

SOCI 301: Contemporary Social Theory

Fall 2022

Instructor

Dr. Martín Jacinto

Email: mjacinto@csuchico.edu

Preferred contact: Blackboard Messaging

Office Hours: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Wed

Office: TBD

Correspondence policy: Respond within 24-48 hours

Class information

Classroom: Butte Hall 308

Class Hours: 2:00 pm - 3:15 pm TuTh

Course Description

We all construct and use social theories in our everyday lives. Theory is simply a means of understanding and explaining the social world around us. Social theory allows for seeing patterns, forces, and power relations, encouraging us to make sense of all kinds of social phenomena – ranging from everyday interactions between friends to decades of violent colonization. In this course, we will read theoretical texts every week, and then we will spend time understanding how they have been used to understand specific social phenomena. Theory must be relevant to real life “social facts” for it to survive, and we will work toward bridging the abstract concepts in our readings with the world around us. By the end of the class, you will likely find that some theories are your favorites – more relevant to your everyday life and your own sociological interests than others.

The goal of this course is to deepen your understanding of sociological theories that motivate research and inquiry into our society. In this class, we explore the diversity of major theoretical orientations in sociological thought since the 1950s. Throughout the course of the semester, we will compare core concepts and ideas from these theorists on topics such as social interaction, identity, domination, freedom and perhaps most importantly, power.

This course requires you to read a lot of social theory, which will be abstract and difficult. I assign primary texts, meaning that they were written by the theorist him/herself. The textbook supplements primary texts by elaborating important notions and concepts across the multiple theoretical perspectives we will cover in the course. While we will contextualize the readings by learning about the theorist’s life, it is important that you learn to read with patience and diligence. I am here to help, as are your classmates. If you are struggling to understand course material on your own, that’s okay! No sociologist learns theory on their own. In this class we situate the readings within their historical and biographical contexts and in conversation with other readings. Through lectures, multiple readings of the material on your own, and class discussions, we will –

together – arrive at a deeper understanding of our social world and of the history of sociological thought.

Learning Objectives

Course Learning Objectives

- Gain knowledge about some of the primary theoretical perspectives used within sociology in the 20th and 21st centuries.
- Understand how these perspectives have been shaped by the social context in which they arose.
- Explore how these perspectives have impacted sociological research and knowledge.
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective.
- Apply the perspectives to our real lives and to the world around us.

Sociology Program Student Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate critical thinking through verbal and written communication.
- Apply, critically interpret, and synthesize sociological theory.
- Display an understanding of and appreciation for cultural diversity.
- Identify processes of social control and how they shape our social institutions and lives.
- Recognize the relationship between personal agency, social responsibility, and social change (sociological imagination).
- Display knowledge of the impact of social institutions on everyday lives.

Course Status

This course is a requirement for the sociology major. It has a prerequisite of SOCI 300, Classical Social Theory, though this prerequisite may be waived with permission of the instructor. *Note that if you take SOCI 301 prior to or concurrent with SOCI 300, you will not be able to repeat SOCI 300 for forgiveness.*

Important Dates

Sept. 2nd - Last day to drop without instructor's approval

Oct. 24th - Last day to drop and receive financial credit for refund

Nov. 10th - Last day to drop or withdraw

See the [2022-2023 Academic Calendar](#) for more information.

Course Readings

Required Textbooks

Dillon, Michele (2010). *Introduction to Sociological Theory: Theorists, Concepts, and their Applicability to the Twenty-First Century, 3rd Edition*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons Ltd. ISBN: 9781119410911.

- We will be using the 3rd edition which looks [this](#). Previous editions are not permitted.

Additional Required Readings

- Primary texts and other required readings will be available electronically on the Blackboard Learn course page and on Perusall.

Structure and Character of a ChicoFlex Course

- Since this is a **ChicoFlex Course**, **ALL communications for this course will be conducted via Blackboard Learn**. At Chico State, “this class meets at set days/times in-person (requiring social distancing and face coverings) and is paired with another section taught simultaneously online by the same instructor.” This means that this class includes campus students who come to a physical class, online students who show up “live,” and online students who watch the archived lectures. Therefore, it is the student’s responsibility to check Blackboard Learn regularly and to check in with the professor or review the Syllabus re: any administrative questions. *Students are required to email the instructor from Blackboard Learn (this will ensure instructor access to emails).*
- Also, given the fact that we’re still in a global pandemic, the course will proceed fluidly. I want this class to work for all of us and will remain sensitive to the ongoing needs of students while adhering to public health standards and guidelines.

