

Intro to Sociological Theory

Course Syllabus - Florida State University

SYA 4010 – Spring 2009
Section 1: Mon & Wed 9:30-10:45am
Section 2: Mon & Wed 11:00–12:15pm
Class Location: HCB 0214
Office Hours: Weds 12:30-3:00pm

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Course Description:

Social theory offers explanations as to why the world is the way it is. It helps one identify the forces that shape human experience and the nature of societies. It encompasses all aspects of human social life, ranging in its subject matter from the nature of civilization or the origins and operations of economic systems to the processes of consciousness. This course provides an overview of major social theorists – intellectuals that all sociology majors should be familiar with. Social theory is not for everybody. It challenges and often requires one to suspend ready-made assumptions about the world. Assumptions, which in many ways, inform our sense of identity and our place in the order of things. Social theory requires abstract thinking. And if you are open to it this course should sharpen your ability to perceive patterns in and the complexity of the world around you.

Learning Objectives:

Students will gain a familiarity with foundational writings in sociology. Students will also develop the ability to evaluate, contrast, and draw out the logical implications of particular theoretical works. These objectives will be assessed through written assignments and exams.

Required Text: (to be purchased and read by all students)

Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk. 2007. *Classical Sociological Theory*. Second Edition. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Recommended Readings:

1. T. A. Kuhn. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.
2. L. A. Coser. *Masters of Sociological Thought*.
3. Turner, Beeghley, and Powers. *The Emergence of Sociological Theory*.
4. R. Collins. *Max Weber: A Skeleton Key*.
5. F. Wheen. *Karl Marx: A Life*.

Course Requirements & Evaluation:

Lectures and lecture-directed discussions will be supplemented by relevant media (i.e., films). Emphasis will be placed on careful reading, analysis and discussion of course materials. *All exams are cumulative.*

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

- a. Exam 1: 100 points
- b. Exam 2: 100 points
- c. Final Exam: 100 points
- d. 2 short assignments: 100 points (50 points each)

Grading Scale:

A 93-100%; A- 90-92; B+ 87-89; B 83-86; B- 80-82; C+ 77-79;
C 73-76; C- 70-72; D+ 67-69; D 60-66; F <60

A Note on the Readings:

Many of the readings for this course are excerpts from original works and will be difficult to get through on the first try. This is to be expected. To facilitate this process I will post discussion questions for some of the readings on the course blackboard site. You should use these discussion questions, before coming to class, to help you read the material. Try to figure out the answers as you read. We will generally use the study questions to guide discussion. They also capture *what I want you to know about the material* and will therefore be useful in your exam preparation. I will also place two supplemental texts on reserve in the library that may help you by providing background and clarification on many of the theorists that we discuss in class.

A Note on Quizzes:

In-class writing and quizzes: I may give one or more short in-class quizzes or short in-class writing assignments during the semester. Quizzes/assignments are *not* announced in advance and are usually given at the beginning of class. They will cover material from the day's assigned readings and are scored from 0 to 15. A grade of "0" means "not done." You didn't turn it in (were not in class) OR you did turn it in but I can't tell from what you wrote that you actually read the material. A grade of "1-5" means "done minimally." It is difficult to tell whether you read or understood all of the assignment. A grade of "6-10" means that I can tell that you made a real attempt to read and learn from the assignment. A grade of "11- 15" means "done well." I can tell that you read the entire assignment, carefully, and grasp the material. This means that you should 1) keep up on your reading, 2) be careful in how you use your absences and 3) always show up to class on time. There are absolutely NO MAKE-UPS on quizzes or other in-class assignments.

Contacting Me:

The quickest way to contact me is through email at dtope@fsu.edu. Email is an efficient way to ask simple questions and to arrange meetings outside of office hours. Feel free to come to my office hours (listed above). If these times conflict with your schedule, I am more than willing to arrange another time during which to meet. You may come to ask questions or to just discuss course-related issues. I will also be briefly available to you before and after our class meetings. I try to be in the classroom several minutes before class, and should have a few minutes to talk after class as well.

General Course Guidelines:

1. It will be difficult to succeed in this course if you do not complete the assigned readings on time. It is **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY** to keep up and be prepared for each class meeting. If you are having difficulty with a concept, or with reading comprehension, I am available for consultation during office hours, or by appointment. However, I **strongly** encourage you to form study groups for this purpose.
2. I do not take attendance for a grade. It is **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY** to attend class regularly and on time or, if you cannot be here, to find out what was covered in lecture and obtain notes from another student, not the instructor. Again, I *strongly* encourage you to form study groups for this purpose. If attendance is sparse or students do not appear to have read the material, I reserve the right to give *pop quizzes*.
3. Rescheduled exams will be given only to those students presenting a valid, "university approved" excuse. It is **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY** to reschedule missed exams in a timely fashion. *As a rule, exams should be rescheduled within no more than 48 hours of your return to classes and must be taken within a week. Please contact me to reschedule the exam. Makeup exams may not be allowed beyond this time frame.*
4. While I am willing to consult with you about an exam you have taken, I absolutely will not look at any exam more than one week after the grades have been posted.
5. If I assign homework, all assignments must be submitted on the due dates. *Late work will not be accepted for any reason.*

