

Soci 333, Contemporary Theory, Fall 2010

Course Outline

Instructor: Dr. Ariel Ducey

Office Hours: Mondays 3:00-5:00 pm, and by appointment

Office Location: Social Sciences Bldg, Room 938

Instructor contact info: aducey@ucalgary.ca, 220-5054

Sociology Department Website: www.soci.ucalgary.ca

DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce you to some of the major thinkers and concepts in post-war, western social theory. To be successful in this course, you must read the theorists assigned and become proficient at interpreting and explaining their views. You will not be expected to memorize a theorist's major concepts, rather you will be expected to begin to identify a theorist's way of thought, world view, and significance to social theory and sociology through your own reading of some of his or her important texts. There will be lectures in the course, intended to help you understand the theorists' arguments as well as the political and historical conditions that influenced their work, but we will also spend time in class reading together and discussing key sections of the texts.

At the completion of this course, you should:

- Be confident in your own ability to make sense from, and recognize themes within, even the most dense social theory
- Be able to identify some of the major debates within social theory
- Be able to compare and contrast theoretical writings and theorists
- Have a sense of the relationship of social theory to historical changes in society and culture

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reading: You are required to obtain the course packet and required book from the bookstore. There are also required articles that I will either post for the class on blackboard or distribute to you.

About 50 pages of reading per week are assigned, though in several weeks the number of pages is more. You are required to complete the readings *before* the class for which it is assigned. I may add, omit, or change a few readings, depending on the progress of the course. I may also change the amount of time spent on each theorist if necessary. I will notify you in class of any changes to the class schedule. If you miss a class, you are expected to contact a classmate to get notes and find out if there have been any changes to the schedule.

You are also required to *bring the day's reading/text with you to class.*

Participation (3 components)

1. As a required course for majors with a smaller number of students enrolled, *participation in class* will be expected. I will lecture and guide discussion, but this is a rare opportunity at the undergraduate level to practice articulating ideas and questions in a scholarly setting.

Members of the class can make a constructive and substantial contribution to class discussion in several ways: by posing relevant questions to classmates or the instructor; being forthright about what you find to be confusing in the readings (though make some effort to think through difficult or confusing points); sharing your epiphanies; and drawing upon specific sections of texts and readings when participating. I recognize that not everything you say will deserve to be preserved; the point is for you to practice verbalizing ideas, including what you understand and what you do not. Conversation is also essential to good writing: the more experience you have hearing and responding to others' ideas, the more you will be able to anticipate those ideas in your writing and construct thorough arguments.

Quality of participation will be given more weight than quantity, but regular participation is expected.

2. I may make ungraded, *informal assignments* during the term, including in-class writing and occasional preparation for group work. If you complete these informal assignments on time and conscientiously, you will receive full credit.
3. About six times during the term, brief *pop-quizzes* will be given in class (requiring about 15 minutes). They will consist of true/false, fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, or matching questions. They will primarily assess whether students have attended class and completed the readings.

I will provide students with their in-progress participation grade at approximately midterm, so that anyone not doing well can get feedback from me and have a chance to improve.

In this class, we will strive for an environment that is intellectually challenging and emotionally supportive. Anyone who consistently disrupts such an environment will be asked to leave the class.

“Thought Pieces”

Logistics:

Students are responsible for preparing five “thought pieces” on course readings. **Students**

will be randomly assigned three readings on which they *must* write a thought piece. Students may choose the other two readings on which they would like to write a thought piece.

The thought pieces should be one-page, typed, single-spaced, use Times 12-point font, have standard 1" margins, and be prepared in Microsoft Word. The thought pieces must be emailed to me (aducey@ucalgary.ca; use the subject heading "333 Thought Piece") by midnight on the deadlines in the course schedule. Please save your thought piece using the following file name format: yourlastname_theoristlastname.doc. (For instance, if I wrote a thought piece on Bourdieu, I would save it as, "Ducey_Bourdieu.doc".)

