



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

Faculty of Arts
Department of Sociology
Sociology Department Home Page: <http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca>

SOCI 333
Contemporary Sociological Theory

• Winter 2019	• Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:00am-10:50am	• ST129
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Instructor: Dr. Dean Curran

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Office Hours: Monday 11:00am–12:00pm, Wednesday 11:50am–12:50pm

Course Description

This is a required course for students majoring in Sociology. This course is intended as an introduction to contemporary sociological theory. Contemporary Sociological Theory provides an introduction to: research areas, issues of concern, theories, methods, and concepts that significantly influence contemporary sociology more generally.

Theory and Theorizing

In this course it is essential that students engage in a theoretical manner with the course material in their participation and writing. It is essential that students not merely describe and summarize the readings. A theoretical analysis seeks to abstract certain key ideas, arguments, concepts from the specific content of a text and then reconstructs the arguments, ideas, or concepts in such a way that we are able to better grasp the relations between different ideas and concepts. This process of abstraction and reconstruction may be for the purpose of: better understanding a specific concept of a theorist (such as Weber's "rationalization" or Durkheim's "anomie"); better understanding the relation between the different concepts of a specific thinker (such as how Marx's theory of class relates to his theory of value); or better understanding the relation between two thinkers' conception of social reality (such as the connection between Marx's understanding of "alienation" and Durkheim's "social facts"). This improved understanding through the process of abstraction and reconstruction may be for such purposes such as: (1) helping to better understand the theorist's work in their own terms, (2) critiquing the work of the thinker, or (3) identifying how to apply the basic theories of a thinker to a very different context than the one for which they were originally formulated.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students should have knowledge and understanding of:

- The dominant theoretical approaches in contemporary sociological theory.
- How these different approaches relate to each other and to developments in contemporary society.

This course should also enhance students' ability to:

- To theorize in a critical and analytical manner about social life.
- Write clearly and cogently about contemporary social theory.
- Make a contribution to existing debates in contemporary sociological theory by fashioning and defending their own arguments.

Learning and Discussion

While many truths that we hold may appear self-evident to ourselves, rather than remaining in our silos, a core part of the task of universities and of critical social theory is to critically engage with other viewpoints and to learn to further articulate the reasons for one's views. It is particularly important that we engage in respectful conversation in classroom discussions; likewise, it is important to emphasize that disagreement does not in itself automatically constitute disrespect of other viewpoints. In challenging dominant views in society and our own views, we can further our ability to better understand society as well better enable ourselves to engage in critical debates ongoing in contemporary society.

Required Textbooks, Readings, Materials

- S. Appelrouth & L. Edles (2015) *Sociological Theory in the Contemporary Era: Text and Readings*. Sage
- Readings on D2L

Students are expected to bring the readings to the class to discuss the material.

Methods of Evaluation

Participation: 5%

Test: 20% (**March 4, 2019**)

Theory Paper: 40% (**Due April 1, 2019, in class**)

Take-home Final Exam: 35% (**Due April 19th, 2019 on D2L**)

Course Participation

Students are expected to regularly attend the lectures and discussions, and to have completed the readings prior to the Friday class. It is important that each student be prepared to contribute to the discussion of the readings, both for their own learning and for the benefit of the class as a whole.

Theory Paper

The theory paper is a core component of assessment for this course. The paper assignment is intended to enable students to develop a substantive theoretical paper and to further develop the skills associated with this task. The readings in this course are intended to provide an in-depth introduction to many of the key debates in contemporary sociological theory. Students are heavily encouraged to plan ahead and consult with the instructor regarding their proposed essay topics.

The paper involves a comparison or contrast of the key ideas of two key thinkers in the course). This paper should be 2000 words with 10% (i.e. 200 words allowance) on either side. In comparing the two thinkers, students are encouraged not just find differences in terms of focus, but in particular, points of agreement and disagreement which in turn generate similarity or differences in the respective theorists.

General Referencing Guidelines

Always include page numbers of the source you are referencing - just using a date is not enough. Harvard style (in text citations with date and page e.g. (Marx 1848: 139) is recommended)

Submission and Late Policy

The term paper is to be handed in as a hard copy in class to the course instructor the day of class that it is due. The paper will receive a late penalty of FIVE (5) MARKS PER FULL OR PART DAY (a weekend counts as two full days). Any paper more than one (1) week late without a valid extension will receive a mark of zero (0). Accommodations are unlikely to be allowed for late entry other than illness or another serious and documented situation – talk to me prior to the deadline. Take-home exams that are late will receive a mark of F.

