

SOC 406: Sociological Theory

TTh 2-3:15 Admin 110

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Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce and examine the foundational ideas, perspectives and texts in sociological theory. We will begin our study by examining the work of classical theorists Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. We will also consider mid-century thinkers such as Mills and Foucault. The second half of the course will focus on the work of more contemporary theorist as we explore post-modernism, feminist theory, critical race theory, and queer theory.

We will investigate not only the theoretical traditions themselves, but also consider the social context and academic environments from which these thinkers and theoretical traditions have emerged. We will trace the roots of contemporary sociological thinking through history, and explore the strengths, weakness and contributions of seminal works, as well as those that challenge the regularly accepted “canon” of sociology.

Textbook (Available at the Campus Bookstore and Online)

Seidman, Steven (2012) *Contested Knowledge: Social Theory Today*, 5th edition

Excerpts from theorist original texts will be posted weekly on Blackboard (BB)

Course Goals

These are some of the key concepts you will learn in this course. As time permits throughout the semester, we will work to reinforce these objectives. By the end of the semester, students should be able to provide well thought out, clear, and complete answers to the following questions:

- What are the key theoretical traditions and ideas in sociological theory?
- How can I effectively read and understand social theory critically?
- How has sociological theory been influenced by the social context of its emergence?
- What tensions, debates and challenges to the accepted canon of sociological theory exist?

Course Assignments and Grading

- **Participation (20%)**
 - **Attendance (10%)** - You may have three absences during the semester. No excuse is required. More than three absences will result in a loss of points for attendance. Students with extraordinary circumstances are required to meet with me.
 - **In Class Participation (10%)** - You will be expected to participate in class activities, including small and large group discussions.
- **Three Guided Essays (60%)** - These essays will allow you to demonstrate your understanding of and engagement with the social theorists and theoretical traditions we are exploring.
- **Final (20%)** - Your final essay will engage multiple perspectives, and utilize the work of a number of thinkers to consider the way(s) in which sociological theory has evolved, engaged with conflicts and shaped the contemporary nature of the discipline.

Classroom Policies

The professor reserves the right to change the syllabus and assignments. Changes may be made to accommodate the specific needs of the class.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty, including the giving or receiving of improper help on examinations or assignments, falsifying records, and plagiarism (the act of stealing and using, as one's own, the ideas or the expression of ideas of another) is not tolerated at Concord University. These behaviors can result in failure of the course or expulsion from the university. Please refer to page 39 of the university academic catalog for the consequences of academic dishonesty.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Concord University is committed to responding to the needs of students with disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please inform me at the beginning of the semester if you have a disability and are requesting accommodations. Students should register with CU's Disability Services Office, located in the Athens campus Jerry L. Beasley Student Center, Bottom Floor, across from the Campus Post Office. The Disability Services Office phone number is 304-384-6036 or you can email the Director, Nancy Ellison, at nellison@concord.edu for assistance.

Course Readings

Readings listed for each day of class in the course schedule are to have been read **prior** to coming to that day's class. Additional reading maybe assigned and will be distributed in class or on the course Blackboard site.

Student Athletes

Student athletes are required to notify me in advance to be excused from class and are responsible for making up all missing assignments and readings.

Classroom Conduct

This course is heavily reliant on discussion, which includes difficult dialogue at times. **This is an inclusive and safe classroom.** All discussion points and questions are valued; as such students are expected to treat one another and the professor thoughtfully and with respect. Racist, sexist, homophobic or other pejorative or discriminatory language will not be tolerated and students who insist on such behavior will be asked to leave the classroom.

Cell phones and other electronic devices should be turned off before coming to class.

DO NOT text message or use your phone during class!

Course Schedule

Jan 12 - Course Introduction

Jan 14 - How to Read and Write about Social Theory, Seidman "Introduction"

Considering the Canon

Jan 19 - Siedman Chapter 2, "The Revolutionary Theory of Karl Marx"

Jan 21 - Excerpts from Karl Marx (BB)

Jan 26 - Siedman Chapter 3, "The Promise of Sociology: Emile Durkheim"

Jan 28 - Excerpts from Emile Durkheim (BB)

Feb 2 - Siedman Chapter 4, "The Ironic Social Theory of Max Weber"

Feb 4 - Excerpts from Max Weber (BB)

Feb 9 - Guided Essay #1

Feb 11 - Essay Work Day

Critical Theory

Feb 16 - Siedman Chapter 7, "The Moral Sociology of C. Wright Mills"

Feb 18 - Excerpts from *The Sociological Imagination* (BB)

Feb 23 - Professor Noam Chomsky Talk 2-3:30, Fine Arts Auditorium

Review <https://chomsky.info> before attending the talk

Feb 25 - Professor Chomsky Discussion

Mar 1 - Siedman Chapter 12, "Michel Foucault's Disciplinary Society"

Mar 3 - Video: Chomsky vs. Foucault

Excerpts Foucault "Discipline and Punish" and "Power" (BB)

Mar 8 - Siedman Chapter 14, "Feminist Theory/Masculinity Studies"

Mar 10 - Excerpts from "Combahee River Collective" and "Understanding Patriarchy" (BB)

Mar 14-18: No Class, Spring Break

Mar 22 - Siedman Chapter 15, "Critical Race Theory/White Studies"

Mar 24 - Excerpts from *Boarderland/La Frontera* (BB)

Mar 29 - Guided Essay #2

Mar 31 - No Class

Resistance Theory

Apr 5 - Siedman Chapter 16, "Lesbian, Gay and Queer Theory/Heterosexual Studies"

Apr 7 - Queer Theory excerpts from "Butler & Katz" (BB)

Apr 12 - Siedman Chapter 19, "Global Capitalism: Immanuel Wallerstein and Manual Castells"

Apr 14 - Video: Networks of Outrage and Hope by Manual Castells

Apr 19 - Siedman Chapter 23, "Nationalism and the Crisis of Postcolonial Nations"

Apr 21 - Excerpts from Chatterjee "Nations and Fragments" (BB)

Apr 26 - Siedman Chapter 21, "Theories of the Other"

Apr 28 - Excerpts from Haraway "Situated Knowledge" (BB)

May 5 - Final Paper Due on Blackboard