

Sociology 4344.03: Sociological Theory (3 Credit Hours)
Fall 2017: Monday and Wednesday, 11:00-12:20, CHSS 210
Syllabus is posted on blackboard

Instructor: Dr. Jason Konefal

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 12:30-2:00 and by appointment

Course Description

This course will examine both classical and contemporary ways of understanding society and its parts. We will study theories that are concerned with societies as a whole, as well as theories focused on institutions (i.e., government, economy, science, religion), social phenomena (race, class, and gender), and questions of power, culture, identity and knowledge. Additionally, we will examine the implications that different social theories have for individuals and social groups.

This course is designed to expose students to an array of different theories and ways of understanding the world in which they live. At times it may confirm your perspective, and at other times it may challenge your understanding of many things that you take for granted. The goal is to both deepen your sociological imagination, as well as broaden your knowledge and understanding of the world in which you live.

Many students may wonder why they have to take this course or the relevance of the classical theories in today's world. Thus, a key objective of this course is to demonstrate (1) the relevance of social theory today, and (2) the ways that both classical and contemporary social theories undergird current political and economic policies, cultural debates, and social conflicts. To accomplish this, we will continually apply the theories that we examine to political, economic, social, and cultural issues.

Students are not expected to come out of this course with an in-depth knowledge of social theory from its inception to present day. Rather, students are expected to develop an understanding of the different theories, their key arguments, positions, main concepts, and how they apply to today's world.

Course Objectives

- To develop an understanding of classical and contemporary social theories.
- To understand the relevancy of social theory today and how it undergirds political, economic, and cultural debates and policies.
- To incorporate ideas and insights from social theory into one's everyday thinking.
- To learn to articulate and defend one's perspectives through both speech and writing.

Class Structure

I believe students learn best when they have the opportunity to actively participate in the learning process. For me, learning entails understanding, translating, and engaging with the material and with each other. Thus, this class will use a cooperative learning approach. This means that this class will be organized in ways that encourages participation and student interaction. To accomplish this, the class will be interactive. This means that we will have discussion, I will pose questions, and we will do some exercises. Also, students are encouraged to speak up if they have something to share or need further clarification. Ideally, we will spend our class time having a discussion of the readings and materials. Please note that students will always be required to treat others with respect and never devalue or in any way “put down” others for their different opinions or experiences.

Many of the readings for this class are quite difficult. They are complex, sometimes written in ways that we are not used to today, and can be quite abstract. Thus, there are times where I will lecture to clarify difficult sections in the readings and facilitate discussion.

Classroom Policies

1. You are expected to attend class, show up on time, and stay for the entire class (entering the classroom late or leaving early is distracting to your fellow students).
2. You are responsible for all the materials covered in class. This includes readings, lectures, movies, and in-class discussions. If you miss a class, you are responsible for getting the material.
3. You are expected to complete the assigned readings on time.

Assignments and Grading

Exams: 70%

There will be three exams. Each exam will be made up of essay questions. The exams will include reading and in-class materials (lectures, discussions, and films). Exams are not cumulative. Make-up exams will only be offered with an excused absence and must be taken within 1 week of the scheduled exam.

- All exams will be taken in class.
- You will receive review sheets for each exam.
- Exam 1 is worth 20%; Exam 2 and 3 are worth 25%.

Reaction Papers: 25%

At the end of select theories an analytical question will be given. The question will require you to analyze and/or apply the readings discussed in class. You will need to complete 8 out of 10 papers. Answers should be approximately 1.5-2 double spaced pages. Papers are to be turned in by the assigned date by midnight (all papers except one are due on Sunday, see schedule below) using Turnitin in the blackboard site for the class. Papers will be graded out of 100 points. Papers turned in 1 day late will have 10 points deducted and papers turned in 2 days late will have 20 points deducted. Papers will not be accepted 48 hours after the due date.

Quizzes: 5%

Throughout the semester there will be a series of quizzes. Quizzes will be unannounced and will be given at the beginning of class. They will consist of questions based directly on the readings

that will require short written answers. Quizzes will be graded on the following 1-3 scale: 3 is exceptional, 2 full credit, and 1 incorrect answer but partial credit for attending class.

Extra Credit

For each exam up to 10 extra credit points can be earned. For selected weeks of the course there are films that accompany the readings. To earn extra credit, you will need to watch the film and analyze it using the noted social theories. The papers should not be a summary of the film, but a critical analysis using relevant social theories. Papers should be 2-3 pages double-spaced and all references should be cited. You can due up to two for each exam, with each paper worth a maximum of 5 points. Papers must be turned in before the exam date (No papers will be accepted after the exam). There will be a folder on blackboard for turning in extra credit papers. Please note if you are caught plagiarizing an extra credit assignment you will not get any extra credit for the course. This means that if you have completed extra credits they will become zeros.

Grading Scale

100-90 = A

89-80 = B

79-70 = C

69-60 = D

59-0 = F

University Policies

University Code of Conduct

Please see: <https://netreg.shsu.edu/mirror/codeofconduct.html>

Academic Dishonesty

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. Students who participate in academically dishonest activities should be aware that they will receive an F for the course **at the minimum**. For more information, please see <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/728eec25-f780-4dcf-932c-03d68cade002.pdf>

Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic

performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail disability@shsu.edu). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

- If you have a disability please come talk with me and notify the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities at the beginning semester so that appropriate accommodations can be made.

For more information on Sam Houston State's policy on students with disabilities, please see <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/9edd8433-cad5-40d1-b4bf-6a91b08f90e4.pdf>

Religious Holidays

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: "a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20...." A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For more information, please see <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/0953c7d0-7c04-4b29-a3fc-3bf0738e87d8.pdf>

Visitors in the Classroom

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

Instructor Evaluations

Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor form toward the end of the semester.

