

# SOC 4010: CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGY THEORY

## Spring 2016

**Class meeting times:** Tuesday & Thursday, 3pm – 4:15

**Class location:** Family Life 307

**Instructor:** Shawn Olson (Shawn K. Olson-Hazboun)

**Email:** [shawnkeatingolson@gmail.com](mailto:shawnkeatingolson@gmail.com) or [shawn.k.olson@usu.edu](mailto:shawn.k.olson@usu.edu)

**Office:** Old Main 224C

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 12-1:30, Wednesdays 2-3:30, and by appointment

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### REQUIRED TEXT

- Contemporary Sociological Theory: The Basics, 4<sup>th</sup> edition by George Ritzer and Jeffrey Stephnisky – available through the USU bookstore.
  
  - Other readings will be provided on Canvas on a weekly basis.
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### COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

*“The function of sociology, as of every science, is to reveal that which is hidden.”*  
– Pierre Bourdieu

In this class we will be studying numerous theories about why and how society functions. We will be engaging theories that answer some of the biggest sociological inquiries, including: How is society structured? How and why is it changing? Who is in control, and why? What is the relationship between the individual and the larger society? We will begin with a brief review of sociology’s classical theories, then focus for the remainder of the semester on contemporary sociological theories. Contemporary theories are generally understood as those formulated after the 1920s-1930s. We will connect each theory to its predecessor and strive to understand how each theory is a product of its founder, its historical context, and its location in the lineage of sociological theorizing. We will critique each theory presented, differentiating between theories from which we can formulate testable hypotheses and theories from which we cannot, ultimately asking what each theory offers as a tool for evaluating and explaining patterns of modern social life. At the end of this course you should be able to:

- explain fundamental theoretical traditions in sociology
- explain the major critiques of those theories
- compare and contrast classical and contemporary sociological theories
- describe the social and historical climate from which different social theories developed
- illustrate the role of theory in research, investigation, and analysis
- identify the role of theory in sociology
- apply major theories to modern social phenomena, situations, and events
- apply social theory to personal and professional life

## REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

Your course grade will be determined through the following (all assignments described on Canvas):

- Exams\* (55% of class grade)
  - Exam 1 ..... 13%
  - Exam 2 ..... 13%
  - Exam 3 ..... 13%
  - Final Exam..... 16%
- Group Presentation..... 7%
- Theory Application Essay .....13%
- Homework Assignments.....15%
- Class Participation & Attendance\*\* .....10%

*\*Exams will be based on readings, lectures, homework assignments, and in-class activities.*

*\*\*Students must be present at least 80% of the class time to earn a C grade or better for this course. Regular attendance is no guarantee of a C grade, but you cannot earn a C or better if you miss 20% or more of class time.*

### Grading Schema

93% and higher (463-500) = A	80-82% (398-412) = B-	67-69% (334-347) = D+
90-92% (448-462) = A-	77-79% (383-397) = C+	60-66% (298-333) = D
87-89% (433-447) = B+	73-76% (363-382) = C	59% (297) and lower = F (E)
83-86% (413-432) = B	70-72% (348-362) = C-	

A denotes *exceptional* performance, B—*above average* performance, C—satisfactory performance, D—poor performance, F (E)—failing performance

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## CANVAS

- Readings in addition to the textbook will be posted in the “Modules” section.
- Grades will be kept up to date on Canvas.
- All assignments will be posted on Canvas, with the exception of homework assignments handed out in class.
- Most assignments, including the final take-home exam, will be turned in on Canvas.

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## COURSE FORMAT

- Lectures – I will try to minimize the use of powerpoints. You are expected to take thorough notes from lectures. When I do use powerpoints, I will post them on Canvas.

- Class discussion – The nature of understanding social theory requires active participation in group discussions from all class members. I will do my best to facilitate this, and I expect students to actively participate each class period.
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## **EXPECTATIONS**

### **Expectation #1: Do the readings before lectures and class discussions.**

- Reading assignments for most weeks consist of 2 parts:
  1. Required readings: Minimum readings each week usually consist of one textbook chapter and one or two outside articles or chapters, including either the original works of the theorists or a research article that uses the theory to explain a social phenomenon. Readings will be posted on Canvas under “Modules”.
  2. Supplemental readings: I’ll occasionally post supplemental readings, intended to provide students a deeper reading into a particular theory, or another example of an empirical investigation of that theory. It is encouraged that students read (or at least glance through) the supplemental readings.

