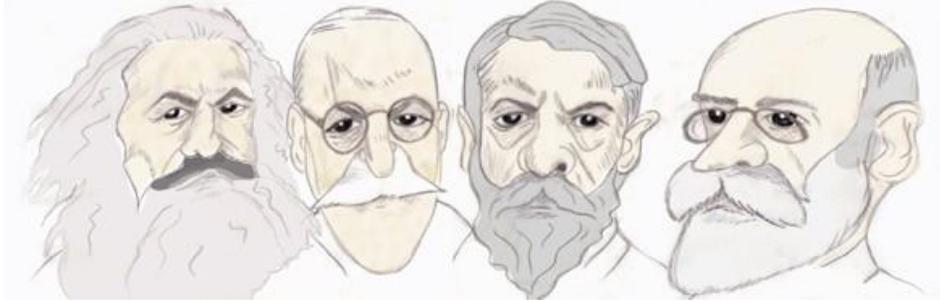


## SOC 4010: CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY



Instructor: Gabriele Ciciurkaite, PhD  
Email: gabriele.ciciurkaite@usu.edu  
Office: Old Main 224E

### Meeting times:

**4:30 pm - 5:45 pm Tuesday/Thursday Old Main 326**

**Office hours: Tuesday & Thursday 11:00 am - 12:00 pm**

### About the Course:

This course offers an introduction to classical and contemporary sociological theory. We will explore several topics, namely: 1) what are the major themes of the foundational texts of sociology; 2) how these texts were shaped by the social context in which they were produced; 3) how do these texts connect with broader development in social and economic thoughts in the nineteenth and early twentieth century; 4) how do the key authors compare with one another; and 5) how do they influence sociological theorizing today. The more general objective is to learn about and reflect on the role of theory in sociological research.

### Learning Objectives:

The goal of this class is that you learn to think like a sociologist. That means, that you understand the major assumptions of theories we will cover in this course and for every theory you encounter, you are able to think of hypotheses and empirical data to confirm or disprove it. Thinking like a sociologist also means that you see how events are rarely isolated phenomena, but have causes and effects on social life. When you read or hear of any news, my goal is that you be able to think about some of the possible explanations for the event, how it might affect other things, and how it might be part of a cycle or ongoing back-and-forth social process.

Upon successful completion of this course, you will:

1. Have knowledge and understanding of major classical and contemporary sociological theories (IDEA objective: *learning fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories*).
2. Be able to analyze, synthesize, apply, and critique those theories (IDEA objective: *learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view*).
3. Be able to express your understanding of sociological theories in academic prose, orally, and creatively (IDEA objective: *learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view*).

Each assignment, including in-class activity, discussion, and lecture will contribute to these goals. The three major graded assignments (see below) emphasize different aspects of the learning objectives. The exams will you give you an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding and

analyze, synthesize, apply, and critique classical and contemporary theorists' ideas. You will demonstrate orally your understanding of each theory studied in the course in the class discussions and in-class activities.

**Course Format:** This course will revolve around numerous readings and active discussion in class of these selections, as well as lecture to supplement and provide background information on each theorist or theoretical paradigm. We will spend the bulk of time wading through and struggling to understand the writings through primary readings composed by the actual theorists, themselves. But, we will supplement this with discussions as to the relevance of these ideas, and investigate the socio-cultural circumstances surrounding these writers and their ideas.

**Required course materials:**

**Book:** Sociological Theory, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition by Ritzer and Stepnisky. Publisher: McGraw-Hill.

**Additional Readings:** Additional readings will be made available as pdf files on Canvas.

**Class Notes and Presentations:**

Lecture slides and student presentations and other documents will be linked to this syllabus for each class. See course schedule. You can download or print these documents as you wish. I must reserve the right to revise/update the slides, presentations and other documents at any time during the session.

**Grading/evaluation:**

Course grades will be based on the following weighting of course requirements:

3 in-class exams	60%
Final reaction paper	15%
Student presentations	15%
Participation	10%

3 in-class exams

There will be three exams during the semester – one on classical sociological theories, and a two on contemporary sociological theories. (See Course Schedule for dates.) They will be closed book and held in class (so, there is no exam during Finals Week for this course). The exams will assess whether you have done the readings, paid attention in class, and thought about the material seriously. They will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. More information will be provided as we go along.