Technology Use

Class Etiquette

Use of cell phones or internet on laptops distracts other students and the instructor and hence is not permitted. Based on previous feedback from students, the policy for this class will be that laptops without the use of internet is permitted, but that if laptops are used for other than taking notes, permission to use a laptop will be withdrawn.

Final Exam Information (35%) (Exam Period, April 19th, 2019)

The final exam will be a take-home. It will cover the entire course material, both readings and lectures. Proper citation practice must be used in the take-home essays. The questions will be placed on D2L on April 12th and will be due one week later on D2L, **April 19th, 2019 at 4pm.** Take-home exams that are late will receive an F grade. **Students are responsible for checking that they have uploaded the correct file – there will be no exceptions for incorrectly uploaded submissions.**

Grading Scale

Letter grades will be assigned and submitted to the registrar based on the following scale:

Grade	Percent range	Grade Point Value	Description
A+	95 – 100%	4.0	Outstanding performance
A	90 – 94.99%	4.0	Excellent-superior performance
A-	85 – 89.99%	3.7	
B+	80 – 84.99%	3.3	
B	75 – 79.99%	3.0	Good – clearly above average performance
B-	70 – 74.99%	2.7	
C+	67 – 69.99%	2.3	
C	63 – 66.99%	2.0	Satisfactory - basic understanding
C-	60 – 62.99%	1.7	
D+	55 – 59.99%	1.3	
D	50 – 54.99%	1.0	Minimal pass - marginal performance
F	<50%	0	unsatisfactory performance

The grades for a course component may be scaled to maintain equity among sections and to conform to departmental norms.

Grade Reappraisal

Within two weeks of the date the exam/assignment is returned, students seeking reappraisal of examinations or assignments must submit a written response to the instructor explaining the basis for reconsideration of one's mark. The instructor will reconsider the grade assigned and will then book a time with the student to discuss his or her work and rationale. It should be noted that a re-assessed grade may be raised, lowered, or remain the same.

Email

Feel free to contact me over email at any time. Please put your course number and section in your email's subject line, and include a proper salutation, your full name, student ID, and a proper closing in the body of your email. It may take up to 48 hours (not including weekends) for me to respond to you. I do not answer emails over the weekend. Please take that into account when emailing me questions pertaining assignments or exams. If you have a course-related question, please check the course outline first. Questions that can be answered by consulting the course outline will not be answered. Also, please e-mail me for administrative purposes only, for example to set up an appointment. Please do not use e-mail as a replacement for an office visit, if there is something you want to discuss. Questions about the course content and readings, concerns about grades, or any other personal issues should be dealt with in person during my office hours.

Office Hours: During office hours you are free to drop by without an appointment at any time. If you are unable to make that time, please contact me in advance so that we can try to arrange an appointment. Office hours are a very effective and efficient way of providing help and I encourage all students to make use of my office hours.

Emergency Evacuations

In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the assembly point: Professional Faculties – Food Court.

Handing in Papers, Assignments

1. The main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters. Please speak directly to your instructor.
2. **Protection of Privacy:** The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) legislation does not allow students to retrieve any course material from public places. Anything that requires handing back will be returned directly during class or office hours. If students are unable to pick up their assignments from the instructor, they provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are only available online.

Research Ethics

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 Faculty 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

Please refer to the website listed below for information on University of Calgary policies on Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-5.html>

Absences and Deferrals

Students who are absent from class assessments (tests, participation activities, or other assignments) should inform their instructors as soon as possible. Instructors may request that evidence in the form of documentation be provided. If the reason provided for the absence is acceptable, instructors may decide that any arrangements made can take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test. For information on possible forms of documentation, including statutory declarations, please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/n-1.html>.

