization

There is no way to avoid reading, lots of reading. Furthermore, there is no point in coming to the lectures unprepared. Each class will begin with a review of readings, posing and answering questions about the readings and discussing past lectures. Each class will be a discussion and an integration of the readings placed into the larger theoretical frame of the author being studied.

This is a theory course and you will be expected to read (I can't say this too often!). The weekly class discussions will be based on the required readings by the theorists (read in advance of the class meeting). Note: I have assigned only the excerpts by the core theorists. For a full understanding of the theoretical foundations of sociology you should read these theorists in their entirety. Required readings form the basis of our class discussion and your assignments throughout the semester.

I strongly recommend that you find a way of working in groups—how many in a group is a personal preference. Group discussions will help as you struggle with the weekly readings, and as you make your way through the final paper. Groups are useful throughout your career. However, make sure your work is your own.

Required Introduction

During the first week I want each of you to introduce yourselves and tell us all something about your interests on the discussion board. At the same time, explicitly state that **you have read the syllabus and you understand what is expected of you in this course.**

Grading

Your final grade is based on three factors: reading journals (30%), short answer midterm exams (40%), and a final (30%).

Reading Journals (30 points): You will be asked to write down your reactions and thoughts about the readings in 5 (five) periodic discussion boards (posting dates on the schedule

below) available from Sunday evening 8PM to Friday evening 5PM. These should be a critical engagement with the theorists covered—that means you are to elaborate on some aspect of the readings. There are two parts to each reading journal: 1) 200-300 words detailing which theoretical reading most attracted you, and 2) 200-300 words where you take a position relative to the theorists—do you agree or disagree, and why. You will get points simply for posting, provided you respond to the two parts (3 points each)— you may not get points if your comments are not thoughtful (I will discuss this in class).

Short Answer Exams (40 points): Taken online, the first is available October 8th at 8AM and end on October 10th at 5PM, the second on November 5th 8am due November 7th 5pm. These are short answer midterm exams, each exam worth 20 points, where you will have 90 minutes and be expected to provide a short response to a range of questions that will include defining basic concepts and providing reflections or interpretations on the ideas found for the three classical theorists.

Third Exam (30 points): We will wrap up the course and have a wide-ranging discussion and I will answer questions on December 5th. The third exam becomes available online at 8PM Monday December 10th and must be taken by 8PM Thursday December 13th. That means you have a 72-hours to answer 3 out of 4 questions (10 points each). The exam will be filled out on-line and you should provide a response between 500 and 1000 words for each exam question. A good answer can be written briefly, but if you find you are going on too long it usually means you are not sure of the response. [**NOTE: Honors students will need to answer all 4 questions**]

Grading Scheme for the third exam questions:

8-10 POINT answer consists of cogent, well-articulated, and well-developed written presentation, demonstrating insight, originality, and complexity in both form (e.g., language, expression, organization) and substance (e.g., logical argumentation, factual accuracy, and appropriate examples); critical thinking skills are amply demonstrated; sociological imagination is highly active; tasks are completed on time and according to the guidelines, often going “above and beyond”. This work is considered excellent.

6-8 POINT answer is thoughtful and developed, but may not be completely original, particularly insightful, or precise. While ideas might be clear, focused, and organized, they are less likely to be comprehensive. Critical thinking skills are satisfactory; sociological imagination is active. This work is considered good and shows originality.

4-6 POINT answer is reasonably competent, yet may be unclear, inconsistent, and minimally inadequate in form and/or content. Critical thinking skills are minimal; sociological imagination is weak. This work is considered mediocre and barely adequate.

<4 POINT work is not competent, appropriate, relevant, complete, and/or adequate in form and/or content, thereby not fully meeting more than the minimum requirements. Critical thinking skills are largely absent; and one’s sociological imagination is lacking. You will earn these points for at least turning in your essay.

WITHDRAWING DURING THE SEMESTER:

“WN/WP/WF” can only be given when you withdraw from the course by the deadline.

“WN” means no work was done at all during the semester—I encourage anyone not sure about the class to withdraw by the early date to get a refund. A “WP” is given when you have completed all work to date in a satisfactory manner but must withdraw from the course (everyone withdrawing will normally get this from me). “WF” is only given when you decide to withdraw but you have not made discussion posts, did not take the mid-term exam and were generally absent (this requires a “last attended” date).

Students must initiate all requests to withdraw, subject to the withdrawal deadlines.

COURSE GRADE

Your grade for the course will be a composite of your percentage performance on the four main portions of this course: 8 Discussion Posts for 48 points, 2 Examinations for 45 points and general discussion for 7 points.

