

**Instructor: Professor Manfred B. Steger**

**Meeting Time & Place: Monday, 3:00 - 5:30 pm, Saunders 541**

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## **SOC 612: CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY Spring 2018**

### ***Course Description and Structure***

Serving as a graduate-level survey of contemporary sociological theory, this course invites students to engage in the study of influential perspectives that provide us with an appreciation of concrete social issues confronting us today. For example, global social problems such as surging inequality, increasing social insecurity, and proliferation of violence have forced many contemporary social thinkers to construct new theoretical frameworks capable of responding to those issues. Indeed, sociological theory at its best is a critical, problem-oriented mode of inquiry that both explores and challenges established categories and traditions.

In this survey course, we will appraise the writings of influential contemporary social theorists. The four major sections of the course focus especially on perspectives on capitalism, power & inequality, the presentation of self in everyday life, gender, race, (post)colonialism, violence, inequality, knowledge, modernity & postmodernity, state-society relations, social crises, social change, and globalization. Given that the contributions of contemporary sociological thinkers to these topics have been vast, a survey course like this one must be selective (and therefore limited) in choosing representative writings. However, throughout the course, we will identify additional works and themes that students can explore at their own leisure.

While we always bring our own culturally and historically specific standpoints and sets of biases to our reading of sociological texts, the goal of this course lies in expanding our present intellectual horizon of understanding by encountering and attempting to understand theories and views that at first sight might seem strange, alien, outdated, and even hostile to our own perspective. If successful, our readings and class discussions will help us to both appreciate our distance from and our kinship with those social theorists whose perspectives may differ markedly from our own. Employing such an open-minded strategy of interpretation corresponds to the enduring sociological quest for meaning and knowledge, as well as the desire to develop comprehensive and policy-relevant social theories and interpretations.

Most of our time will be taken up analyzing and discussing primary texts. Here are the three crucial questions that frame this course:

- *What are the main perspectives and intellectual currents of contemporary sociological theory?*

- *What are the pioneering contributions of some of the most prominent thinkers like Schutz, Gramsci, Goffman, Blumer, Mills, Habermas, Foucault, Bourdieu, Giddens, Fanon, M.L. King, Gandhi, Smith, Wallerstein, and Sassen to the development of contemporary social thought?*
- *What are some valuable insights to be gained from the study of contemporary sociological theory that connect directly to social problems today?*

### **Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

The SLOs for this course are closely aligned with the Sociology Department's posted MA Program and PhD Program student learning outcomes (SSLOs). These can be found here: <http://www.sociology.hawaii.edu/documents/uhm-soc-ma-phd-slo.pdf>

The five particular student-learning outcomes of this course are:

- *To understand the main dimensions, dynamics, and issues of sociological theories and their historical evolution after World War II (MA SSLOs 1,2,5; PHD SSLOs 1,2,4)*
- *To gain the ability of contrasting and comparing key concepts and themes in major contemporary sociological theories and theorists, especially conflict theory, interpretative theory, (post)structuralism, micro-sociological analysis, modernization theories, and globalization theories (MA SSLOs 1,2; PhD SSLOs 1,2,6);*
- *To acquire the knowledge and skill to analyze a broad spectrum of contemporary sociological theory across major themes and concepts and with an critical eye toward the workings of asymmetrical power relations in (post)modernity (MA SSLOs 1,2; PhD SSLOs 1,2)*
- *To appreciate the role of ideational and material forces (especially economics and religion/ideology) in contemporary societies (MA SSLOs 1,2; PhD SSLOs 1,2)*
- *To produce written and oral work that reflects a critical understanding of various forms of knowledge and understanding in contemporary societies (MA SSLOs 1,2,5,6; PhD SSLOs 1,2,4,7).*

### **Readings: Primary Sources (required)**

The following four paperback books are available for purchase in the U.H. bookstore. Feel free to get cheaper e-book versions of these books (if available), **but do not use different editions** since we'll need to use the same textual references in class.

- 1) Craig Calhoun, *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). ISBN: 978-0470655665
- 2) C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (Oxford University Press, 2000). ISBN: 978-0195133547
- 3) Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Beacon Press, 1975). ISBN: 978-0807015216.
- 4) Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of Prison* (Vintage, 1995). ISBN: 978-0679752554

**Additional required readings:**

5) Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford University Press, 1991), Chapters 1-2.

