Course Syllabus **Sociology 7050 (Comparative Schools of Sociological Theory)** Winter 2020

Course: Sociology 7050 (Comparative Schools of Sociological Theory)

Class Meets: Monday 5:00– 7:30pm in room 0055 Manoogian Hall

Dr. Zachary W. Brewster

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 E-mail: zbrewster@wayne.edu (Best way to contact me)

**Office Hours**: M/W: 1:00 – 4:00pm or by appointment. I am on campus Monday through Friday. Even if you plan to stop by during my office hours please email me to confirm my availability.

Required Books:

1. Calhoun, Craig, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk (eds). 2012. *Contemporary Sociological Theory* (3rd ed.). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
2. Goffman, Erving. 1959. *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Harmondsworth.
3. Berger, Peter and Thomas Luckman. 1967. The Social Construction of Reality. Penguin Publishing.
4. Domhoff, William G. et al. 2017. *Studying the Power Elite: Fifty Years of Who Rules America*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge Publishing.
5. Haidt, Jonathan. 2012. *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion*. Vintage Press.

Additional readings will be required and made available on Canvas.

**Course Description**

This graduate level course is intended to introduce and/or further develop students’ knowledge of contemporary sociological theory (e.g., post 1920). To actively engage with and think effectively about empirical patterns, or social facts, students must be able to formulate coherent explanatory frameworks. Towards this end, this course will examine the progression of sociological theory of the 20th century. By studying the writings of contemporary social theorists—e.g., Parsons, Merton, Goffman, Homans, Foucault, Bourdieu, Habermas, just to name a few —this course will introduce students to the major traditions of thought (e.g., structural functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, exchange theory, etc.) that have and continue to guide sociological inquiry and the production of sociological knowledge. In short, this course is designed to further develop a set of theoretical tools that students may draw from to understand and empirically examine the social world.

**Learning Outcomes**

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Define theory and describe its role in building sociological knowledge.
2. Compare and contrast basic theoretical assumptions underpinning the work of contemporary social theorists.
3. Show how contemporary theories were shaped by and stem from classical paradigms or schools of thought.
4. Draw distinctions between paradigms, contemporary theories, and concepts.
5. Identify and intellectually discuss the genesis and central assumptions of the various contemporary schools of thought, including functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.
6. Identify and intellectually discuss the contributions of central theoretical figures within the various schools of thought.
7. Recognize how contemporary social theory contributes to analysis of social problems, social change, and social organization.
8. Recognize how empirical research, more generally, is informed by contemporary theoretical ideas and propositions.
9. Identify their own theoretical orientation and intellectually defend it utilizing empirical evidence but also acknowledge and appreciate the merits of other perspectives.

**Expectations**

My expectations of you in this course are commensurate to the degree that you are pursuing. In short, I assume by virtue of your decision to pursue a graduate degree that you want to **read extensively**, write extensively, think extensively, and engage in intellectual discussions (wait for it), extensively. To the degree that my assumptions are correct I can guarantee that you will experience a considerable amount of intellectual growth while taking this course. In the event that my assumptions are incorrect I would suggest reassessing the reasons why you decided to go to graduate school.

**Course Policies**

The following is a description of course policies that are designed and implemented to ensure a quality learning environment. As your professor, my responsibility is to create an environment where students can learn, but it is also the students’ responsibility to respect the policies. Therefore, I take the course policies seriously and I expect that students will abide by them.

*Classroom etiquette and Academic Integrity*

All expressions of ideas are welcome assuming that these expressions are not uncivil to your classmates. Harassment of any nature will not be tolerated. Students are also expected to maintain academic integrity and therefore, cheating of any sort may result in failure of this course. For additional information on academic integrity and related issues refer to the Student Conduct Services homepage (<http://www.doso.wayne.edu/student-conduct/index.html>). Remember, ignorance is not a viable defense against allegations of student conduct violations.

*Assignments*

I expect you to complete and submit all course assignments on the designated due dates. If there is a legitimate reason that you are unable to do so you should contact me immediately to request an extension. If your request is granted a set of accompanying conditions will be outlined, discussed, and agreed upon (e.g., duration of extension, potential late penalty, etc. etc.). If the student fails to meet these conditions it is unlikely that I will accept the assignment for credit. **Nevertheless, please note that all assignments in this course must be completed in order to receive a passing grade.** All course requirements will be assessed using the following generic rubric:

**“A” level work** consists of cogent, well-articulated, and well-developed written presentation, demonstrating exceptional understanding, preparation, insight, originality, logical argumentation, and factual accuracy. “A” work is completed on time and according to the guidelines. “A” work is considered excellent.