Your final grade will be calculated on your overall points, as follows:

<u>Points</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Grade</u>
94 – 100	A	74 – 76	C+
90 – 93	A-	70 – 73	C
86 – 89	B+	66 – 70	C-
81 – 85	B	50 – 65	D
77 – 80	B-	Less than 50	F

ODDS and ENDS

- 1) Writing matters for several reasons. First, it is the way you communicate with the discipline; poor writing will never make it into print. If you have problems with writing there are support systems available to you at WSU (see <http://clas.wayne.edu/writing>). Second, it is not the reader’s responsibility to interpret what you meant; if it is not said coherently it is likely you will not convey your argument well. I will not grade down for poor writing on exams, just poor thinking.
- 2) FAQ on Plagiarism: The rules are clear: Nothing may be copied from books, articles, websites and other materials written by others UNLESS you give the author (creator) of the idea the credit.
 - * *What is plagiarism?* Plagiarism is copying words and ideas and passing them off as yours.
 - * *What constitutes copying?* Copying is writing down, word for word, something you read, written by someone else. Copying is stringing together bits and pieces from published sources to create a paragraph that reads as if you wrote it yourself.
 - * *When can a researcher copy?* Copying is allowed if you indicate you have copied the words and let us know where they came from.
 - * *What if I don’t copy the words, just the idea? Do I still need to reference the original work?* When you put someone else’s idea into your own words, you are paraphrasing the idea. You MUST reference the creator of the ideas.
 - * *What is the best way to reference where I got the idea?* There are many books on the subject. For this class, simply indicate the source (likely the text) and page numbers, if you get ideas from any handouts or notes I may provide.

** If everything I write is taken from something I have read, won't I have a reference after every sentence? Yes. This is good. It demonstrates you understand the rules. It also demonstrates that you have not done much original thinking.*

Departmental, College and University rules and requirements on plagiarism and falsification of work will apply. They outline your rights and responsibilities. **Failure to acknowledge the source of one's ideas, or to indicate paraphrases, ideas, or verbatim expressions not one's own through proper use of quotations and footnotes constitutes plagiarism (intentional or otherwise), is a form of academic dishonesty.** This may result in a failing grade for the assignment or course.

- 3) In my experience, you will learn more from each other than you will just from my lectures. As a result, I encourage and facilitate the formation of study and reading groups. Use the group to discuss readings, get reactions to what you are writing, and help formulate your questions for me.
- 4) **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A BAD OR INAPPROPRIATE QUESTION!** If you have a question and do not ask, I cannot know you are confused. If you are uncertain about any question, ask it—if I think it should be addressed outside of class I will tell you. Perhaps not so obvious, it is hard to ask questions if you don't read the material beforehand.
- 5) All reading should be completed *prior* to the corresponding class meeting for maximum benefit and the best use of our time in class. It is much harder, after the fact, to read the material and, on your own, figure out what is going on. I do not repeat lectures. Come to class prepared. And consider that most things require two readings—the first time to get a general sense of what was being presented, the second time after discussion to more fully comprehend the material.
- 6) At the end of the day, this course is guided by the idea that theory is a tool, much like your methods and statistics courses. Therefore, it is up to you to learn how to use the tool wisely and when to apply it. This course is an introduction to theory and consequently somewhat of a survey course...it is now up to you to pursue your studies in other courses.

IMPORTANT DATES

September 12:	Last Day to Drop with Full Tuition Refund
September 26:	Last Day to Drop without Permission, Tuition Charged
September 28:	Degree Applications Due if Graduating this Semester
October 8-10:	First Exam
November 5-7:	Second Exam
November 11:	Last Day to Withdraw from Course with Permission
December 10-13:	Third Exam

REVISED FALL 2018 SOC3050 COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK	TOPIC	READING
Aug 29	INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE Learn to use CANVAS	
Sept 5	FOUNDATIONS OF THEORY IN SOCIETY (Discussion of the film https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4rnJEdDNDsl)	
Sept 10, 12	1. Karl Marx	Chapter 1 from <i>Capital</i> Vol I found on Canvas
Sept 17, 19	2. Karl Marx and Durkheim	
Sept 24, 26 Journal #1	3. Emile Durkheim and Weber	Chapter 1 from <i>Professional Ethics and Civic Morals</i> found on Canvas
Oct 1, 3	4. Max Weber	Chapter 1 from <i>Economy and Society</i> found on Canvas
Oct 8, 10	EXAM I <i>AVAILABLE 8AM TUESDAY OCT 9, DUE 5PM THURSDAY OCT 11</i>	
Oct 15, 17	5. Charlotte Perkins Gilman	As found on CANVAS
Oct 22, 24	6. Gilman/Du Bois	As found on CANVAS
Oct 29 Journal #2	7. W E B Du Bois	October 31 (Weds) Group Meeting
Nov 5, 7	EXAM II <i>AVAILABLE 8AM TUESDAY NOV 6, DUE 5PM FRIDAY NOV 9</i>	
Nov 12, 14	8. Franz Fanon	As found on CANVAS
Nov 19 Journal #3	9. Franz Fanon	THANKSGIVING BREAK
Nov 26	10. Critical Race Theory	November 28 (Weds) Group Meeting
Dec 3 Journal #4	What does it all mean?	As found on CANVAS
Dec 10	EXAM III <i>AVAILABLE 8PM MONDAY DEC 10, DUE 8PM THURSDAY DEC 13</i>	