SOC 300: SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY
ON-LINE COURSE SYLLABUS
FALL 2012

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TEXTS:

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course is designed to acquaint students with the general development of sociological theory from its 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 concepts, propositions, events, and biographies. Furthermore, students will write one standard research paper using the Guide to Writing Sociology Papers on a topic in sociology using one or more of the sociological theories to explain the issue or problem.

Feminist scholars, including 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 self. 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 the topics that interest you. 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 theoretical paradigms within sociology, 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.

EVALUATION:
There will be three open book exams covering the material found in the assigned readings. These exams will be broad, critical essays using the terms, perspectives, and theories of the founders of sociology as well as modern sociologists. 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.

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 need to make posts to four different discussion board topics.

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:

3 Exams: 60%
4 discussion board posts: 20%
1 Paper: 20%
Total: 100%

A  90-100
B  80-89
C  70-79
D  60-69
F  0-59

Note: The MBC Honor Code Policy concerning cheating and plagiarism will be strictly followed.

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.

You should obtain a copy of A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers in order to use the editorial guidelines in the book for writing your paper on a topical area in the field of sociology.

COURSE OUTLINE:

Week One: August Comte and the beginnings of sociology

Week Two: Karl Marx and the Material Basis of Social Life

Week Three: Emile Durkheim and Morality and Order in Modern Social Life

First assignment: 1st Discussion board post and meeting and/or phone conversation due: September 24th *** this deadline is of utmost importance. If you do not contact me in some fashion before this date you will be dropped from the class.

Test One, topic idea, and introductory paragraph of paper due: October 1st
Week Four: Max Weber and the Spread of Rationality

Week Five: Georg Simmel, George Herbert Mead, and Forms of Interaction

Week Six: W. E. B. Du Bois and Modern Sociological Theory: The Major Schools

Test Two; 2nd Discussion board post; and annotated bibliography, outline, and first rough draft of paper due: October 29th

Week Seven: Anomie and Deviance: Structural Functionalism and Conflict Theory

Week Eight: We Are Who We Pretend To Be: Symbolic Interaction

Week Nine: The Immoral, Ordinary Society: Ethnomethodology and Exchange Theory

Week Ten: Gender Inequality: Contemporary Feminist Theory

Week Eleven: The Analysis of “Nothing”: Globalization in the Modern World

Test Three, 3rd Discussion board post, and second rough draft of paper due: November 30th

Week Twelve: Work on Research Paper

Week Thirteen: Work on Research Paper

Final Discussion board post and Final Research Paper Due: December 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. You should complete all of the work for the class prior to revising and resubmitting any other assignments unless I state otherwise, however.

GETTING STARTED:
Please send me an email 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 a couple of 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 Ritzer text. Please let me know which chapters and sections are of particular interest to you as early in the semester as possible. 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 for the course **ONLY IF you have completed at least half of the work in the class.** This policy means that you must post to at least 2 discussion board topics and take at least two exams _or_ take one exam and complete the paper by the ADP deadline for all semester coursework to be eligible for an ET.

Reading list:

Test one: pages 1-26, 43-111.
Test two: pages 26-39, 112-221.
Test three: (to be negotiated from within the following pages) 39-42, 235-326, 347-498, 573-643. and/or your choice

For the first discussion board post, I would like for you to read C. Wright Mills’ essay on the Sociological Imagination (which is available on-line and/or will be sent to you in an email) then answer the following questions: What is the sociological imagination? How does it compare with early sociological thought and conditions? 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?

Also look over the table of contents of the Ritzer text, and send me a list of the sections that look the most interesting to you. Tell me why they are interesting to you as well. 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 to the development of sociological thought.