

Sociological Theory
SYA 4010-002/53631 (3 credit hours)
Fall 2011

Classroom: LA 332

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SYLLABUS

REQUIRED BOOKS

Lemert (ed.)	Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings
Abercombie, <i>et al</i>	The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology
Culleton	In Search of April Raintree
Zinn	Marx in Soho
Rubin	Families on the Fault Line
Ibsen	A Doll's House
Ehrenreich	Nickel and Dimed
Steinbeck	Grapes of Wrath

RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

Fogarty	Grammar Girl's Quick and Dirty Tips for Better Writing
Trenga	The Curious Case of the Misplaced Modifier: How to Solve the Mysteries of Weak Writing
O'Conner	Woe Is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English
Cook	Line by Line: How to Edit Your Own Writing
Zinn:	A People's History of the United States

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- (1) Examine the basic ideas of classical and modern sociological thought.
- (2) Identify the philosophical and conceptual core of the discipline of sociology.
- (3) Examine the historical contexts in which social theories are developed.
- (4) Explore the relationship between the contemporary and classical sociological thought.
- (5) Evaluate the relevance of sociological theories to contemporary society and to understanding global social change.
- (6) Use writing as a means of critically thinking about the works of social theorists who have influenced contemporary ways of seeing the world.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

"There is more to seeing that meets the eye."

--N. R. Hanson

The word "theory" comes from the Greek word "theorein" which means "to look at" or "to see." It was often used in the context of looking at a theater stage, hence suggesting looking at something that is not "a reality" but the make-believe of actors playing. Looking at the world *as if* it were a make-believe or stage play is precisely the way I intend to use the term "social theory" in this course. In a different and more technical sense, theories are ways of seeing the world, our "*Weltanschauung*" -- our worldview. In this sense, theory is how we understand the world we live in. My understanding of theory is based on the proposition that *all human beings are intellectuals, and all intellectuals develop theories*. Theory is therefore not esoteric but a daily *activity*. Descartes said: "*Cogito, ergo sum.*" "I think, therefore I am." But the reverse is also true: *I live, therefore I theorize*. We live, and we are *conscious* that we live, and therefore we *must* develop theories. In this sense, theories simply provide us with a set of linguistic metaphors to understand the world. Many social theorists, for example, have tried to understand basic questions about the relationship of human beings to "nature" and to each other. Could we separate humanity from "nature" to begin with? If living, thinking, and symbolizing occur concomitantly, then what *is* "nature?" Chief Seattle (1786-1866), a Native American leader who certainly did not "acquire" his theory by attending a university offers a most profound answer:

"We are part of the earth and it is part of us, for all things share the same breath . . . all things are connected."

David Bohm, a prominent quantum physicist, puts forward the same idea. According to Bohm (in *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, 1980), all phenomena are

"to be understood not as . . . independently and permanently but rather as product[s] that [have been] formed in the whole flowing movement and that will ultimately dissolve back into that movement."

Since we, as theorists, live and think *simultaneously*, we must recognize that these problems are always perceived in particular social and historical contexts. Every theory has a history, and none is independent of social context. I have therefore organized this course around the following question: In what ways did the social context in which classical social theorists were writing (e.g., the emergence of modernity, nationalism and industrial capitalism, along with the transfiguration of ancient systems of authority) condition the various ways in which these theorists thought about society? In what ways did their theories change the social context of their times? What were their underlying assumptions? Were they conscious of the assumptions behind their ways of seeing? What are the underlying assumptions behind *our* ways of seeing? And how did *we* come to believe/accept/internalize those assumptions? This course, therefore, is not meant to be about learning for the sake of learning; it is meant to be a journey of *self-discovery*. A way of seeing is a way of being, just as a way of being is a way of seeing.

I am proposing a twofold objective: (1) to critically evaluate the works of major thinkers who have influenced contemporary ways of seeing the world, so that (2) *we* develop, by way of example, our *own* theories about society, social existence, and ourselves. **If you have never thought of yourself as a social theorist, it's time to do so now.**

Do you agree with these objectives? Why? And what is (are) your alternative(s)? This course is an "ongoing project" and this means that I need your active participation and feedback.

"Complacency is a far more dangerous attitude than outrage."

--Naome Littlebear

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY: STUDENTS AS INTELLECTUALS:

The philosophical perspective that guides my teaching practice emphasizes democracy, engagement, and empowerment. The classroom, in this course, is not where you passively listen and take notes; it is, on the contrary, where you display an active voice and presence. I think teaching means **facilitating discovery through interconnecting**. For me, this requires that I conceive of students as intellectuals and not as objects. For you, it implies that learning is not about "receiving" knowledge; it is about active and critical appropriation of knowledge. Discussion and critique are therefore essential in this course. Learning for critical consciousness is certainly more challenging than learning for memorization. But it is also more rewarding because it involves nurturing our curiosity, inquisitive spirit, and creativity.