Text

Farganis, James. *Readings in Social Theory: The Classical Tradition to Post-Modernism*. 7th edition. New York: McGraw Hill. (Represented by a F on the syllabus)

Blackboard. There are several readings on blackboard as PDFs. (Represented by a B on the syllabus).

Course Schedule

***Reading is to be completed by date listed**

Week 1

August 23: Introduction: What is Social Theory and Why is it Important

Week 2

August 28: F: Marx and Engels: *The Manifesto of the Communist Part*, 31-42
F: Marx and Engels: *The German Ideology*, 50-54
B: Marx: *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 7 pages

August 30: F: Marx: *The Fetishism of Commodities*, p. 43-50
B: *Working Longer, Living Less*, 5-31
Marx EC Movies: *Modern Times*, *Silkwood*

***Paper 1 is due September 3**

Week 3

September 4: Labor Day: No Class

September 6: F: Durkheim: "The Rules of Sociological Method," p. 58-63
F: Durkheim: "Egotistic Suicide and Anomic Society," p. 64-72

Week 4

September 11: B: Durkheim on Mechanical and Organic Solidarity
B: "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?"
Durkheim EC Movies: *The Gods Must be Crazy*, *Pleasantville*

September 13: F: Weber: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 85-88
F: Weber: "Bureaucracy," p. 89-99

***Paper 2 is September 17**

Week 5

September 18: F: Weber: "Power, Domination, and Types of Authority," p. 100-108
B: Ritzer: "McDonaldization," 17 pages
Weber EC Movies: *Brazil*, *Metropolitan*

September 20: EXAM 1

Paper 3 is due September 24

Week 6

September 25: Functionalism

F: Davis and Moore: "Some Principles of Stratification," p. 143-50

F: Merton: "Manifest and Latent Functions," p. 161-178

September 27: Conflict Theory

F: Dahrendorf: "Social Structure, Group Interests, and Conflict Groups," p. 181-188

F: Mills: "The Structure of Power in America," p. 189-197

F: Zweigenhaft and Domhoff: "The Ironies of Diversity," p. 198-216

Conflict EC Movies: *The Milagro Beanfield War*, *Braveheart*, *Chinatown*, *The Last King of Scotland*

***Paper 4 is due October 1**

Week 7

October 2: Exchange Theory and Social Capital

F: Blau: "The Structure of Social Associations," p. 219-231

B: Putnam: "Declining Civil Engagement," 10 pages

***Paper 5 is due October 3**

October 4: Phenomenological Sociology

F: Berger: *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 248-260

Ethnomethodology

F: Garfinkel: "Studies in the Routine Grounds of Everyday Activities," p. 261-270

Week 8

October 9: Symbolic Interaction

F: Mead: *Mind, Self, and Society*, p. 126-138

F: Blumer: *Society as Symbolic Interaction*, p. 274-280

October 11: Symbolic Interaction

F: Goffman: *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p. 281-289

EC Movies (For Phenomenology and Symbolic Interaction): *Borat*, *Boyz n the Hood*, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, *Lost in Translation*

***Paper 6 is due October 15**

Week 9

October 16: Polanyi: The Great Transformation

B: Polanyi, p. 33-76

October 18: EXAM 2

Week 10

October 23: Theories of Power

B: Lukes: *Power: A Radical View*, p. 11-57

EC Movies: *V for Vendetta*

October 25: Critical Theory

F: Marcuse: *One-Dimensional Man*, p. 309-321

B: Atwood, M: "Are Humans Necessary?"

EC Movies: *Wall-E*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *Her*

***Paper 7 is due October 29**

Week 11

October 30: Critical Theory

B: Chapter 7: "Critical Theory, Legitimation Crisis, and the Deindustrialization of Flint, Michigan," 39 pages

November 1: Bourdieu

B: Bourdieu, *A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, p. 1-63

EC Movies: *Gosford Park*, *The Talented Mr. Ripley*

***Paper 8 is due November 5**

Week 12

November 6: Foucault

B: Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 3-31, 135-140, 195-230

November 8: Foucault Continued

EC Movies: *1984*, *The Truman Show*, *The Virgin Suicides*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

***Paper 9 is due on November 12**

Week 13

November 13: Feminist Theory

F: Smith: "Women's Experience as a Radical Critique of Sociology," p. 363-371

F: West and Zimmerman: *Doing Gender*, p. 384-392

EC Movies: *Tootsie*, *All About My Mother*, *Mr. Mom*, *Frida*, *Nine to Five*, *Private Benjamin*, *Thelma and Louise*, *The Whale Rider*, *Boys Don't Cry*, *A League of Their Own*, *Billy Elliot*, *Transamerica*, *Normal*

November 15: Post-Modernism

B: Best and Kellner, p. 1-5

B: Best and Kellner, p. 111-126

Week 14

November 20: Post-Modernism Continued

B: Bauman: "From Pilgrim to Tourist: or a short history of Identity."

B: Sales: "Tinder and the Dawn of the 'Dating Apocalypse'"

EC Movies Postmodernism: *Matrix, Scary Movie, Stepford Wives, Bladerunner, Her*

November 22: No Class

***Paper 10 is due on November 26**

Week 15

November 27: Globalization

B: Castells, "Materials for an Exploratory Theory of Network Society," 16 pages

EC Movies: *The Constant Gardener, El Norte, Slumdog Millionaire*

November 29: EXAM 3

*This syllabus is subject to modification.