

# SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY 300

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**OFFICE HOURS: MWF 9:00-9:30**  
**MF 3:00-4:00**  
**OTHER TIMES BY APPOINTMENT**

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The theoretical understanding of society is one of the major contributions of sociology to the social sciences. This course is designed to introduce students to several important theorists and theoretical traditions in sociology. The relevance of sociological thought for present issues and concerns is examined as we apply some of the theorists' sociological insights to analyses and interpretations of social structure and social phenomena as they affect human behavior and social change. One of the aims of the course is to cultivate a critical understanding of key issues and debates, strengths and limitations, basic assumptions and ideological underpinnings associated with several dominant thinks and orientations in the field of sociology.

Sociological analysis can be undertaken within a number of theoretical perspectives which are merely ways of looking at phenomena. Each theoretical orientation begins with a different set of assumptions and each asks essentially different questions. The advantages, limitations, and contributions of these theories to the sociological take of explaining human social behavior are examined.

The students will become acquainted with the sociological theories of a selected group of thinkers whose contributions have had lasting value and still influence the intellectual imagination of sociologists today. The first part of the course focuses on the classical foundations of sociological theory. The main features of the social theories of Comte, Marx, Durkheim, Weber, are identified and explained.

The second and third parts deal with aspects of twentieth century sociology, including theoretical contributions by Merton, Parsons, Mead, Homans, Spitzer, Goffman, Lerner, Blumer, Coser, and Habermas. The development of contemporary sociological thought is traced from early American sociology, to Structural Functionalism, Symbolic Interactionism, Conflict sociology, Feminist Sociology (including gender inequality, gender oppression, and the feminist sociology of knowledge), to some more recent developments such as Foucault and Bourdieu.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **TEXT**

**Sociological Theory** by George Ritzer, 2007 (Seventh Edition)

Relevant articles from sociology journals will be used as additional reading materials. These will be distributed in class by the instructor.

The main format used in this class will be lecture-discussion. In my lectures I will provide a considerable amount of material not included in the readings. It is important to keep up with the

lectures, readings, and class discussions. Regular attendance and having read and thought about each reading before coming to class is expected. There usually is an important link between your participation in class and what you will get out of your studies. Of course, as students will express their thoughts, questions, and concerns, we shall all be courteous and respectful of each other's views and opinions. **YES, CLASS ATTENDANCE IS EXPECTED.**

### **EXAMS**

There will be three examinations, including brief essays and brief answers. The exams will cover the material in the lectures, readings, and class discussions. Note: Each Exam will provide choices.

### **PAPER REQUIREMENTS**

The term paper is an opportunity for you to integrate material from the lectures, assigned readings, and relevant journal articles. Thus, you should be working on this throughout the term.

This paper will examine social thought in the context of a current social issue that interests the student. This assignment will help him/her develop a more thorough understanding of a contemporary issue in light of both past and present sociological theory.

Materials covered during the first few classes should be helping in providing the basis for the selection of a topic for the paper. Additional details and handouts concerning this assignment will be provided in the near future. The instructor will give examples of the type of paper required, and will work with students individually in order to assist in the development of this project.

In determining the topic for the paper the student may start by selecting a social issue and matching the selection with a social theorist. For example, if the subject of suicide is chosen, Durkheim's classic on suicide would be an appropriate major source for the paper. Next, the student will search through contemporary research articles (published in sociology journals) dealing with this topic, and choose several (at least 4) relevant articles. The student will then explore some aspects of the topic chosen evaluating both the theoretical and empirical approaches to the topic. (The paper should be about seven pages)

### **YOUR PAPER WILL HAVE**

- Title Page (Title of paper, author name, course name/section, date)
- Introduction (Statement of problem/issues, map of the direction of the paper)
- Body (Literature review, analysis, evaluation)
- Conclusion (What is the consensus regarding this topic, recommendations)
- Bibliography (Lists the articles from which you referenced ideas)
- Be certain to cite any ideas that are not exclusively your own. It is generally better to cite too often than not enough. The paper must technically conform to standard college paper requirements in the social sciences. The APA method of citation and reference must be used. Citations are not only required after quoting an author. All ideas, descriptions and analyses that are from others must be cited. Any time one paraphrases author person's writings, one must cite that author. For example, (Smith 2003: 376) (Author, year and page number).

- The paper must be not less than 2,000 and not more than 2,500 typewritten words (between 7 and 10 pages).

**Paper Due Date:** ON MONDAY THE 26<sup>th</sup> of APRIL.

Additional details and handouts concerning this assignment will be provided in the near future. The instructor will give examples of the type of paper required, and will work with students individually in order to assist in the development of the project.

\*\*Please do the readings. It will help you to better understand lectures, to participate in class discussions, and to succeed on the exams.

### RELEVANT JOURNALS

*Sociological Theory*

*Social Thought*

*Sociological Focus*

*Journal of Social Issues*

*American Journal of Sociology*

*American Sociological Review*

*Social Forces*

*Journal of Marriage and the Family*

*Social Problems*

*Criminology*

*Crime & Delinquency*

*Gender & Society*

### GRADING

Exam #1	20%
Exam #2	25%
Exam #3	30%
Paper	15%
General Evaluation	10%

### WEEKLY LECTURE TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

**PLEASE NOTE:** Students are responsible for any syllabus changes announced in class.

#### TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

#### PART I: SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY: THE EARLY YEARS

Week	Topics	Ritzer Text and Handouts
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Social &amp; Intellectual Forces in the Rise of Sociological Theory:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Montesquieu, Rousseau, Comte, The Evolution of Discipline</li> </ul> </li> <li>•Scientific, Political, and Industrial Revolutions</li> </ul>	Chapter 1

2	•Durkheim—Social Facts, Nature of Society, The Division of labor in society, suicide, deviance, human nature, anomie, order and justice	Chapter 3
3	•The Dialectic of Marx, Human Potential, Alienation, Nature of Society, Private Property, Social class, Capitalism, Ideology	Chapter 2
4	•Weber—Verstehen, Ideal Types, Values, Social Action, Structures of Authority, Rationalization, The Protestant Ethic, Bureaucracy	Chapter 4
5	•Weber •EXAM #1 FRIDAY	

## PART II: CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGY

Week	Topics	Ritzer Text and Handouts
6	•The Structural-Functionalist Tradition •Parsons—Pattern Variables, Action Theory, The Social System •Merton's Functionalism	Chapters 6 & 7 Handouts
7	•Conflict Theories •Radical and Pluralistic Theories •Collins, Coser, Turk, Dahrendorf, Mills •Competing Paradigms	Chapter 7
8	•Symbolic Interactionism	Chapter 8
9	•Cooley, Mead •The Capacity for Thought, the Self, Meanings, Symbols, Learning, Socialization, Language, Role, Definition of the Situation	
10	•The Dramaturgical Approach of Goffman, Social Interaction •EXAM #2 FRIDAY	Chapter 10
11	•Ethnomethodology •Schutz, Garfinkel •Historical Emergence and the Response to Positivism •The Interpretive Process, the Taken-for-Granted	11 Handouts
12	•Exchange Theory •Homans, Blau	Chapters 12 Handouts
13	•History, Theory, and Gender	Chapter 13
14	•Varieties of Contemporary Feminist Theorizing •A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge	Chapter 17 Handouts
15	•Post-Modernism •Foucault •Bourdieu •FINAL EXAM DURING EXAM WEEK	pp. 407-418

PAPER DUE the 26<sup>th</sup> of April, the sixteenth week of the semester.

FINAL EXAM: MAY 2, 8:30 to 11:30