6. **PARTICIPATION:** Since class time will be devoted to discussions regarding the issues addressed in the readings and or relevant current events, it is important that students have completed the reading. Obviously, informed participation necessitates that the students have read the material. All students are welcome and encouraged to participate in class discussions. I will be presenting viewpoints supported by sociological research – not merely my opinions. All viewpoints are welcome but keep in mind that the focus of the course is sociology and discussions should be framed with a sociological perspective in mind. Please be aware that agreeing with the instructor's or others' viewpoint is not a requirement for this course. However, you must be familiar with the arguments presented in class to perform adequately on exams and other assignments. Also note that personal attacks or belittling of others will not be tolerated.

7. Also related to class participation: Please bring your assigned readings to class every day.

8. **DISTRACTIONS:** Please refrain from behavior that distracts other students. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to reading materials unrelated to this course, talking on a cell phone, allowing your cell phone to ring, talking while the instructor is lecturing, and so forth. You may be asked to leave class if you choose to engage in activities that are distracting to other students whether or not that behavior has been listed here.

9. **SCHOLASTIC HONESTY:** The integrity of the University is dependent on scholastic honesty. Therefore, scholastic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. For example, anyone observed engaging in activities such as looking at another student's exam or looking at notes during an exam will receive a zero on that exam and/or a more serious University sanction. I expect you to do your own work. Students should uphold the Academic Honor Code published in The Florida State University Bulletin and the Student Handbook, and available online at: <http://www.fsu.edu/~dof/forms/honorpolicy.pdf>

10. The course schedule may change depending on how the course proceeds. Some topics may take more time and others may take less. If time allows, I may introduce additional films or other relevant media. If any changes are necessary, they will be announced in class. It is **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY** to find out about such announcements.

11. **Americans with Disabilities Act:** Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact:

Student Disability Resource Center, 108 Student Services Building
97 Woodward Ave, South
Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32306-4400, (850) 644-9566 (voice),
(850) 644-8504 (TDD), SDRC@admin.fsu.edu,
<http://www.fsu.edu/~staffair/dean/StudentDisability/>

12. **Religious Holidays:** Students will be allowed to miss class due to observance of religious holidays but they are still responsible for all materials assigned outside and covered in class on the day(s) missed. You must inform me *in advance* of missing a class for the observance of a religious holiday.

COURSE SCHEDULE:^{1, 2}

Section One: Introduction to Sociological Theory

Week 1

Jan. 7: Course Introduction, no readings

Week 2

Jan. 12: TEXT: 1-14; BB: C. W. Mills

Section Two: The Enlightenment, Science, & Social Thought

Week 2

Jan 14: TEXT: 19-38

Week 3

Jan. 19: MLK Day ~ No Classes

Jan 21: BB: Burke, and Ritzer

Section Three: Karl Marx

Week 4

Jan. 26: TEXT: pp. 75-81

Jan. 28: TEXT: Ch. 5 & 6, pp.82-95

Week 5

Feb. 2: TEXT: Ch 7, pp.96-111

Feb. 4: BB: Working Longer, Living Less; *Exam Review*

Week 6

Feb. 9: *Exam 1*

Feb. 11: Worker Unrest ~ *Matewan*

Week 7

Feb. 16: Worker Unrest ~ *Matewan*

Section Four: Max Weber

Week 8

Feb. 18: TEXT: 205-210.

Feb. 20: TEXT: Ch.17, pp.228-246.

Week 9

Feb. 25: TEXT: Ch.18, pp.247-263.

Feb. 27: TEXT: Ch.20, p.264-273; BB: Ritzer

Section Five: Emile Durkheim

Week 10

March 3: TEXT: 133-138.

March 5: TEXT: Ch.12, pp.158-180.

**Spring Break* March 7-15

Week 11

March 16: TEXT: Ch.14, pp.193-202; BB: Baller & Richardson

Section Six: Early American Sociology

Week 11

March 18: TEXT: Ch. 25, pp.323-328.

Week 12

March 23: BB: Veblen Excerpts 1 & 2; Veblen NYT Article

March 25: Review for Exam, no additional readings

Week 13

March 30: *Exam 2*

Section Seven: Contemporary & Postmodern Perspectives

Week 13

April 1: BB: Discipline & Punish; BB: Staples

Week 14

April 6: Contemporary Theory

April 8: Postmodern Perspectives

Section 8: Course Wrap Up

Week 14

April 13: Course Wrap Up

April 15: Review for Final

Week 15 Finals

Final Exam: 9:30 Course (Section 1), Weds, April 22 @ 12:30-2:30

Final Exam: 11:00 Course (Section 2), Thursday, April 23 @ 12:30-2:30

1: The course schedule is subject to change.

2: Readings associated with "BB" will be available on Blackboard. Readings associated with "TEXT" are from the Calhoun et al. *Classical Sociological Theory* book.