

**SOCI 302: Topics in Contemporary Theory**  
**St. Francis Xavier University**  
**Department of Sociology**  
**Winter 2015**

Instructor: Dr. Peter Mallory

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**Course Description**

This course introduces you to the major developments in sociological theory from the end of the Second World War to the present. Topics include phenomenology, structuralism, hermeneutics and interpretive sociology, micro-sociology, critical theory, cultural sociology, and feminist theory. As we examine the major developments in sociological theory over the last 60 years, you will have an opportunity to read the original works of theorists whose ideas are still generating much lively debate and controversy within the discipline today. By the end of the course, you will have a good understanding of the history of contemporary social theory as well as the more general questions of what theory is and what it means to engage in the practice of theorizing. The purpose of this course is not only to introduce you to the history and diversity of contemporary social theories, but also to help you develop your own ability to practice social theory.

**Course Evaluation**

Class Participation	5%
Mid-term Test	15%
Essay	30%
Final Exam	35%
3 Pop-Quizzes	15% (each at 5%)

*Essay:*

A 2000 word essay will be due during lecture on March 26th. A handout describing the assignment will be distributed during class.

*Mid-term Test:*

There will be an in-class test on February 10th. The purpose of the test is to give you feedback on your progress in the course.

*Exam:*

An exam will be scheduled during the regular examination period. It will be closed book and consist of essay style questions.

### *Class Participation:*

A high level of participation is a requirement for this class. Your grade for participation will take into account attendance, participation in lectures, and preparation for class. Please bring the readings to class and be prepared to discuss them.

### *3 Pop-Quizzes:*

Three classes will begin with a pop quiz. These 20-minute quizzes will consist of short questions on the readings assigned for the week of the quiz and the previous week. The dates of these quizzes will not be announced. Their purpose is to ensure that students actively engage the readings before coming to class. If you are late to a class, you will have less time to do a pop quiz. If you miss a class on a date when there is a pop quiz and you do not have a documented reason, then you will receive a grade of zero for the quiz. If you must miss a class for a valid reason, please speak with me ahead of time.

### **Required Texts and Readings**

1. Levi-Strauss, Claude. 1978. *Myth and Meaning: Cracking the Code of Culture*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
2. A course pack prepared by Canadian Scholars Press available at the Campus Store
3. A selection of journal articles available through the library, and linked to Moodle.

## **IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION AND POLICIES**

### **Late Policy**

Late papers submitted without prior permission will incur a late penalty of 5% of the total assignment per day, including weekends.

### **Academic Honesty and Plagiarism**

Since this course requires you to complete a written assignment, you should familiarize yourself with standards for proper referencing of all materials cited (i.e. books, journals, newspaper articles, internet resources, etc.). Students who attempt to pass off someone else's work as their own (plagiarism) will be dealt with through the university policy on academic honesty. Please ensure that you fully understand this policy (see section 3.8 in the calendar).

### **Special Accommodations**

If you develop a prolonged illness or encounter a personal crisis that will impact your participation in the course, please contact me as soon as possible. Your best strategy for dealing with anything that may prevent you from completing the course in a way that is satisfactory to you is to discuss your concerns with me as soon as they become apparent so that we can work out a way of responding to them.

## **Other Accommodations**

If you are a student with physical, learning, or psychiatric disabilities that require reasonable accommodation in teaching style or evaluation, you should speak with me early in the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

## **LECTURE SCHEDULE AND READINGS**

### **Jan 6 & 8 Phenomenology: The Natural and the Theoretical Attitude**

Schutz, Alfred. 1944. "The Stranger." *American Journal of Sociology* 49(6): 499-507. (Moodle)

### **Jan 13 & 15 Goffman and Collins on Interaction Rituals**

#### Tuesday:

Goffman, Erving. 1967 "On Facework: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction" Pp. 5-46 in *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face-to-Face Behaviour*. Chicago, IL: Aldine. (Course Pack)

#### Thursday:

Collins, Randall. 2013. "Interaction Ritual Chains." Pp. 75-90 in *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, edited by C. Calhoun, J. Gerteis, J. Moody, S. Pfaff, and I. Virk. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. (Course Pack)