Technological Problems:

- Occasional problems with technology are a common part of the modern university experience. If you have any technical difficulties, you **should call the university technology folks at 530-898-6000**. After you call them, if they are not able to resolve the issue, please email me with a description of the problem, the name of the person you spoke to in that office, what they and/or you are doing to resolve the problem, and the expected timeline for its resolution. If you are having trouble with Blackboard Learn during a quiz or other assignment, take a screen shot or photo of the computer screen and the error message you receive and email it to me AND contact ITSS at 530-898-6000. If you experience technical difficulties while submitting an assignment, call ITSS at 1-800-898-6000 and send a copy of the assignment to me via Blackboard Learn. If any of these things happen when ITSS is closed, please follow up with them immediately the next business day. You **MUST** contact ITSS to resolve the issue if you are asking for any kind of leniency or extension.

COVID policy

Per the California State University Chancellor’s Office policy, the Covid-19 vaccine and booster is required for students, faculty and staff, unless you obtain an exemption from the university. Currently, Chico State is requiring everyone on campus to wear an approved face covering in all indoor campus spaces. Accordingly, all students are required to wear an appropriate face mask covering the nose and mouth in order to participate in this course. Policies and requirements regarding COVID-19 are subject to change pursuant to campus, local, state and/or federal guidelines.

Please note that dishonesty relating to the vaccination policy and/or your failure to comply with any other COVID-19 related safety policy or mandate, including the face covering requirement, may result in disciplinary action against you through the office of Student Conduct, Rights and Responsibilities, which can include suspension or expulsion from the California State University system.

Individuals unable to wear a face covering due to a medical condition should contact the Accessibility Resource Center by phone at (530) 898-5959 or by email at arcdept@csuchico.edu.

COVID policy re: attendance: Attendance in this class is mandatory; if you do not attend class, you will not pass. If, however, you are a campus student attending physical class and you are

symptomatic, please contact me (via email), do not attend the in-person class, and contact the COVID hotline at **530-898-2222** for additional direction. Also, make sure you keep me updated as you learn more about your health status.

Attendance Policy

Attendance and Ongoing Participation in Sociology Courses is mandatory in all sociology classes and is essential to your success in this course. Only documented emergencies will constitute excused absences or assignments. Documentation will only be accepted within one week of your return to class. Please do not contact me about non-emergency absences. You are allowed up to three (3) unexcused absences and anything more than that will affect your final grade. If you expect to miss class because of a religious observance, you will need to notify me beforehand. Finally, if you miss class, it is your responsibility to catch up.

Dropped From The Course

In accordance with the college drop policy, students who do not access the class web site or submit the designated “first assignments” by the due date may be dropped as a no show. Students who fail to turn in the weekly assignments and/or participate in the discussion boards will be considered “absent” and may be dropped from the class for “excessive absence.” Students are responsible for officially dropping the class or they will receive a letter grade based on their performance.

- **No Show Drop:** You must complete a designated discussion post, quiz, or practice activity by Tuesday of the first week of class or you may be dropped as a no-show. Students who do not complete any work in the first week will be dropped.
- **Excessive Absence Drop:** If more than two consecutive weeks of non-participation is observed by the instructor the student may be dropped. If you do not participate in each week’s discussion board and complete at least one quiz or practice activity, you will be considered “non-participating” and subject to being dropped from the course.

Determination of Final Grade

At the university level, it is a great achievement to earn the grade of A. It is especially worthwhile to earn an A as an overall final course grade. The grade of A is the highest recognition and commendation there is at the university classroom level. Its use in this course will be in that spirit, consistent with the traditional meaning of “excellence.” At the same time, I wish to make it perfectly clear that **your grades in this class are NOT an evaluation of you as a person.** For people on both ends of the grading scale, it is sometimes necessary to remember that you are more than just your grades.

Table 1 displays the grading scale that is used to determine a letter grade.