I will use the thought pieces as the basis for class discussion, and may share copies/excerpts of some thought pieces with the entire class. This will be done anonymously. If students wish to identify themselves as the author of a thought piece discussed in class, they may do so, but the instructor will not do so without their consent.

Contents of the thought pieces:

The first part of the thought piece must accurately summarize, in your own words, the author's argument. If there is more than one argument, focus this paragraph on what you understand to be the most important argument. The summary should take up no more than approximately half the page.

In the second part of the thought piece, students can do any of the following: critically assess the author's ideas or argument; draw attention to details that warrant further thought or discussion; discuss particular passages that are important or difficult (while showing an effort to understand them); make comparisons/contrasts to other theorists read in class; discuss the implications of particular passages or points for social theory or personal praxis; discuss the author's strategy—for instance, what they see as legitimate knowledge, the kind of evidence they use to make their argument; discuss why the author felt the need to make the argument and why the argument is significant; personally reflect upon the author's argument.

The thought pieces should be well written, but they do not have to be formal in style. In particular, they do not need to include formal citations or notes. However, students must use quotes when copying exact words, *and* provide page numbers for quotes or references to specific points and ideas in the readings. Always include your name and the date on the thought piece.

Grading:

Thought pieces will be given an "A" if they accurately summarize the reading; are clearly written with appropriate references to the text; identify particularly thought-provoking aspects of the reading(s); and show an exceptional level of engagement with text and course themes. If there are problems in any of these areas, the grade will be lowered accordingly.

Late thought pieces will not be accepted and students will receive a “0”.

Students may rewrite up to two of their thought pieces if they are not satisfied with their grade. Revised thought pieces are due no later than the last day of classes.

Final Paper

The final paper will be no more than 2,000 words (about 8 double-spaced pages). I will provide some themes/questions, but students may also write on a topic or theme of their choice (and may find that they have already begun to develop a topic in their thought pieces).

The paper will be due during exam week. Details on the paper content and grading will be distributed several weeks in advance.

Grading

Your final grade will be computed as follows:

Participation	10%
Thought pieces	65%
Final paper	25%

You are not required to pass a particular course component in order to pass the course as a whole.

I will use the following scale to convert percentage grades to letter grades for this class:

A+ = 95-100	B = 75-79	C- = 55-59
A = 90-94	B- = 70-74	D+ = 50-54
A- = 85-89	C+ = 65-69	D = 45-49
B+ = 80-84	C = 60-64	F = below 45

Instructor Contact Information

I am available, without an appointment, during office hours. I am also available by appointment during other times. I am pleased to meet with students, but request that you:

- 1) **Use email largely for administrative purposes.** I cannot always respond to emails that are substantive. So, for instance, you should email me to schedule an appointment or inform me of an absence.

- 2) Students with substantive questions should come to see me. If you have questions related to grading, readings, or wish to discuss the course in greater depth, see me during office hours or make an appointment.

COURSE SCHEDULE

CP=course packet, BB=reading posted on blackboard, PBI=Instructor will provide copies of the reading

Section 1: The political and economic conditions of post-war Western social theory

- Harvey, David. 1990. "The political-economic transformation of late twentieth century capitalism," Part II of The Condition of Postmodernity. London: Blackwell. [PBI]

Sept 13, 15, 17, 20, 22

Thought piece due: Sept 16, midnight

Section 2: Functionalism

- Merton, Robert. "Manifest and Latent Functions," from *Social Theory and Social Structure*. NY: The Free Press. Pp 73-96, 114-126. [orig. pub. 1949] [CP]

Sept 24, 27

Thought piece due: Sept 23, midnight

Section 3: Opposing Modernity: The Marxist critique of the status quo

- Marcuse, Herbert. "The New Forms of Social Control" and "The Closing of the Universe of Discourse", Chs. 1 and 4 in *The One-Dimensional Man*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1981 [1964]. Pp. 1-18, 84-120. [CP]

Sept 29, Oct 1, 4

Thought piece due: Sept 28, midnight

- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, Monthly Review Press, 1971. [PBI]

