

**SOC 300: SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY  
ON-LINE COURSE SYLLABUS  
SUMMER 2020**

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**REQUIRED TEXT:**

**Scott A. Applerouth and Laura Desfor Edles. Classical and Contemporary Sociological Theory, Text and Readings *Second Edition*: (ISBN: 9781412992336)**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is designed to acquaint students with the general development of sociological theories from their earliest foundations to the modern era. The nature of theories and the historical context of the writers will be explored in detail by focusing upon sociological concepts, propositions, events, and biographies. Furthermore, students will write one standard research paper on a topic in sociology using one or more of the sociological theories to explain the issue or problem.

Feminist scholars such as bell hooks influence how I teach this class. I use a dialectical method which requires for us to learn some about each other. I will use the course material to help you develop your knowledge of sociological theory and understanding of your “self” within the social fabric. Within this framework, I, as your instructor, am not the purveyor of all knowledge; we teach each other. First, you must provide a discussion of your interests and consider how the different sociological theories frame the discussion about these topics. Whether you have well-defined interests and job goals or are just beginning to consider what interests you, the social theories that you will consider in this class will be used to help you develop your academic and professional skills, your understanding of the major classical and modern theoretical paradigms within sociology, your understanding of how the social world operates, and your voice (an important concept for feminist scholars). This approach will also help you learn to construct your own social theory which will be important when you take SOC 320 Sociological Research Methods and SOC 400 Senior Seminar in Sociology.

**COURSE GOALS:**

1. Students will enhance their writing skills.
2. Students will investigate the social conditions in Europe and the United States at the beginning of sociology as an academic discipline.
3. Students will examine the classical sociological theorists responsible for the development of sociology.
4. Students will explore modern theories in sociology, including the ideas of W. E. B. Dubois, feminist theory, and symbolic interactionism.
5. Students will examine the role of theory in sociology, particularly as it is related to conducting research and examining social problems.
6. Students will gain experience in writing a sociological research paper.

**COURSE OUTCOMES:**

1. Students will integrate the terms and perspectives of sociological theories by engaging in class discussion board posts.
2. Students will analyze how key concepts interrelate within the larger social theories through writing essay assignments and exam answers.
3. Students will identify a social issue or problem of particular interest and write a research paper that incorporates at least one theoretical perspective.

**EVALUATION:**

The course will be divided into 4 parts. There will be discussion board post for each part of the course with a midterm exam after Part Two and a Final Exam at the end of Part Four of the course. All of the discussion board forums and open book exams will cover the material found in the assigned readings. The discussion board forums will cover specific concepts and ideas from the readings. For instance, I may ask the question, “What does Marx mean by the term alienation?” I will want the class to engage in a discussion of the meaning of the term and how it relates to other concepts within Marx’s theory as well. There will be plenty of room for the expansion of the discussions in these forums. The more you discuss the different concepts, the better prepared you will be to answer the essay questions for the exams.

The midterm and final exams will be broad, critical essays that will require answers that integrate the terms and perspectives of the sociological theories in the readings in this class. For the first part of each exam, you will create and submit exam questions to provide the opportunity to discuss concepts of personal interest and to demonstrate critical thinking skills by developing questions that focus on how key concepts interrelate within the larger social theories. There are also example questions for each theorist posted in the assignments tab of Canvas as well.

In your essays, you will need to demonstrate the ability to present a cogent and reasoned argument of the strengths and weaknesses as well as the critical perspectives inherent in the theorists’ ideas or current topics under debate. The course is intended to introduce critical thinking in sociology, and you must be able to analyze and assess competing ideas in a thorough manner. These essays may be developed over a series of critical responses back and forth between you and me as necessary and as time permits throughout the semester.

You will make posts to discussion board topics throughout each of the 4 parts of the course.

You will also write a 10 to 12 page research paper incorporating one or more theoretical perspectives into the discussion of a social issue or problem of particular interest to you.

**WEIGHTING OF GRADE:**

Discussion Board Posts	20%
Midterm Exam:	30%
Final Exam	30%
Research Paper:	20%
Total:	100%

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 63-66  
D- 60-62  
F 0-59

The course is composed of 4 parts:

Part One of the course contains a general introduction to sociological theory and the readings of W. E. B. Dubois and Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

Part Two of the course contains ideas from classical sociological theorists including Marx and Durkheim.

Part Three of the course contains ideas from Weber, Mead, and symbolic interactionists.

Part Four of the course contains ideas from contemporary feminists and work on the research paper.

The open book exams will be evaluated for clarity of thought, correct use of sociological terms, grammar, syntax, and critical thinking. The graded essays will be returned with comments to help you improve the quality of your work. If a grade lower than an "A" has been earned in the first draft of an exam or paper, **and as long as the work was submitted on time**, you will be afforded the opportunity to rewrite and resubmit the essays to improve the quality of your work and earn more credit towards the grade for the exam or paper in question. **You will NOT be afforded the opportunity to revise drafts of any work that is submitted less than 2 weeks prior to the end of the semester.**

**Note: The MBC Honor Code Policy concerning cheating and plagiarism will be strictly followed. Any assignment will receive an automatic "0" (zero) and an "F" will be recorded for the course grade should a student be caught plagiarizing. This type of offense demonstrates a disregard for the very foundations of academic thought and the learning process itself.**