Table 2 displays how your final grade will be weighed according to the following components:

Note regarding class workload: This is a three (3) credit hour class. You should expect to spend two hours outside of class for every one hour in class. This time outside of class will be spent on reading, assignments, and studying. This means you should plan on devoting six hours of outside time per week to this course.

Table 1: Grading Scale

Grade	Range	Quality
A	93 - 100%	Excellent Work
A-	90 - 92%	Nearly Excellent Work
B+	87 - 89%	Very Good Work
B	83 - 86%	Good Work
B-	80 - 82%	Mostly Good Work
C+	77 - 79%	Above Average Work
C	73 - 76%	Average Work
C-	70 - 72%	Mostly Average Work
D+	67 - 69%	Below Average Work
D	60 - 66%	Poor Work
F	< 60%	Failing Work

Table 2: Course Requirements and Grading Policy

Item	% of Final Grade
Attendance & Participation	15 %
Weekly Perusall Participation & Discussion	15 %
Quizzes	15 %
Three (3) Writing Assignments	25 %
Final Paper	30 %
TOTAL	100 %

Attendance and Class Participation (15% of Final Grade)

The format of this course is an interactive, “live” hybrid lecture and discussion with the objective of collaborative learning and analysis. Participation in class discussion is necessary for your development as a critical scholar and for your understanding of the course material. This is a **required** course with difficult reading material and, therefore, it is crucial to establish an informed and critical discourse with each other over the material. Participation includes contributions to class discussions either in class or via class assignments. Participation also includes actively listening, as well as sharing your ideas, criticisms, and frustrations with course material. To ensure active participation, students must come to class having read and taken notes on all material. Furthermore, you are expected to contribute to discussions either in class or via class assignments. Grading of all work is done with the expectation that attendance and participation will be rewarded in the final grade. Also, see “COVID Directions” (above) if you are symptomatic and an in-class student.

In addition to completing all of the assigned reading before each designated day of the week (see reading schedule below and make sure you attend class for the ongoing reading deadlines), you must critically reflect on what is interesting/troubling/useful about what you have read. You are expected to do this work on your own. Be prepared to offer your questions, insights, and critique either via communication with me, writing assignments and/or in conversation with other students.

These are questions you should consider as you complete each reading: What are the authors' main objectives/research questions? What methods, if any, did the author use to explore this question? What are the author's main conclusions? How do the readings build upon or challenge other works we have read thus far? Answering these questions on your own will better prepare you for quizzes, writing assignments, and the final project.

REMEMBER! Attendance is mandatory in all sociology classes (see [Attendance Policy section](#) above). It is also crucial to doing well in this class. In the context of this class, attendance means COMPLETING ALL OF THE ASSIGNMENTS, QUIZZES, INDIVIDUAL WORK, etc. I usually have a very strict attendance policy.

Weekly Perusall Participation (15% of Final Grade)

For reading we will use [Perusall](#), a social annotation tool that allows students and their instructors to collaboratively markup .pdf documents. Instead of only reading a document and discussing it, Perusall brings discussion to text.

To start, register for a free Perusall account and enter the course code: [Insert Code Here]

At the beginning of the quarter, you will be assigned to groups in Perusall, each comprised of around 10-12 students. After week 2, you will be randomly placed into these groups and participate in asynchronous group reading and discussion, covering any major theme(s) or issue(s) from the reading and lecture.

You will each read and discuss within your group forum. This means that you must not only do the reading and annotate on your own, but you must ask and respond to one or more questions within your group that are related to that week's readings assignment(s) and lecture. Thus, you must interact in your group forum with at least two (2) of your groupmate's posts. Your contribution and annotations will be graded on a scale of 1 – 3, with higher scores indicating higher quality annotations and responses. Your response to two or more groupmate's annotations and questions (due by 8:00 PM (Pacific Standard Time) on Friday of that week). **Discussion posts and annotations will be given credit only if they are substantive and follow all instructions.**

For reading assignments in Perusall, you will be evaluated based on the following four criteria:

1. Quality: The more thoughtful the responses, the higher the score.
2. Quantity: Each student must submit at least seven (7) annotations in each reading document. I will then compute overall grade based on highest quality annotations.
3. Timeliness: You must complete the reading assignment by Friday 8:00PM.
4. Distribution: Are annotations made throughout the document? If most annotations are made in a single area, it indicates the student did not engage with the entire document. If annotations are distributed throughout the entire document, it indicates the student did engage with the reading in entirety.
5. Asking/Answering Questions: Ask and respond to each other's comments and questions in their group forums.