**“A-“ level work** consists of cogent, well-articulated, and well-developed written presentation, demonstrating very good understanding, preparation, insight, originality, logical argumentation, and factual accuracy. “A-” work is completed on time and according to the guidelines. “A-” work is considered very good.

**“B+” level work** consists of well-written work that demonstrates an acceptable understanding, preparation, insight, originality, logical argumentation, and factual accuracy. “B+” work is acceptable graduate level work, but only shows a basic grasp of concepts and ideas and with only satisfactory levels of communication.

**“B” level work** consists of work that reflects a minimally adequate understanding, preparation, insight, originality, logical argumentation, and factual accuracy. “B” work is considered mediocre and is the lowest passing grade in the course.

**“B-” level work** is not adequate in either form or content, thereby not fully meeting the minimum requirements. “B-” work is not passing at the graduate level. Thus, a final grade of “B-” will require you to retake this course.

**“C” level work** shows the barest understanding of the subject or task assigned, is poorly written, and fails to make a coherent argument. A final grade of “C” may lead you to be removed from the graduate program.

*Attendance*

This is a graduate level course and as such I assume attendance problems will not be an issue. Missing classes will inevitably be reflected in your final course grade. Excessive tardiness and leaving class early will likewise make it difficult for you to do well in this course. If you have a problem with getting to class on time or having to leave early, please see me as soon as possible. You are all adults and are capable of making the decision to attend class. In cases in which you cannot attend class you are responsible for obtaining missed information from a classmate (if you are sick, stay home and get better but **I do not need to see doctors’ notes** if this is the case). I will not provide students with my lecture notes nor will I reiterate lectures and class discussions for individual students. In the case of an emergency, where excessive absences result, please contact me as soon as possible. In the event that you foresee life requiring you to miss more than two classes, I recommend that you drop the course. I also recommend that you drop the course if you find yourself in a situation where life is impeding you from completing the course requirements on schedule. If such a situation materializes and you choose not to drop the course please know that in most cases an “incomplete” will not be granted rather you will be assigned the grade that you have earned. I also do not give students a mercy “B” because a student has tried hard but had issues arise that impeded them from being successful.

*Students with Disabilities*

Wayne State University is working to build a community that is inclusive and welcoming to all people, including those with disabilities. If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Disability Services (SDS) office is located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department. SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-577-3365 (TDD only). Once you have your accommodations in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your special needs. Please DO NOT request accommodations directly from me without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.

Student Disability Services’ mission is to assist the university in creating an accessible community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in their educational experience at Wayne State University. Please refer to the SDS website for further information about students with disabilities and the services we provide for faculty and students: <http://studentdisability.wayne.edu/>

*Course Withdrawals and Incompletes*

Incompletes will only be given in the rare event of a major medical or other verifiable event that preclude a student from completing the final portion of the course (e.g., final paper). Incompletes are not given simply because students desire more time to finish the course requirements. In the event that a student is not doing well in this course, they should consult with me and discuss the possibility of withdrawing from the course.

*“Failing” Grades for Graduate Students*

If sociology students receive a B- or lower as their final grade, this is a “failing” grade for a required graduate level course. Thus, if students receive a B- or lower, they must take the course over again in order to receive credit for Sociology 7050. To take a course over a second time, students must formally apply to do so with the Graduate School at Wayne State.

*Changes to the syllabus*

I reserve the right to make adjustments to this syllabus throughout the course if I deem it necessary. However, the syllabus is, in my opinion, a social contract between the instructor and her/his students. As such, I assure you that any alterations to the syllabus that I might make after the semester has started will not result in a notable increase in students’ workload.

**Course Requirements**

1. *Weekly Preparation and Participation (33% of your final grade)*

This course will be facilitated as a seminar centered on contemporary social theory. A seminar by definition is a relatively small group of students who are intellectually advanced and who meet regularly with a faculty member to exchange ideas and actively discuss the current state of knowledge within any particular area. This style of learning can be intellectually rewarding and is the convention in graduate school. However, you should recognize that in a seminar the responsibility for teaching is shared equally among all of the participants. In other words, I will do very little lecturing in this course but will rather contribute to class discussions alongside each of you. As you should see, the success of the course is thus contingent on each of you attending class, reading the assigned readings before we discuss them in class, and contributing to class discussions. To facilitate the success of this graduate seminar you are required to complete each week’s readings before class begins. Importantly, you are also required to submit a 3-4 page document demonstrating your engagement with each week’s readings. In each weekly write-up you should concisely identify, discuss, and reflect upon the key ideas/concepts that you think are of theoretical import in the weekly set of readings. In your write-up you should aim to identify common themes across readings, points of divergence, and areas ripe for theoretical elaboration/extension. **At the end of each week’s write-up you should specify at least two discussion questions.** As you prepare your weekly write-ups be sure to cite specific passages/pages wherein key ideas/concepts are discussed. Finally, it is expected that you will contribute to each week’s seminar. In short, to earn full credit for weekly preparation and participation you must 1) read the material before class, 2) submit a short (3-4 pages) but thoughtful write-up wherein you actively engage each week’s readings, and 3) contribute to each week’s class discussion.