Student Presentations

Each student (with a colleague or two) will prepare and present on assigned readings. (At the time of writing there are 36 students registered with 14 presentation readings, so most presentations will be prepared by 3 students and a few by 2 students.)

Presentation topics are numbered R1 to R14 on the course outline. A typical presentation takes no more than 30 minutes and focuses on one of the readings and consists of:

1. Summary of the reading (2 or 3 pages, no more). You should bring enough photocopies to class for everyone present. (Alternatively, send the electronic copy of the document to me in sufficient time that I can make copies at the Sociology department.)

2. Include in your presentation two or three questions for class discussion. These can refer to passages of the reading that you feel need clarification, or articulations of the argument that you think have interesting implications, etc.
3. *Due at the next class period (or the next day for the last class):* 3 multiple-choice questions about the reading or the class discussion and an electronic version of your reading summary. The final exam will be based in large part on the questions provided by students. I will maintain a cumulative file of the questions.

### Reaction Paper

These papers should be typed, and between 5-8 pages, not counting heading, using a normal size and type font. You can pursue a variety of options while writing these papers, so long as it is clear that you have read and thought about the course readings. You may choose to highlight strengths or weakness in the theory(s) presented, you may choose to discuss how the theory applies to current events, or a personal experience, etc. Feel free to be creative, but make sure that your paper is not just a summary of the reading, and instead is a reaction to it. Because the papers are so short, you may choose to address only one of the course readings for your reaction paper, however, you are welcome to and encouraged to react to multiple readings. If you are unsure about how to best approach a reaction paper, please feel free to consult with me. **Under no circumstances will late papers be accepted.**

### Attendance/Participation

Attendance is required, and your grade for this part of the class depends on coming to class regularly, on time, and prepared to discuss the readings. Everyone is granted three free absences during the semester; any additional absence will be penalized by reducing your final grade by 5%. The only exceptions beyond this will be for serious family or medical emergencies.

Your participation score will be based on your contribution to class discussions. Many intelligent contributions to class discussions bring higher score. A range of contributions will be deemed adequate, so you need not worry if you are just the quiet sort.

The grading distribution is as follows:

94 and up	=	A
90 to 93	=	A-
87 to 89	=	B+
84 to 86	=	B
80 to 83	=	B-
77 to 79	=	C+
74 to 76	=	C
70 to 73	=	C-
67 to 69	=	D+
60 to 66	=	D
59 <	=	F

### **Make-up Exams:**

A make-up exam will be arranged only for true emergencies. The instructor must be notified before the exam takes place (if at all possible). A desire to leave early before the end of the semester, vacation rentals, plane reservations, marriage plans, marriage plans of relatives or friends, other appointments interfering with the exam schedule (including job interviews and routine doctor appointments), *or other exams scheduled on the same day* are emphatically *not* valid reasons for requesting a make-up.

**Office Hours:**

I encourage you to come to my office hours if you are having trouble with the course material, or if you would like to discuss any concerns you are having with the class. If you are unable to come during my normal office hours I am more than happy to set up an alternate time during in which we can meet.

**Grade appeal policy:**

We all make mistakes and it is consistent with my teaching philosophy that students be allowed the right to have those mistakes corrected. In order to facilitate that process: **always keep all graded work in case there is a discrepancy with your grade.** If you do not agree with a grade you have received, you may submit a *written* grade appeal to me within *one week* of receiving the grade. Appeals received after one week will not be considered unless there are serious extenuating circumstances. Write a rationale addressing all comments given to you on the assignment and explain your reasons for wanting a change in grade. We will then set a time to meet and discuss your appeal. Finally, if there are circumstances prohibiting you from completing course requirements, please see me *before* the end of the course.