Oct 6, 8, 13

Thought piece due: Oct 5, midnight

Section 4: Opposing Modernity: The Effects of Racism and Diaspora

- Fanon, Frantz. Chs. 1, 5, and 8 (pp.17-40, 109-140, 223-232) from *Black Skin, White Masks*. Grove Press, 1967. [CP]

Oct 15, 18, 20

Thought piece due: Oct 14, midnight

- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," pp. 222-237 in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Jonathan Rutherford, ed. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990. [PBI]

Oct 22, 25, 27 (class is cancelled on Oct 29)

Thought piece due: Oct 21, midnight

- Baumann, Zygmunt. "Modernity and the Holocaust." Pp. 428-447 (ch. 30) in *Contemporary Sociological Theory, 2nd edition*, Calhoun et al. (eds), Blackwell Publishing, 2007. [Orig published in *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Ithaca: NY, Cornell University Press, 1989.] [PBI]

Nov 1, 3

Thought piece due: Oct 31, midnight

Section 5: Postmodernity and Capitalism

Oct 25, 27, Nov 1, 3, 5 (class canceled on Oct 29)

- Jameson, Frederic. "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." *New Left Review* I/146, 1984. [BB]

Nov 5, 8, 10

Thought piece due: Nov 4, midnight

- Featherstone, Mike. "Modern and Postmodern: Definitions and Interpretations," pp. 1-13, Ch.1 in *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. London: Sage, 2007 (2nd edition). [CP]

Nov 15 (no thought pieces permitted)

Section 6: The Sociologist in Question

Nov 8, 10, 15, 17, 19

- Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Habitus and the Space of Life-Styles," Ch. 3 in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard University Press, 1984. Pp. 169-225 [CP]

Nov 17, 19, 22

Thought piece due: Nov 16, midnight

- Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Sociologist in Question," Ch. 3 in *Sociology in Question*. London: Sage, 1993. Pp. 20-36 [PBI]

Nov 24, 26

Thought piece due: Nov 23, midnight

- Smith, Dorothy. "Women's Experience as a Radical Critique of Sociology," Ch. 1 in *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge*. Northeastern Press, 1991. [CP]

Nov 29, Dec 1

Thought piece due: Nov 28, midnight

Section 7: Rethinking Theory

- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Vintage Books, 1990. (available at the bookstore)

Dec 3, 6, 8, 10

Thought piece due: Dec 2, midnight

Additional Policies

Emergency evacuations: In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom/lab, please proceed to the assembly point by the Social Sciences Food Court.

Deferrals of exams and assignments: 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 online:

Deferred Final Exam Application:

http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/APP%20FOR%20DF%20EXAM_0.pdf

Deferred Term Work Form:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/defTW.pdf>

You must submit these deferral forms to the Faculty of Arts Associate Dean (Students) through the UPO office: Undergraduate Programs Office, 4th Floor, MacEwan Student Centre. Only the Associate Dean approves requests for deferrals which extend beyond the end of a term. Instructors are not involved in such decisions. To make an appointment with the Associate Dean, phone (403) 220-8155.

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 offences. 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.

Since it is important that you read and discuss the work of others in academic papers and research, please take the time to review the following website: [Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Recognize and Avoid It](#).

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.

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, phone 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.**

Handing in papers outside of class, return of final papers, and release of final grades:

- 1) When students are unable to submit papers in class, they should make arrangements to hand in their papers directly to the instructor or teaching assistant. Papers will not be accepted in the main Sociology Department office.
- 2) Final papers will not be returned through the main Sociology Department office. The Freedom of Information and Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place (i.e. outside an instructor's office, the department office etc.) Students who want their final papers returned by mail must attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the paper. Otherwise final papers will be available for pick-up only during the instructor's office hours at the end of this term or at the beginning of the next term.
- 3) Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are available only online.

Office of the Student Ombuds: The Students' Union in partnership with the University of Calgary and the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) offers students a key advocacy resource to assist in addressing concerns and issues they encounter at the university with the Office of the Student Ombuds. See <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>