? Common question! What if I don't have any questions or comments? Elaborate on a specific topic, connect to personal experience or perspective, extension to another topic or perspective, paraphrase part of the text.

Quizzes (15% of Final Grade)

Throughout the course, I will ask students to synthesize, analyze, and/or apply contemporary social theories and readings from the previous day(s) or week(s) via a fairly short, intense quiz (typically, 3-10 multiple-choice and/or short answer questions). The quiz closes after the posted due date. In order to avoid missing a quiz and any announcements I have, make sure you check Blackboard Learn every single day of the week. The quiz closes after the posted due date. In order to avoid missing a quiz and any announcements I have, make sure you check Blackboard Learn every single day of the week. *No quiz will be assigned the week a writing assignment is due.*

Three (3) Writing Assignments (25% of Final Grade)

Students will complete at least 3 small writing assignments throughout the course. These assignments will assess knowledge of the course material, critical thinking skills, and writing skills. Guidelines for the papers will be given out at least two weeks in advance. Papers will have a word limit, approx. 750 words (roughly 3 double-spaced pages), typed, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, Times New Roman (11-point Arial font is also appropriate). Proper grammar and APA citation of sources is expected. **No other format will be accepted.** Late papers will be deducted 20% of its overall grade each day that it is overdue.

Final Paper (30% of Final Grade)

Building upon the ideas you developed in the writing assignments and other assignments, you will write a **final 1,000 word (roughly 4 double-spaced pages) paper for this class.** In this paper, you will apply, expand, or challenge theories we covered in class. In this paper, you will apply, expand, or challenge theory. If you apply theory, you will use one of the main theoretical frameworks we covered in the course to sociologically analyze a cultural artifact (examples: documentary film(s), popular film(s), popular music, magazines, novels, etc.; speak with me about the appropriate cultural artifact). If you expand theory, you will make an argument for the expansion of any theory we have covered in the course, thus making that theory better, more contemporary, and/or more inclusive. If you challenge theory, you will accurately describe the theory you are challenging, make an argument for how and why you are challenging the theory, and perhaps offer a new theory that might replace the theory you are challenging. Before you begin your paper, speak with me about your main ideas and outline for the paper. I will post a detailed rubric and example of an excellent Final Paper on Blackboard about a month before the due date.

Tips and tricks for good writing

Use a citation management software to organize your papers and create bibliographies. My personal preference is [Zotero](#) because it is free, open source, and works across multiple operating systems. For information about other citation management software that is available to CSU Chico students, visit the Meriam Library ["Sample Papers and Citation Tools" page](#).

Write and then revise. Ask for feedback from peers or wait until you have some distance from your writing and then revise.

Prompt yourself with questions that have short, concrete answers.

Late Work

Participation in discussions (Perusall or otherwise) must be on time so that others can respond to your posts. Thus, **discussion posts will not be accepted late for any reason (no matter how good you think your reason is)**. Quizzes, practice activities, and essay assignments are a bit different. If you must submit one of these assignments late, please contact me right away. The longer you wait, the less likely I am to accept the assignment. I reserve the right to refuse any late work, but keeping the lines of communication open is your best bet if you fall a little behind on an assignment.

Getting Help And Communicating With Your Professor

Remember, your professor is here to help you gain a rich understanding of the material. So, it is important to be connected to your instructor and seek help whenever you need it. However, it is primarily your responsibility to seek help when you need it. Use the following methods to get in touch and/or ask questions.

Communication policy

When contacting your about the course, please send message through “Message Your Professor” in BBLearn. I check messages three times per day, Monday thru Friday, between 9:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Please allow up to 24-48 hours for a response during the week. If you contact on the weekend, expect a reply the following Monday.