#### **COURSE OUTLINE:**

##### **Part One:**

**Week One:** What is Social Theory? And the Beginnings of Sociology: C. Wright Mills and Peter Berger (readings posted on line and Chapter One of the textbook)

**First assignment: 1<sup>st</sup> two Discussion posts and email due June 1st**

**Weeks Two and Three:** Charlotte Perkins Gilman and W. E. B. Du Bois

**First meeting and/or phone conversation with instructor due: June 8th**

##### **Part Two**

**Week Four:** Karl Marx and the Material Basis of Social Life

**Week Five:** Marx continued

**Week Six:** Emile Durkheim and Morality and Order in Modern Social Life

**Week Seven:** Durkheim continued

**Midterm Exam and topic idea and introductory paragraph of research paper due: July 3rd**

##### **Part Three**

**Week Eight:** Max Weber and the Spread of Rationality and Bureaucracies

**Week Nine:** George Herbert Mead and forms of Interaction

**Week Ten:** Symbolic Interactionists

**Annotated bibliography, outline, and first rough draft of paper due: July 17th**

#### **Part 4**

**Week Eleven:** Gender Inequality: Smith, Butler, Connell, and Collins: Contemporary Feminist Theory

**Week Twelve:** Feminists continued

**Final Exam and second rough draft of paper due: July 31st (deadline for students to receive feedback on answers in time to revise and resubmit based upon instructor's feedback).**

**Week Thirteen:** Work on Research Paper and revisions to earlier exams/assignments

**Final Discussion board post, Revisions of all previous work in the semester, and Final draft of Research Paper Due: August 14th**

#### **COURSE SCHEDULING:**

There are suggested deadlines for each of the elements for this course; and it is highly advised that you turn in work consistently throughout the semester. My feedback from work turned in early in the semester will be valuable for letting you know if you are including what I expect in your essays. As long as the work is submitted on time and before the final two weeks of the semester, I will allow you to revise and resubmit any of your work based upon my feedback so that you can raise your grades on exams and/or the paper. Grades for your essays and papers will be an average of your grades for the first and second drafts of the papers. You should complete all of the work for the class prior to revising and resubmitting any other assignments unless I state otherwise, however.

#### **Important notes concerning Deadlines:**

**Should a student become unable to meet a course deadline, please contact me before the deadline to schedule another deadline and discuss the plan of action moving forward in the class for the rest of the semester. I will not accept late work unless such arrangements are made prior to the due date.**

#### **Important Note about meeting deadlines and passing the class:**

**Since this class meets the writing emphasis requirements, in order to have an opportunity to pass the class a student must turn in at least half of the work prior to the deadlines and/or the final two weeks in the semester to be afforded time to revise and resubmit work based upon my comments. A student will receive a grade of "F" if he or she does not submit at least half of his or her work prior to July 31st.**

#### **GETTING STARTED:**

Please send an email to me from your Mary Baldwin email account after you have signed up for the class and have reviewed this syllabus. This way we can become acquainted, and I can answer your initial questions. Also, if you ever have a question or comment that you want to bring to my attention at any time during the semester, please do not hesitate to do so. I will be glad to answer any questions that come up for you while you trek through the readings and assignments for this course. You can expect that I will respond to your emails within two days and that I will return comments to your exams and papers within one to two weeks.

To get started on your coursework, skim over the sections of the required readings for the class and begin looking over the entire table of contents of the text. Please let me know which chapters and sections are of particular interest to you as early in the semester as possible so that we may help you explore more deeply in those areas as you have some flexibility in the readings for the final exam. Email is the best way to stay in contact with me.

**I want to stress that you should contact me if you have not heard back from me within a week of when you submit an assignment or within 2 days if it is a simple question about**

**some aspect of the class. There is a good chance I have missed your email, so please be persistent.**

**Policy on “Extensions”:**

Should you find that you cannot complete all of the work for the course, you may take an ET (extended time) for the course ***ONLY IF you have a documented illness or have completed at least half of the work in the class. This policy means that you must complete at least half of the assignments and take at least the midterm exam \_or\_ take the midterm exam and complete the paper by the ADP deadline for all semester coursework to be eligible for an ET.***

For the first discussion board, please tell everyone in the class a little bit about yourself. For the second discussion board post, please read the C. Wright Mills’ essay on the Sociological Imagination and the Peter Berger article then answer the following questions: What is the sociological imagination and/or the sociological way of looking at the world? How is it unique, and how is it not unique? How does it compare with how you interpret the modern world? What other courses have you taken in sociology? And what aspects of the sociological imagination were expressed in those courses? Give a lot of examples from your life or what you have seen in the news in your discussion.

Please read the table of contents of the text, and send a list of the sections that appear to be the most interesting to you. Tell me why they are interesting to you as well. Start reading the introductions to the theories that interest you the most. Discuss what you learn. These answers will give us a basis to discuss the rest of the material for the course.

As you read through the material for the exams, please consider that I will want you to submit essay questions that you would either like to answer and/or that you think comprise a comprehensive exam for the first set of readings. I will give you the option to answer one or more your questions for your exam. I may suggest revisions to your questions to help guide you to discuss many of the more central concepts of the particular theorists. There are example questions posted on Canvas for each of the theorists. You may answer those questions if you like, but I would prefer for you to come up with your own questions that relate to your own research and personal interests.