What do you think? Do you think this course is for you? Why or why not?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

I will evaluate you in terms of several criteria, including performance on the written examination and consistency of classroom preparation. I will decide your final grades based on:

(1) Class Attendance, Participation, and Professionalism (30 points)-

"Invisibility is not a natural state for anyone."

-- Mitsuye Yamada

I need your cooperation in developing an atmosphere conducive to learning. I would like to learn all of your names and your academic and/or professional background and interests. Please **bring a small photo** (or a clear copy of one), which you can attach to your class participation form. The **class participation form** must be turned in; otherwise, you might end up not getting credit for class participation. Please, if possible, sit in about the same place for several classes in a row.

Class Attendance: Attendance is required and will be recorded; if illness and other serious event would make absence unavoidable, please make sure that you will let me know in advance. Please arrive on time, and do not leave early. Unexplained tardiness and/or absenteeism not only keep you from knowing what is going on, but may be interpreted as evidence of apathy or discourtesy. If you miss any part of any class, you are responsible for getting notes, assignments, and handouts from another member of the class, **before** the next class meeting.

Professionalism: Please do not talk with other students, as this would be disruptive for the class. If you have a question about the material we are covering, ask me, rather than asking another student. (I really do not mind answering questions, clarifying a statement, repeating myself, etc.). Lack of professionalism inside the classroom (e.g., holding a private conversation with another student, reading material related or unrelated to this course, exchanging written comments) may lead to a failing grade.

Participation: I expect that you read all required books and articles and demonstrate your preparedness by **active participation** in class. This includes any or all of the following: **sharing insights into the reading material, raising critical questions, responding to questions raised, and advancing the discussion to higher levels.** The assigned readings include *original* works; some of you may find the material denser than other social science you have read before. Therefore, close reading (and **rereading**) of the material and class participation are essential.

(2) Twelve short written assignments (typewritten; 5 points each, 60 points total)-

Each assignment will consist of two parts: (a) commentary and (b) posing a significant sociological question. For part (a) write a short commentary that ties together **all** of the assigned readings. These commentaries are open-ended, but you **must demonstrate that you have carefully read and thought about each reading**. For part (b), formulate a significant sociological question **about a specific reading**. As someone who believes that there are no “dumb” questions, I will be my pleasure to read, and reflect upon, all questions; **to get credit, however, you must formulate a sociological question that is specific and relevant to at least one of the assigned readings**. Please give specific reference to the readings with author’s name and the page number). In other words, avoid **general** and/or hypothetical questions such as: “why did the author become a sociologist?” “What would the author have said if s/he were still alive?” “Why haven’t people paid more attention to this theory?” “Why does this author use so many words to make a simple point?” “Why is the universe expanding?”

As much as I dislike uniformity, I have to ask you to follow these guidelines:

1. Do not exceed **one** page, **typed, single-spaced**. (But as long as you do not exceed one page, you may type double-spaced).
2. Choose a **title** that best captures **your** understanding of the readings.
3. Put your name (**Last name first**), the **assignment number**, and the title of this course (**Sociological Theory/ Fall 2011** on the **top right-hand corner** of your paper (this will help me with alphabetizing your papers). On the top left-hand corner write the title of the assigned readings and pages (see the reading schedule). Then put the word count.
4. Provide a printed copy of each assignment on the due date.
5. Upload **an electronic** copy of your assignment to SafeAssignment in Blackboard **by the due date**. (See instructions under Announcements in Blackboard).

Assignment #

Due Date

1..... September 1

2..... September 8

3..... September 15

- 4..... September 22
- 5.....September 29
- 6..... October 6
- 7..... October 13
- 8..... October 20
- 9..... October 27
- 10..... November 3
- 11.....November 10
- 12.....November 17

Example:

*Readings for Class 2
(List all authors and titles, e.g.,
Lemert, Social Theory: Its Uses and Pleasures*

*Your LAST name, first name
Sociological Theory
Fall 2011
Assignment # 1*

Your Chosen Title

Part A: Commentary

(About 250 words)

Part B: Sociological Question

(3) One term paper (about 10-15 pages; typewritten; **due on December 1** (100 points)

(4) Take-Home Assignment (160 points)

(5) Final exam (December 2, 150 points): Since this course is designed to encourage creative and critical thinking, multiple choice tests will be inappropriate for evaluating your progress. The final examination will therefore consist of **essay** questions only. You will have sufficient time (about 3 hours) to think out your answers. This exam will be a **cumulative** test of all materials presented in the course.

(6) Other (extra % will be factored into all of the above)-

I would like to encourage you to develop and maintain an ongoing interest (keep up with relevant information) in plays, concerts, conferences, lectures, films, current issues, news, and articles relevant to this course that may appear locally, in the U.S., and internationally.