### **Expectation #2: Show respect for all people and their viewpoints**

Respect for all viewpoints and life experiences is required, including:

1. Treating everyone with civility
2. Listening without interrupting
3. Avoiding insulting terms and stereotypes when describing people
4. Attempting to understand other people’s behavior
5. Critiquing ideas rather than the person holding them

### **Expectation #3: Do not be a disruption**

- Even small, unintended disruptions like gathering your books and papers before the end of class can disturb your classmates’ learning.
  - Coming to class late and leaving early are particularly distracting. Please do not leave class early unless you have made prior arrangements with me.
  - Cell phones and other electronic devices need to be turned off at the beginning of every class.
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## **MID-SEMESTER CLASS ASSESSMENTS**

I will be providing two opportunities during the semester for you to give me feedback about how the course is going, what is working for you, what you are finding especially challenging, and what you think could improve the course. I will be adjusting the course activities and readings based on your feedback after the first and second-class assessments.

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## COURSE & UNIVERSITY POLICIES

### Cell Phones

Absolutely no cell phones should be accessible, visible, or have sound on during class time. If I see you looking at your phone in class, I will ask you to leave the classroom.

### Laptops

I understand that many students prefer to take notes on their laptops or tablets. As such, you may use your laptop during class. HOWEVER, if I see that you are using your laptop during class time to check your email or peruse social media sites, I'll ask you to close your computer.

### Make-up Work & Missed-classes

In a seminar-type class where a majority of the classroom learning is related to the interaction in class, it is very difficult to make up what has been missed.

- If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain the information you missed, including lecture notes as well as any announcements that may have been made.
- Students who must miss class for any legitimate reason, including participation in organized university activities, should notify me in advance of their absence if possible, and arrange to make up missed work.
  - An *excusable* absence needs to be cleared with me in order for it to become *excused*. In the case of an unexcused absence, no credit for missed work will be allowed.
  - Family get-togethers, holiday celebrations, trips, vacations, or any last minute commitments are not acceptable excuses for missing a due date or presentation date.
  - Complying with these expectations greatly increases your chances of being able to make up any work missed, however because of the nature of this course, I may require documentation (e.g., a note from your doctor, the coach, etc.).

### Cheating and Plagiarism

I will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty. This includes cheating, such as copying assignments from other students. It also includes plagiarism, such as copying written text by another author and copying ideas from another author without properly attributing those ideas to him or her. You will be required to submit assignments through Canvas, which uses a software package that electronically checks your work for plagiarism. **If you engage in any kind of academic dishonesty, you will fail the course.**

*University policy on plagiarism:* Plagiarism includes knowingly "representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one's own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials." The penalties for plagiarism are severe. They include warning or reprimand, grade adjustment, probation, suspension, expulsion, withholding of transcripts, denial or revocation of degrees, and referral to psychological counseling. If you are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism, please refer to <http://www.usu.edu/student-services/studentcode>

**Citation Format**

You will be required to produce a bibliography/works cited page for the Application Paper and the Final Take Home Exam. You may use any *recognized* formal citation format you wish, as long as your formatting is consistent throughout the bibliography.

**Students with Disabilities**

I will gladly provide reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities in accordance with the policies and procedures of the USU Disability Resource Center (DRC). If you have a disability that will likely require some accommodation on my part, you must contact me and document the disability through the Disability Resource Center (797-2444), preferably during the first week of the course. Any request for special consideration relating to attendance, pedagogy, taking of examinations, etc., must be approved. In cooperation with the Disability Resource Center, course materials can be provided in alternative format, large print, audio, diskette, or Braille."

**Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is defined by the Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as any "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature." If you feel you are a victim of sexual harassment, you may talk to or file a complaint with the Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity Office located in Old Main, Room 161, or call the AA/EEO Office at 797-1266.

**Withdrawal Policy and "I" Grade Policy**

Students are required to complete all courses for which they are registered by the end of the semester. In some cases, a student may be unable to complete all of the coursework because of extenuating circumstances, but not due to poor performance or to retain financial aid. The term 'extenuating' circumstances includes: (1) incapacitating illness which prevents a student from attending classes for a minimum period of two weeks, (2) a death in the immediate family, (3) financial responsibilities requiring a student to alter a work schedule to secure employment, (4) change in work schedule as required by an employer, or (5) other emergencies deemed appropriate by the instructor.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

I am providing a rough overview of the semester schedule. However, this is subject to change, so please be sure to check the modules on Canvas each week for updates about when assignments and readings are due.