- Requesting help: If you miss a class meeting, you should...
 1. First, look on the course website for material you missed.
 2. Second, if you need help understanding the material, you should contact your classmate via Beach. Board (direct email or discussion board).
 3. Third, if you still find it difficult, find some time to chat with me during office hours
- Requesting a 1-on-1, non-office-hour Zoom meeting:

If, after you’ve looked over the material yourself and reached out to classmates, you still need help but cannot attend office hours, you may email me to request a virtual Zoom meeting. For non-office-hour zoom meetings, I require at least a minimum of one-week’s notice.
- On-line communication
 - I require that all communication be done in a respectful, courteous, and professional manner. When in doubt, always err in these directions; for example, aim for being slightly more courteous than you may think you need to be. Nobody will object to an extra “please” or “thank you.” Always take a few minutes to read what you have written before posting a comment or sending an email – pause and think – could what you have written be construed as disrespectful, impolite, or snappy? When in doubt, re-think your words and tone, and re-calibrate your message. We may not always agree but disagreeing while simultaneously showing respect and courtesy toward someone is a skill that will serve you well throughout your life and in many contexts. Always make criticism constructive and not personal. If you disagree with someone, they should not feel personally attacked. Keep the ideas separate from the person. I will always keep these principles in mind when communicating with you – please do the same toward me and your fellow students.

I reserve the right to penalize individuals who do not demonstrate these basic principles in their communications.

#Other Course Policies

- Unless you have a documented emergency, there will be no substitutions for assignments, quizzes, or papers. A missed assignment, quiz, or paper will result in a zero. Incomplete grades (or an “I” grade) are rare, and will be given at the discretion of the professor.
- “Pet Peeves”:
 1. Asking to be excused from rules that all classmates are following.
 2. Inappropriate or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. If this behavior persists, the student will be reported to the Dean’s Office.

Campus resources

Writing center

Over the course of this semester, seek help at the Writing Center if you would like additional guidance and critique. You can access the Writing Center at [at their website](#). During graduate school, I found workshops and writing groups at the Writing Center on campus to be helpful in building my motivation and teaching me new strategies for writing efficiently.

Disabilities

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, students with bona fide disabilities will be afforded reasonable accommodations. The Office of Special Student Services (OSSS) will certify a disability and advise faculty members of reasonable accommodations. If you have a specific disability that qualifies you for academic accommodations, please notify the instructor/professor and provide certification from the Office of Special Student Services. OSSS is located at 5828 Old Shell Road at Jaguar Drive, (251-460-7212).

Food insecurity

If you are subject to food insecurity, JagPantry provides a food for students needing assistance. More information can be found [on their website](#)

Mental health

Being a university student is stressful and can negatively impact mental health. The University Counseling and Testing Center provides confidential, free counseling and crisis intervention services to eligible USA students and consultation and outreach services to members of the USA community. More information can be found [at their website](#).

Final thoughts

This document is a roadmap for our semester. We learn about the Earth together and our individual experiences shape how we interpret and value data. Like all your classes, you will get out what you put into this course. Asking for help from one another and your instructors is important, don't be afraid to ask a question about something you don't know or if you want to check your knowledge about something you think you know.

If this document is updated, a copy will be supplied to you via Blackboard and changes will be announced in class.

Table 3: Course Schedule.

Date	Class	Week	Lecture
2022-08-23	1	1	1
2022-08-25	2	1	2
2022-08-30	3	2	3
2022-09-01	4	2	4
2022-09-06	5	3	5
2022-09-08	6	3	6
2022-09-13	7	4	7
2022-09-15	8	4	8
2022-09-20	9	5	9
2022-09-22	10	5	10
2022-09-27	11	6	11
2022-09-29	12	6	12
2022-10-04	13	7	13
2022-10-06	14	7	14
2022-10-11	15	8	15
2022-10-13	16	8	16
2022-10-18	17	9	17
2022-10-20	18	9	18
2022-10-25	19	10	19
2022-10-27	20	10	20
2022-11-01	21	11	21
2022-11-03	22	11	22
2022-11-08	23	12	23
2022-11-10	24	12	24
2022-11-15	25	13	25
2022-11-17	26	13	26
2022-11-29	27	15	27
2022-12-01	28	15	28
2022-12-06	29	16	29
2022-12-08	30	16	30