### **Jan 20 & 22 Feminist Theory: Dorothy Smith on Standpoint and Institutional Ethnography**

Smith, Dorothy. 1990. "Women's Experience as a Radical Critique of Sociology." Pp. 11-29 in *The Conceptual Practices of Power*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. (Course Pack)

Hegel, G.W.F. 1807. "Lordship and Bondage." in *The Phenomenology of Mind*. Available Online at:  
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/ph/phba.htm>  
(Moodle)

### **Jan 27 & 29 Critical Theory: Habermas and the Bourgeois Public Sphere**

Seidman, Steven. 2004. "The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas." Pp. 122-133 in *Contested Knowledge: Social Theory Today*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Malden, MA: Blackwell. (Course Pack)

Habermas, Jürgen. 1989. "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article." Pp. 136-142 in *Critical Theory and Society*, edited by S. E. Bronner and D. M. Kellner. New York: Routledge. (Course Pack)

### **Feb 3 & 5 Critical Theory: Mass Culture and the Decline of the Public Sphere**

#### Tuesday

Adorno, Theodor, and Max Horkheimer. 1972. [Original 1947]. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Herder and Herder. Read the online excerpt at: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1944/culture-industry.htm> (Moodle)

#### Thursday

Mills, C. Wright. 1956. "The Mass Society." Pp. 298-323 in *The Power Elite*. New York: Oxford University Press. Read the online excerpt at: [http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Book\\_Excerpts/MassSociety\\_PE.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Book_Excerpts/MassSociety_PE.html) (Moodle)

### **Feb 10 & 12 Michel Foucault: Discipline and Normalization**

#### Tuesday

Midterm Quiz

#### Thursday

Seidman, Steven. 2004. "Michel Foucault's Disciplinary Society." Pp. 178-191 in *Contested Knowledge: Social Theory Today*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Malden, MA: Blackwell. (Course Pack)

Foucault, Michel. 1984 [original 1975]. "The Body of the Condemned", "Docile Bodies" and "The Means of Correct Training." Pp. 170-205 in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by P. Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books. (Course Pack)

### **Feb 17 & 19 Critical Theory: Recognition and Redistribution**

#### Tuesday:

Taylor, Charles. 1994. "The Politics of Recognition." Pp. 25-44 in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, edited by C. Taylor, A. Gutman, et al. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Course Pack)

Thursday

Fraser, Nancy. 1997. "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Postsocialist' Age." Pp 11-41 in *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the Postsocialist Condition*. New York: Routledge. (Course Pack)

**Feb 24 & 26 Winter study break – No classes**

Enjoy!

**Mar 3 & 5 Levi-Strauss and Structuralism**

Levi-Strauss, Claude. 1978. *Myth and Meaning: Cracking the Code of Culture*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

**Mar 10 & 12 Hermeneutics and the Meanings of Culture**

Weber, Max. 1987 [original 1920]. "What is Social Action." P. 44 in *The Meaning of Sociology*, edited by J. Charon. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. (Course Pack)

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture." Pp. 3-30 in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books. (Course Pack)

**Mar 17 & 19 Jeffrey Alexander and Cultural Sociology**

Alexander, Jeffrey and Philip Smith. 2003. "The Strong Program in Cultural Sociology: Elements of a Structural Hermeneutics." Pp. 11-27 in *The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press. (Course Pack)

Horgan, Mervyn. 2014. "Durkheim, Development and the Devil: A Cultural Sociology of Community Conflict." *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 39(4): 741-64. (Moodle)

**Mar 24 & 26\* Pierre Bourdieu on Class and Culture**

Appelrouth, S. And L. Edles. 2012. "Contemporary Theoretical Synthesis: Pierre Bourdieu." Pp. 652-76 in *Classical and Contemporary Sociological Theory: Texts and Readings*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. [This chapter includes a discussion of Bourdieu's key ideas and two excerpts from his works]. (Course Pack)

\*Essay due in class, March 26th

**Mar 31 Apr 2 Luc Boltanski on the Language of Justification**

Boltanski, Luc, and Eve Chiapello. 2005. "The New Spirit of Capitalism." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 18: 161–188.

**Apr 7 Conclusion to the Course and Review**