Course Requirement	Points
Attendance, Participation, and Professionalism	30
Weekly Assignments	60
Take-home assignment	160
Term paper	100
Final Exam	150
Total Points	500

GRADING SCALE:

I will adopt the following grading scale.

A	93%+
A-	90-92%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-79%
C-	70-72%
D	60-69%
F	< 60%

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

Academic dishonesty undermines the process of higher education. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to copying exam answers or home works, using someone else's work for weekly assignments, using someone else's work when answering in-class questions for the participation grade, or allowing someone else to use your work. Academic dishonesty may result in an automatic failing grade and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University. Academic dishonesty may result in attaching an electronic notation of academic irregularity to the student's transcript. Please be advised that I will actively enforce this policy by using *SafeAssignment* plagiarism detection tool.

Code of Academic Integrity & Honor Code

The honor code states: “Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the University mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the University community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty.” For more information, see http://www.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/4.001_Code_of_Academic_Integrity.pdf.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

At times, it will be necessary for me to make announcements during the class. You are responsible for all such announcements, whether present or absent when they are made.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students who require special accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) located in Davie on the 2nd floor of the LA building (954-236-1222)

CONTACT:

"Familiarity Breeds Content!"

I am concerned about each of you and take a personal interest in your intellectual development and academic progress. Please **feel free to consult** with me about the course, or related problems that might be bothering you. I encourage you to visit me during the office hours, or to make appointments to talk if the office hours are inconvenient. Let me assure you that when problems arise, an informed instructor is more likely to be a sympathetic one.

READING SCHEDULE

Class 1 August 25	Introductions
Why Theory? Why Critique?	
Class 2 September 1	<p>Lemert, Social Theory: Its Uses and Pleasures (in <u>Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings</u>, also on Blackboard)</p> <p>Other required readings posted on Blackboard (check under class 2)</p> <p>Writing assignment #1 due</p> <p>This Assignment will be on all the readings for this week (including the readings on Blackboard). Please see page 5 of the syllabus for instructions.</p> <p>Please read all the assigned material before class time. Be ready to talk</p>

	about the main points, to give a summary of each reading, explain how the various readings tie in with each other, share insights into the reading material, raise critical questions, respond to questions raised, and advance the discussion to higher levels.
Class 3 September 8	Blackboard readings for class 3 Writing assignment #2 due
Part I: Critique of Organicism	
Class 4 September 15	<u>Dictionary of Sociology, "Durkheim"</u> Sociology and Social Facts (Emile Durkheim), Anomie and the Modern Division of Labor (Emile Durkheim) in <u>Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings</u> , Other required readings posted on Blackboard (under class 4) Writing assignment #3 due
Class 5 September 22	Suicide and Modernity (Durkheim) in Lemert, <u>Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings</u> Culleton: <u>In Search of April Raintree</u> Blackboard readings for class 5 Writing assignment #4 due
Class 6 September 29	The Cultural Logic of Collective Representations (Durkheim), Primitive Classifications and Social Knowledge (Durkheim and Mauss) in Lemert, <u>Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings</u> Blackboard readings for class 6 Writing assignment #5 due
Part II: Critique of Class Analysis	

Class 7 October 6	Zinn, <u>Marx in Soho</u> Estranged Labor (Marx) Camera Obscura (Marx) Class Struggle (Marx and Engels) The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (Marx) On Imperialism in India (Marx) in Lemert, <u>Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings</u> Blackboard readings for class 7 Writing assignment #6 due
Class 8 October 13	Marx, <u>Capital</u> Vol.1, selections (on Blackboard) Steinbeck, <u>The Grapes of Wrath</u> , chapters 1-13 Writing assignment #7 due
Class 9 October 20	Marx, <u>Capital</u> Vol.1, selections (on Blackboard) Steinbeck, <u>The Grapes of Wrath</u> , chapters 14-end Writing assignment #8 due
Part III: Critique of Power Relations	
Class 10 October 27	Blackboard Readings for class 10 Ehrenreich: <u>Nickel and Dimed</u> (all) Writing assignment # 9 due Term paper guidelines handed out
Class 11 November 3	Blackboard Readings for class 11 Rubin, <u>Families on the Fault Line</u> (all) Writing assignment # 10 due

Class 12 November 10	The Types of Legitimate Domination (Weber) The Patriarchal Family (Engels) in Lemert, <u>Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings</u> Ibsen: <u>A Doll's House</u> Blackboard Readings for class 12 Writing assignment # 11 due Take-home assignment handed out
Class 13 November 17	The Spirit of Capitalism and the Iron Cage The Bureaucratic Machine in Lemert, <u>Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings</u> Blackboard Readings for class 13 Writing assignment # 12 due
November 25	Thanksgiving recess
Class 14 December 1	Final Exam Take-home assignment due