

The University of Calgary  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
Department of Sociology

Contemporary Sociological Theory  
Sociology 333.01  
Winter 2009

Instructor: Thomas Lynch, Ph.D.  
Class Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.  
Lecture Room: SB 148

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Class Assistance Office Hours: Room Sociology Department 952, Tuesday 5-6 p.m.

### **Course Objectives**

The objectives of this course are to:

- 1) Provide students with an opportunity to learn about four contemporary social theorists: Anthony Giddens, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu and John Kenneth Galbraith.
- 2) Examine how these authors deal with some major themes: risk, trust, knowledge, war, equality, poverty and power; and,
- 3) Use each theoretical perspective to assess Alberta society.

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

I have chosen theorists who share one common characteristic – each is a very public intellectual. Michel Foucault may be the most challenging of the four we will study. For Foucault, I have chosen a secondary text that provides a very good overview of his life and work. The theorist that I find the most enigmatic is Giddens. Of the four, the most interesting social perspective is that generated by J.K. Galbraith. Though most commonly considered an economist, Galbraith delivers a strong sociological perspective on many issues. Galbraith's theory is informed by a broad understanding of Weber and Marx. He can teach us many things including the ability to write well. Bourdieu is the theorist I used for my doctoral thesis.

### **Required Texts**

The books I want to use are:

Giddens, Anthony, "The Consequences of Modernity" available in the bookstore.

Gutting, Gary, "Foucault: a very short introduction", available in the bookstore.

Reed-Danahay, Deborah, "Locating Bourdieu", available in the bookstore.

Galbraith, J.K., "The Affluent Society", available in the bookstore

From time to time, I may suggest that you access an internet item about one of our theorists. There will be two films.

## **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, are well-written and have no grammar or composition mistakes.

## **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) Two, 5-7 page writing assignments, on a question assigned in class, each worth 20%, for a total of 40% of your final mark.
- 2) A final essay paper, 10-12 pages, due in-class April 16, worth 45% of your final mark. This paper must be handed in at the end of our final class lecture.
- 3) Class discussion participation will be worth 15%.

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 and Reading Assignments

<b>January 13</b>	Introduction to Class, Discussion of Expectations, Lecture on "What is Theory in Sociology"
<b>January 15</b>	Film, "A Crude Awakening" (relevant to Giddens and Foucault). The questions I want you to think about are, "How do I evaluate the truth claims of this film as I am watching it?" and, "What exactly am I watching?"
<b>January 20</b>	Conclusion of "A Crude Awakening" and Giddens pages 1-78, Key concepts: disembedding mechanisms, risk, trust, time-space distancing, the role of the nation state, capitalism, reflexivity and trust
<b>January 22,27</b>	Giddens, pages 79-150, further discussion of Giddens's main concepts and exploring a key theme in his work, "What does it mean to live in a modern world?". I will want some in-class discussion about whether Giddens's description of the world resonates with your experience.
<b>January 29</b>	Giddens, pages 151-173, Giddens's view of the future  Assignment One distributed, due February 12
<b>February 3</b>	<b>Michel Foucault</b>  Orientation to Foucault and the book by Gary Guttman, I will discuss how Foucault differs from the others.
<b>February 5</b>	Guttman, pages 1-31 and pages 54-67, Foucault's life as art and politics or as I sometimes say "Foucault's life as polartics". In this class I will relate our first film to Foucault's framework.
<b>February 10</b>	Guttman, pages 32-53, archaeology and genealogy
<b>February 12</b>	Guttman, pages 68-110, Foucault's major works and Foucault vs. Giddens
<b>Spring Break</b>	<b>February 15-22</b>
<b>February 24</b>	Film "American Ruling Class" relevant for Bourdieu and Galbraith
<b>February 26</b>	Conclusion of Film and discussion,  Assignment Two distributed due March 10
<b>March 3</b>	<b>Pierre Bourdieu:</b> How he is different from Foucault and Giddens, readings are Reed-Danahay, pages 22-36

- March 5** Bourdieu, Part 1, Reed-Danahay, pages 69-98, and a discussion of his work on education
- March 10** Bourdieu, Part 2, Reed-Danahay, pages 37-68, and a discussion on what a focus on practice entails
- March 12** Bourdieu, Part 3, Reed-Danahay, pages 99-128, and a discussion of his major work "Distinction"
- March 17** Bourdieu, Part 4, Reed-Danahay, pages 129-159, and a discussion of his view of the modern state and globalization
- March 19** Bourdieu, what do you think?
- Major Paper Assigned, must be handed in at our last class April 16
- March 24** Introduction to Galbraith, "Why we are studying him?"
- Please read the following two internet articles:
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Kenneth\\_Galbraith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Kenneth_Galbraith)
- <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2006/may/01/guardianobituaries.usa>
- March 26** Galbraith, Part One, pages 1-80, try to answer this question, "Do you think Galbraith remains relevant for today?"
- March 31** Galbraith, Part Two, pages 80-131, try to contrast what Galbraith has to say about insecurity with what Giddens had to say about security.
- April 2** Galbraith, Part Three, pages 132-142, 186-199, 215-242
- April 7** Galbraith, Part Four, pages 166-176 and 243-263.
- April 9** As you think about the world in which you live, which theorist connects most vividly with that world and why?
- April 14** How would you assess the strengths and weaknesses of each theorist's approach?
- April 16** **Hand in Final Paper**

#### **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.**