Deferred Final Exam Form: Please note that requests to defer a Registrar scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar's Office. Further information can be found at:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/exams/deferred-exams>

Deferred Term Work Form: Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It's available at:

https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred_termwork15_0.pdf

Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

Student Representation

The 2018-19 Students' Union VP Academic is Jessica Revington (suvpaca@ucalgary.ca). For more information, and to contact other elected officials with the Student's Union, please visit this link: <https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/>. You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ombuds/contact>

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

The student accommodation policy can be found at: ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy. Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy. Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

Student Resources

[SU Wellness Centre](#)
[Campus Mental Health Strategy](#)

Course Schedule

Wk	Date	Course Topic	Reading
1	11-Jan	Course Intro & Rational Choice	"Homans" pp. 179-195 [in S. Appelrouth & L. Edles (2015) <i>Sociological Theory in the Contemporary Era: Text and Readings</i> [henceforth <i>Sociological Theory</i>],
2	Jan 14, 16, 18	Merton	"Merton" <i>Sociological Theory</i> , p. 59-79
3	Jan 21, 23, 25	Goffman	"Goffman" <i>Sociological Theory</i> , pp. 255-294
4	Jan 28, 30, Feb 1	Phenomenology	"Schutz" <i>Sociological Theory</i> , pp. 323-340.
			"Berger & Luckmann" <i>Sociological Theory</i> , pp. 340-359
5	Feb 4, 6, 8	Critical Theory	"Critical Theory" in <i>Sociological Theory</i> , pp. 81-127
6	Feb 11 & 13	Foucault	"Foucault" <i>Sociological Theory</i> , pp.391-418
	Feb 18-22	Break	
7	Feb 25, 27, Mar 1	Post-modernism	"Postmodernism" <i>Sociological Theory</i> , pp. 481-518
8	Mar 4, 6, 8	Bourdieu	"Bourdieu", <i>Sociological Theory</i> , pp. 418-454.
9	Mar 11, 13, 15	Giddens	"Giddens" <i>Sociological Theory</i> , pp. 592-617
			<i>Giddens Reader</i> excerpts [on D2L]
10	Mar 18, 20, 22	Gender	"Smith" <i>Sociological Theory</i> , pp. 375-390
			"Butler" <i>Sociological Theory</i> , pp. 518-526
11	Mar 25, 27, 29	Race	"Said", <i>Sociological Theory</i> , pp. 455-479
			"Hill Collins", <i>Sociological Theory</i> , pp. 164-178
12	Apr 1, 3, 5	Global, Neoliberal Society?	"Wallerstein" <i>Sociological Theory</i> , pp 530-558
			W. Brown <i>Undoing the Demos</i> , Ch. 1 pp. 17-45 [on D2L]
13	Apr 8, 10, 12	Habermas	"Habermas" <i>Sociological Theory</i> , pp. 127-164

Criteria for Papers:

This is a checklist to help evaluate a paper submitted in this course. The greater degree to which each question can be answered positively to a high level, the better the paper.

Thesis Statement

Is it identifiable and clear?

Is it manageable rather than being too broad for a short paper?

Is it something substantive and does it provide the key argument(s) of the paper?

Does the paper actually then closely follow the thesis?

Theoretical Understandings

Does the paper identify the key elements of the concepts that it is discussing?

Does it explain these concepts clearly and accurately and in sufficient depth?

Does its further discussion of the concepts demonstrate an overall understanding of the theorists involved in the paper, as well as integrating other literatures into the paper well?

Does it move beyond simply describing or summarizing the readings to analyze them and their underlying reasons and understandings?

Can it apply these concepts to new contexts and arguments in an insightful way?

Does the paper manifest a critical understanding of the subject matter of the paper?

Does the paper manifest a certain level of originality or creativity in understanding and critically analyzing the theorists discussed?

Writing Quality

Is the grammar and spelling correct?

Is it clear what the meaning of the sentences and paragraphs is?

Does it follow a clear structure, and provide the reader with an understanding of where the argument is proceeding, rather than being disorganized or disjointed?

Evidence

Does the paper provide reasons for the arguments and conclusions that it makes?

Are the reasons provided clear and persuasive?

In making claims about a certain thinker's ideas does it provide proper evidence of these claims through proper citation (book and page number) and argumentation?

A Paper

The paper will be very good in all these dimensions.

B Paper

The paper will be good on all of these dimensions, or adequate on some dimensions and very good on other dimensions.

C Paper

The paper will be satisfactory on all of these dimensions, or poor on some and good (or very good) on others.

D Paper

The paper is poor on some of these dimensions and satisfactory on some of these dimensions.

F Paper

The paper will be poor on these dimensions or inadequate on one or more of these dimensions.