

The University of Calgary  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
Department of Sociology

Contemporary Sociological Theory  
Sociology 333.01  
Fall 2009-10

Instructor: Thomas Lynch, Ph.D.  
Class Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:30 – 13:45  
Lecture Room: SB 105

E-Mail: [tlynch@ucalgary.ca](mailto:tlynch@ucalgary.ca)  
Class Assistance Office Hours: SS 903, Wednesdays 5:00 to 6:00 pm or by  
appt.

### **Course Objectives**

The objectives of this course are to:

- 1) Provide students with an opportunity to learn about contemporary social theory in general and specifically Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu
- 2) Examine most major theorists from the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and,
- 3) Consider how social theory informs analysis.

Students will be expected to have read the required readings for each class and will be encouraged to discuss the readings in class. I am hoping that those with a political science, history or economics background will contribute from each of these disciplines to any classroom discussions.

For our general examination of theory, I am using Steven Seidman's text "Contested Knowledge". Seidman provides a good overview of most major trends in modern theory and covers the sociologists most often considered "theorists" by their peers.

In addition, I have chosen to study two specific theorists – Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. Both are challenging but the challenge is quite manageable. For Foucault, I have chosen a secondary text that provides a very good overview of his life and work. Bourdieu is the theorist I used for my doctoral thesis. The text we are using focuses on his principal concepts.

Without giving the game away, you need to understand that the last two theorists have been chosen intentionally because I intend to use them in a way that I hope interests you. The Seidman book is very useful as an overview of social theory during the modern period. It is also a useful case study with which to engage both Foucault and Bourdieu.

### **Required Texts**

The books I want to use are:

Seidman, Steven, "Contested Knowledge: Social Theory Today" available in the bookstore.

Nealon, Jeffrey, "Foucault Beyond Foucault" available in the bookstore.

Grenfell, Michael (editor), "Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts", available in the bookstore.

The Seidman book is quite understandable so I will not be issuing notes via Blackboard. However, For Foucault and Bourdieu, lecture notes will be available on Blackboard. From time to time, I may suggest via Blackboard that you access an Internet item that illustrates aspects of the theorists we are studying.

### **Grading**

Letter Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

A+	95-100
A	90-94
A-	85-89
B+	80-84
B	75-79
B-	70-74
C+	67-69
C	63-66
C-	60-62
D+	57-59
D	53-56
D-	50-52
F	0-49

Higher marks will be reserved for papers that are well-argued, make good use of assigned readings, and are well-written.

### **Course Assignments**

There will be no examinations in this course. The assignments will focus on helping you develop your understanding of the way in which each theorist goes about conceptualizing the social and demonstrating how well you have come to grips with each theorist's concepts and approach.

The following course marking distribution system will be used:

- 1) Three, 7 page writing assignments, on a question assigned in class, each worth 30%, for a total of 90% of your final mark.
- 2) An initial writing assignment, 3 pages, worth 10% of your final mark.

On each assignment, marks will be deducted for spelling errors. Marks will also be deducted for poor or blatantly wrong grammar. If you do not have a copy of Strunk and White's "Elements of Style" you may want to buy one from the bookstore.