On two occasions you can choose, without penalty, to opt out of completing the weekly write-up but you still must read the material and come to class prepared to discuss the readings. All weekly write-ups should be submitted on Canvas prior to the beginning of each class session. Be sure that you have access to your discussion questions, if not your whole write-up, during class so that they can be consulted. In the event that you have completed your weekly write-up and life precludes you from attending class that week you can still receive credit for doing so as long as it is submitted on Canvas prior to the class that you were unable to attend.

*2. Mid-term Exam (33% of final grade)*

There will be a take-home midterm exam that will require you to answer essay questions that center on the work of the contemporary social theorists covered in the first 2/3rds of the course. This exam will be described in detail in class and will be submitted on Canvas.

3. Theory Paper (33% of final grade)

As is typical in graduate level courses you are required to produce a final product at the end of the semester. This product will take the form of a “theory paper” and should be between 15 and 20 double spaced pages. As an independent scholar in training you will have considerable leeway in developing your theory paper. However, you must produce a coherent line of argumentation that draws from, elaborates on, and/or integrates the ideas/concepts found in the work of the contemporary theorists discussed in this class. In short, contemporary theory must be an integral component of your paper regardless of the approach that you take and must include at least 15 secondary (e.g., peer reviewed articles) sources. Some approaches that you might consider include:

1. A Backward Approach: outline the development of a contemporary theorist’s line of thought. On the shoulders of what giants did the theorist’s stand? How did the ideas of a contemporary theorist’s develop over the course of his/her life? What is the intellectual history of key contemporary ideas or concepts? (e.g., Marxism versus neo-Marxism; Durkheim versus Parsons; Durkheim versus Foucault on education).
2. A comparative Approach: What are the conceptual similarities between two or more different theorists or contemporary lines of thought? What are the major points of contention in the thinking of two or more theorists or assumptions underpinning different theoretical traditions or approaches?
3. A Downstream Approach: Trace the work of a contemporary theorists or line of thought to the subsequent development of an empirical literature that has tested and elaborated on the original ideas, concepts, etc.
4. A Critical Approach: outline the conceptual contradictions or weaknesses inherent in in the work one or more contemporary theorists and offer insights into how such contradictions/weakness might be resolved.
5. An Application Approach: Elaborate on how contemporary theoretical ideas/concepts have influenced current applied sociological scholarship.

You should submit a short proposal on Canvas for a paper idea (2 pages) no later than February 10th.

Grading Scale

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| 90-100% A | 80-89% B | 70-79% C | 60-69% D | Below 60% F |

**Tentative Schedule** (Tentative meaning that this is not sketched in stone and can be altered according to class interest, time constraints, and other unforeseen events.)

**Week 1 (January 6th):**

1. Syllabus—Introduction to the Course and Course Requirements

**Week 2 (January 13th):** Critical Theory and Structural Functionalism (This week’s readings are posted on Canvas)

Critical Theory and Sociology of Knowledge

1. Introduction to Part VII (pp. 421 – 424)
2. Traditional and Critical Theory—Max Horkheimer (pp. 425 – 440)
3. The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction—Walter Benjamin (pp. 441 – 464)
4. The Culture Industry—Max Horkheimer and Theordor Adorno (pp. 465 – 477)
5. One-Dimensional Man—Herbert Marcuse (pp. 478 – 486)

Structural Functionalism

1. Introduction to Part VIII (pp. 489 – 494)
2. The Position of Sociological Theory—Talcott Parsons (pp. 495 – 501)
3. An Outline of the Social System—Talcott Parsons (pp. 502 – 522)
4. Manifest and Latent Functions—Robert Merton (pp. 523 – 530)
5. On Sociological Theories of the Middle Range—Merton (pp. 531 – 542)

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**Week 3 (January 20th): No Classes in Honor of Martin Luther King Day**

**Week 4 (January 27th):** Micro-Sociological Analysis I

1. Introduction to Contemporary Sociological Theory (pp. 1 – 24)
2. Introduction to Part I (pp. 25 – 34)
3. The Phenomenology of the Social World—Alfred Schutz (pp. 35- 45)
4. The Social Construction of Reality—Berger and Luckmann (Whole book)