**Communication:**

Key points regarding communication:

- ❖ Note that I do *not* monitor my e-mail 24/7. You should reasonably expect a reply to your electronic communications within 24 hours, *except for weekends and holidays*. Please include the course number in the subject line of all email messages (SOC 4010) and your name.
- ❖ Please keep a copy of all of your work. We cannot be responsible for missing work due to technical issues.
- ❖ It is expected that students in this course will access their e-mail **at least once a day**.

**Electronics:**

I do not allow the use of any electronic devices in class, which includes cell phones, laptops, Ipads, and other devices. The World Wide Web is just too tempting. Any slides I use will be posted to the course website on Canvas, which should minimize the notes you'll need to take. Exceptions will be made for students who require a laptop for accessibility reasons or who see the laptop as essential to their work.

**Classroom Conduct:**

Professional Behavior is expected in this course at all times. This class will have students enrolled from a variety of backgrounds who hold a variety of differing opinions. This diversity only adds to the enjoyment of the class and our learning experiences. Additionally, we will be covering sensitive subjects on which students may hold differing views. Your opinions and participation in this class is highly valued, and you are encouraged to share your opinions, so long as it is presented in a respectful way. Students who are unable to act professionally and treat others with respect will be removed from the class and receive a failing grade

**Academic Honesty:**

Plagiarism (Latin for "to kidnap") which is using others' work and presenting it as your own, **is not allowed**. You must abide by the rules on honesty in academic work, outlined here:

<http://www.usu.edu/studentervices/studentcode/article6.cfm>. Please be familiar with the rules and if you are confused, do not hesitate to ask me to clarify them.

**Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:**

If you have a documented disability and need reasonable accommodation to participate in this course, please make an appointment to meet with me as soon as possible so that together we can arrange the necessary reasonable accommodations. Please note that prior to our meeting you must obtain documentation of your disability through the Disability Resource Center (DRC) on campus.

**TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE**

**NOTE: This class schedule is tentative. Readings, videos, and topics are subject to change at the instructor's discretion**

Week		Topics	Readings
Week 1	Aug 29	Welcome	No readings
	Aug 31	Intro to Sociological Theory	Chapter 1
Week 2	Sept 5	Karl Marx	Chapter 2
	Sept 7		R1: "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844" R2: "The German Ideology"
Week 3	Sept 12	Emile Durkheim	Chapter 3
	Sept 14		R3: "The Division of Labor in Society" R4: "Suicide"
Week 4	Sept 19	Max Weber	Chapter 4
	Sept 21		R5: "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" R6: "The Types of Legitimate Domination"
Week 5	Sept 26	Review for exam	
	Sept 28	<b>FIRST IN-CLASS EXAM</b>	
Week 6	Oct 3	Structural functionalism	Chapter 7
	Oct 5		R7: "Structural Components of the Social System" R8: "Social Structure and Anomie"
Week 7	Oct 10	Critical Theory	Chapter 8
	Oct 12		R9: "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" R10: "One-Dimensional Man"
Week 8	Oct 17	Michele Foucault	The Sociological Theory of Michele Foucault (on Canvas)
	Oct 19	<b>NO CLASS - Friday class schedule</b>	
Week 9	Oct 24	Symbolic Interactionism	Chapter 9

	Oct 26		R11: "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" R12: "Symbolic Interactionism"
Week 10	Oct 31	Review for Second Exam	
	Nov 2	<b>SECOND IN-CLASS EXAM</b>	
Week 11	Nov 7	Pierre Bourdieu	The Sociological Theory of Pierre Bourdieu (On Canvas)
	Nov 9	In-class movie	
Week 12	Nov 14	Gender, Race, and Difference	Chapter 15
	Nov 16		R13: "The Conceptual Practices of Power" R14: "Black Feminist Epistemology"
Week 13	Nov 21	Global Society - Giddens	Chapters 14, 16
	Nov 23	NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING	
Week 14	Nov 28	Review for exam	
	Nov 30	<b>THIRD IN-CLASS EXAM</b>	
Week 15	Dec 5	No test week	Use the time to work on your final paper
	Dec 7	No test week	Use the time to work on your final paper
	<b>Dec 12</b>	<b>Final Paper Due</b>	