## **Lecture Schedule, Assignments and Readings**

- September 8** Introduction to Class, Discussion of Expectations,  
Lecture on "What is Theory in Sociology"
- Assignment One (10%)** Due September 15, take a position on the following statement and provide your reasons, "Society can be re-made to be more fair."
- September 10** Review of Classical Theory  
From Seidman, please read the Chapters on Comte and Marx
- September 15 and 17** Review of Classical Theory, Continued, From Seidman, the chapters on Durkheim and Weber
- Assignment Two (30%)** Due October 1: Use Marx, Durkheim and Weber to consider the following question, "Ideas play a minor role in the development of modern societies."
- September 22 and 24** Seidman, Pages 59-108, Chapters 5, 6 and 7
- September 29** Seidman, Chapter 8 on Jurgen Habermas
- October 1** Seidman, Chapters 9 and 10, focus on only Stuart Hall and the Birmingham School and Anthony Giddens. We will be covering Bourdieu later in the course.
- October 6** Seidman, Chapter 11, Derrida, Lyotard and Baudrillard
- October 8** Seidman, Chapter 13, Bauman
- Assignment Three (30%)** Due October 29, Consider the following point made by Seidman, "Modern social scientists have, in the main, abandoned the effort to craft a comprehensive philosophy of life." Based on what you have read so far and heard in class, do you agree or disagree with him, please provide examples to buttress your argument.
- October 13** Seidman, Chapters 13 and 15, Feminist Theory and Critical Race Theory
- October 15** Seidman, Chapters 16 -20, Queer Theory, Colonial Discourse Studies and Theories of World Order
- October 20** Summary Lecture on Seidman
- October 22** Foucault, read Nealon, pages 1-23
- October 27** Nealon, pages 24-53

<b>October 29</b>	Nealon, pages 54-73
<b>November 3</b>	Nealon, pages 74-93
<b>Assignment Four (30%)</b>	Due, December 8, complete the following statement with your own choice of theoretical insight, "In the story as told by Seidman, modern social theory is relevant/irrelevant to modern concerns because ..." and then make an argument supporting your position.
<b>November 17</b>	Bourdieu, Read Grenfell pages 67-81
<b>November 19</b>	Grenfell, pages 49-65 and 101-117
<b>November 24</b>	Grenfell, pages 27-40 and 199-212
<b>November 26</b>	Grenfell, pages 119-130 and 153-170
<b>December 1</b>	Grenfell, pages 183-198 and 131-148
<b>December 3</b>	Bourdieu Summary
<b>December 8</b>	Final lecture and Last Assignment Hand-in

### **FOIP Statement (Mandatory)**

"The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act" (FOIPP) disallows the practice of having students receive assignments from a public space, e.g. outside an instructor's office, etc. Term assignments must be returned to students individually, during class or during the instructor's office hours. If a student is unable to pick up an assignment from the instructor, the student may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment."

Please also note that no grades will be posted. Grades will be written on assignments. Always keep an extra copy of any written work you submit, as well as keeping graded assignments when they are returned.

### **Deferrals:**

If at all possible you must provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to take a test or pass in an assignment or essay on time. All requests for deferral of a course component due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the physical or emotional problem rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, the instructor can require you to write a "make up" test as close in time to the original test as possible or can choose

to transfer the percentage weight to another course component. If the instructor schedules a "make up" test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the Sociology Department.

Please note that requests to defer a final examination or to defer term work past the end of a term go through the Undergraduate Programs Office (UPO) and must be processed by the deadlines that are established in the U. of C. Calendar. You can find the forms you need at:

Deferred Final Exam Application:  
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/Winter2008DEFERREDFINALEXAMINATIONS.pdf>

Deferred Term Work Form:  
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/defTW.pdf>

You must submit these deferral forms to the Social Sciences Associate Dean (Students) through the UPO office: Undergraduate Programs Office, 4th Floor, MacEwan Student Centre.

To make an appointment with the Associate Dean, phone (403) 220-8155.

Only the Associate Dean approves requests for deferrals which extend beyond the end of a term. Instructors are not involved in such decisions.

**Ethics Research:** Students are advised that any research with human subjects--including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation--must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

**Academic Misconduct:** Plagiarism, cheating and other academic misconduct are regarded as serious academic offenses. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct.

**The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP)** legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside an instructor's office or the Department main office. Written assignments must be returned to students individually, during class, or during the instructor's office hours; if a student is unable to pick up her/his assignment s/he may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

Please also note that no grades will be posted during this course. Grades will be written on assignments. Always keep an extra copy of any written work you submit, as well as keeping your graded assignments when they are returned.

**Safewalk:** The University of Calgary provides a "safe walk" service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.

**Academic Accommodation:** Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, telephone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. **It is a student's responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.**