Week	Day	Unit	Topic	Assignments due	Readings due
1	12-Jan		Welcome and introduction to theory and terminology		
	14-Jan	Classical Theories	Intro to Theory and Terminology, Classical Theories I: Durkheim		<b>Required:</b> Chapter 1; Chapter 2 - section on Durkheim only; Calhoun 1996; Durkheim_Division of Labor. <b>Supplemental:</b> Durkheim_Solidarity.
2	19-Jan		Classical Theories I: Marx and the critique of capitalism		<b>Required:</b> Read the rest of Chapter 2 and Marx's Critique of Capitalism
	21-Jan		Classical Theories I: Weber and the rationalization of society	Irrigation exercise write-up due	<b>Required:</b> Ritzer 1983; Weber_Protestantism and the spirit of capitalism. <b>Supp:</b> Weber_Bureaucracy
3	26-Jan		Classical Theories II: Simmel and Veblen	Group 1 Presentation	<b>Required:</b> Chapter 3 section on Simmel and Veblen, Ordabayeva and Chandon 2011, Delaney 2012.
	28-Jan		Classical Theories II: Mead		<b>Required:</b> Rest of Chapter 3, Blumer 1966. <b>Supp:</b> Mead 1912_Mechanism of social consciousness
4	2-Feb	Contemporary Grand Theories	Contemporary Grand Theories I: Structural functionalism theories (Parsons and Merton)	Mead exercise write-up due	<b>Required:</b> Chapter 4; Rebellon et al 2012_Perceived injustice and delinquency; Merton 1938_Social structure and anomie
	4-Feb		Contemporary Grand Theories I: Conflict theories (Dahrendorf and Mills)	Assesment of Course 1 (5 min)	<b>Required:</b> Guclu 2014. <b>Supp:</b> Mills_The Power Elite; Dahrendorf 1958
5	9-Feb	<b>EXAM 1</b>	<b>EXAM 1 (in-class)</b>		
	11-Feb	Contemporary Grand Theories II	Neo-Marxian critical theories (Marcuse)	Group 2 Presentation	<b>Required:</b> Chapter 5; Marcuse 1964_One dimensional man
6	16-Feb	<i>NO CLASS - MONDAY SCHEDULE</i>			

	18-Feb		Contemporary Grand Theories II; Other important theorists	Group 3 Presentation	<b>Required:</b> Denker and Dougherty 2013_Corporate colonization; Beck 2003
7	23-Feb		The Social Construction of Reality		<b>Required:</b> Berger & Luckman 1966; The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy; The Onion reading
	25-Feb	Contemporary Theories of Everyday Life	Symbolic Interactionism		<b>Required:</b> Chapter 6 pages 139-151; Blumer 1969
8	1-Mar		Dramaturgy and impression management (Goffman)	Group 4 Presentation	<b>Required:</b> Robinson 2007; Goffman_Presentation of self in everyday life
	3-Mar		Ethnomethodology & conversation analysis (Garfinkle)	Assesment of Course 2 (5 min)	<b>Required:</b> Chapter 6 pages 152-157; Attewell 1974_Ethnomethodology since Garfinkle
9	8-Mar	<i>SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS</i>			
	10-Mar	<i>SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS</i>			
10	15-Mar		Exchange Theory (Homans)		Chapter 6 pages 157-163; Other readings TBD
	17-Mar		Rational Choice Theory (Coleman)		Chapter 6 pages 164-171; Other reading TBD
11	22-Mar	<b>EXAM 2</b>		<b>EXAM 2 (in-class)</b>	
	24-Mar	Theories integrating Agency & Structure	Overview: integrative theories	<b>Rough Draft due - Theory Application Essay</b>	<b>Required:</b> Chapter 7; <b>Supp:</b> Emerson 1976
12	29-Mar		Habitus & Field (Bourdieu)	Group 5 Presentation	<b>Required:</b> Bordieu 1986 Carter 2003. <b>Supp:</b> Bourdieu_Distinction
	31-Mar	Feminist Theory	Classic Roots and missing voices: Harriet Martineau and Marianne Weber	<b>Peer Review due - Theory Application Essay</b>	<b>Required:</b> Chapter 8; Deegan 1981
13	5-Apr		Contemporary feminist theory	Group 6 Presentation	<b>Required:</b> Hunnicutt 2009; Budig and England 2001 <b>Supp:</b> Feminist and Gender Theories (for your reference)
	7-Apr	Critical Race Theory	Critical Race Theory	Group 7 Presentation	<b>Required:</b> Revisit the section on Du Bois Du Bois in Chapter 3 and also read Omi and Winant 1994. <b>Supp:</b> Lawrence 2014

14	12-Apr	Postmodern Grand Theories	The Postindustrial Society (Bell); Poststructuralism & Governmentality (Foucault)	<b>Theory Application Final Essay due on Canvas by 5pm</b>	<b>Required:</b> Chapter 9; Powell and Gard 2015.	
	14-Apr		Postmodern Social Theory (Bauman)		Reading TBD	
15	19-Apr	<b>EXAM 3</b>	<b>EXAM 3 (in-class)</b>			
	21-Apr		Consumer Society (Baudrillard and Rizer)		<b>Required:</b> Ritzer 2001	
16	26-Apr		Queer Theory (Butler, Foucault, Sedgwick)	Group 8 Presentation; Extra credit assignment due	<b>Required:</b> West and Zimmerman 1987_Doing gender	
	28-Apr		Globalization theory & critiques of neoliberalism	Final exam handed out	<b>Required:</b> Chapter 10; Other readings TBD	
Finals Week	3-May	<i>NO CLASS - FINALS WEEK</i>			<b>FINAL EXAM DUE by 5pm</b>	