**Week 5 (February 3rd):** Micro-Sociological Analysis II

1. Presentation of Self in Everyday Life—Erving Goffman (whole book)
2. Symbolic Interactionism—Herbert Blumer (pp. 62 – 74)
3. Interactional Ritual Chains—Randall Collins (pp. 75 – 90)

**Week 6 (February 10th):** Exchange, Rationality, Institutions and Networks

Exchange and Rationality

1. Introduction to Part II (pp. 93 – 99)
2. Social Behavior as Exchange—George Homans (pp. 100 – 111)
3. Exchange and Power—Peter Blau (pp. 112 – 123)
4. The Logic of Collective Action—Mancur Olson (pp. 124 – 128)
5. A Theory of Group Solidarity—Machael Hechter (pp. 129 – 141)
6. Cooperation without Law or Trust—Cook et al. (pp. 142 – 156)

Institutions and Networks

1. Introduction to Part III (pp. 159 – 164)
2. Economic Embeddedness—Mark Granovetter (pp. 165 – 174)
3. The Iron Cage Revisited—Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell (pp. 175 – 192)
4. Catnets—Harrison White (pp. 193 – 203)
5. Structural Holes—Ronald Burt (pp. 203 – 220)

**2- 3 Page Paper Proposal Due**

**Week 7 (February 17th):** Power Elite

1. Introduction to Part IV (pp. 223 – 228)
2. Power Elite—C. Wright Mills (pp. 229 – 236)
3. Fifty Years of Who Rules America—Domhoff (whole book)

**Week 8 (February 24th):** Power and Inequality / Race, Gender, and Difference

1. On Hegemony—Antonio Gramsci (pp. 237 – 250)
2. Coercion, Capital, and European States—Charles Tilly (pp. 251 – 265)
3. Power: A Radical View—Steven Lukes (pp. 266 – 276)
4. State, Society, and Modern History—Anthony Giddens (pp. 277 – 286)
5. Introduction to Part VII (pp. 389 – 397)
6. Conceptual Practices of Power—Dorothy Smith (pp. 398 – 406)
7. Black Feminist Epistemology—Patricia Hill Collins (pp. 407 - 416)
8. Black Skin, White Masks—Frantz Fanon (pp. 417 – 425)
9. The Paradoxes of Integration—Orlando Patterson (pp. 426 – 434)

**Week 9 (March 9th):** No Class Spring Break, No Class

**Week 10 (March 16th):** Sociological Theories of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu

Michel Foucault

1. Introduction to Part V (pp. 289 – 294)
2. The History of Sexuality (pp. 295 – 304)
3. Truth and Power (pp. 305 – 313)
4. Discipline and Punish (pp. 314 – 322)

Pierre Bourdieu

1. Introduction to Part VI (pp. 325 – 334)
2. Social Space and Symbolic Space (pp. 335 – 344)
3. Structures, Habitus, Practices (pp. 345 – 358)
4. The Field of Cultural Production (pp. 359 – 374)
5. Rethinking the State (pp. 375 – 386)

**Week 11: (March 23rd):** Exam 1, No Class

**Week 12: (March 30th):** The Sociological Theory of Jurgen Habermas and Modernity

Jurgen Habermas

1. Introduction to Part VIII (pp. 437 – 443)
2. Modernity: An Unfinished Project (pp. 444 – 450)
3. The Rationalization of the Lifeworld (pp. 451 – 468)
4. Civil Society and the Political Publish Sphere (pp. 469 – 490)

Modernity

1. Introduction to Part IX (pp. 493 – 498)
2. The Social Constraint Towards Self-Constraint—Nobert Elias (pp. 499 – 509)
3. Modernity and the Holocaust—Zygmunt Bauman (pp. 510 – 530)
4. The Consequences of Modernity—Anthony Giddens (pp. 531 – 545)
5. We Have Never Been Modern—Bruno Latour (pp. 546 – 560)

**Week 13 (April 6th):** The Sociological Theory of Jonathan Haidt

1. The Righteous Mind (Introduction, Parts I and II)

**Week 14 (April 13th):** The Sociological Theory of Jonathan Haidt

1. The Righteous Mind (Part III and Conclusion)

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**Week 15 (April 20th):** Flex week, wrap up loose ends, evaluations, etc.

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**Week 16 (April 25th)–** Final Papers are Due

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**Important Dates**

* Class Begins: Jan 06, 2020
* Last day to drop with 100% tuition cancellation: Jan 17th
* Degree Applications Due—Friday, February 7th
* Spring break—March 9th – 15th
* Last day to withdraw: Mar 22nd
* Class Ends: Apr 28, 2020
* Final Exams— April 22nd – 28th

**Have a great semester and work hard!!!!! \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**