Chapter 1:

[http://ewclass.lecture.ub.ac.id/files/2015/02/Giddens\\_Consequences\\_of\\_Modernity\\_17388b4f6c76919ffe7817f7751c61fa.pdf](http://ewclass.lecture.ub.ac.id/files/2015/02/Giddens_Consequences_of_Modernity_17388b4f6c76919ffe7817f7751c61fa.pdf)

Chapter 2: (class handout)

6) Saskia Sassen, "Globalization or Denationalization?" *Review of International Political Economy* 10.1 (2003), pp. 1-22:

<http://www.saskiasassen.com/PDFs/publications/Globalization-or-Denationalization.pdf>

7) Frantz Fanon, "Concerning Violence," from *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963):

<http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/Reader.101/Fanon.III.pdf>

8) Mohandas K. Gandhi, Selections from *Hind Swaraj* (1909) (Chapters to be announced):

<http://soilandhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/0303critic/hind%20swaraj.pdf>

9) Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" (1963):

[https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Letter\\_Birmingham\\_Jail.pdf](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Letter_Birmingham_Jail.pdf)

10) Manfred B. Steger and Paul James, "Levels of Subjective Globalization: Ideologies, Imaginaries, Ontologies," in *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 12 (2013), pp. 17-40 (class handout).

**Readings: Secondary Sources (recommended)**

1) Alex Callinicos, *Social Theory: A Historical Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Polity, 2007).

2) Randall Collins, *Four Sociological Traditions* (Oxford UP, 2004).

3) Raymond Aron, *Main Currents of Sociological Thought*, 2 vols. (Transaction, 1998).

4) Lewis A. Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Waveland Press, 2003).

5) Estelle B. Friedman, *The Essential Feminist Reader* (Modern Library Classics, 2007).

6) Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Vintage, 1979).

**Requirements and Assessment**

Let me encourage you to maintain an exploratory mind and create your own active learning environment—not solely interacting with me, but with each other as well. I EXPECT REGULAR STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION. You must be willing to engage in class discussions. I will facilitate student discussions by creating a safe context that allows you to speak up freely. But I do not accept the equation of subjective experience or unreflective

“common sense” with “truth.” Be prepared to engage with the questions raised in this seminar, regardless of your own preferences. Most of all, I am interested in preparing you for independent research which requires a tolerant, reflective mind, best summarized by Immanuel Kant’s dictum, *Sapere aude*—‘Have the courage to use your *own* understanding!’

The course readings and assignments have been carefully selected to generate broad in-class discussions and materials for your oral presentations. Students are required to write two 10-page (double-spaced, font 12, not counting cover page and bibliography) interpretive papers that engage in a contrast and comparison of two or more sociological theorists (per each paper) on a self-selected key concept/theme/problem. Each student is required to seek approval of his/her theme *in advance* in an individual consultation with the instructor (during office hours).

**Paper 1: Compare theorist(s) of PART I to theorist(s) of Part II (due Monday, March 19, in class);**

**Paper 2: Compare theorist(s) of PART III to theorist(s) of Part IV (due Tuesday, May 8, at 3 pm).**

**No late papers will be accepted.**

In your interpretative contrast & comparison papers, you should carefully and critically contrast and compare the respective sociological views of your three thinkers on your self-selected key concept/theme/problem. With as much sophistication as possible, you should indicate how it reveals something of significance about the social dynamics in question. Your paper should represent reflective exercises in sociological analysis, interpretation, and critical thinking. You should engage in a careful textual analysis and cite appropriate, short textual passages according to ASA style: [http://lib.trinity.edu/research/citing/ASA\\_Style\\_Citations\\_4.pdf](http://lib.trinity.edu/research/citing/ASA_Style_Citations_4.pdf).

*No book reports or summaries please!* You are NOT expected to incorporate in your papers additional secondary sources (books, journal articles, and reviews). Concentrate on the required primary sources. Your papers represent reflective exercises in sociological analysis, interpretation, and critical thinking. In order to support your efforts, I am willing to comment on ONE outline or draft of your papers, but you must come to my office hour to receive my feedback in a face-to-face interaction (no online draft or outline discussions).

Finally, one student will be responsible for serving as discussant and will: a) engage in an *immanent critique* of self-selected themes and textual passages from the readings; and b) lead the ensuing *discussion* involving the entire class (total 60 min). Discussants will be asked to sign up for a specific theorist at the latest by the third week of class. Assignments on particular theorists/weeks will be made on first-come, first-serve basis. In addition the assigned readings, your presentation may include additional supportive (brief) materials (for example, handouts, charts, and/or visual materials like PowerPoints, video clips, or other web-based materials).

Regular class attendance is required. Please inform the instructor *in advance* if you have to miss class for really important reasons!

### **A Note on Grades**

You must complete all assigned written and oral work in order to pass the seminar. Any student found guilty of plagiarism will fail the seminar. Your oral class presentation, engaged discussion, and participation will count for 20% and your essays for 40% each (total 80%). Thus, your seminar grade will reflect your presentation, participation, and the overall quality of your written work. Students who participate regularly during our class discussions will receive *extra credit*—meaning that if you find yourself between two grades at the end of the semester, you will receive the *higher grade*.

Please be advised that *overparticipation* and the monopolization of class discussion at the expense of your peers may hurt the quality of the course, especially if such actions tend to derail the thematic agenda. I reserve the right to cut off discussion at any point in order to keep us on track and help *all* students to engage with the relevant materials. A significant element in academic study is the ability to learn to listen to other voices. For the purposes of this course, you should interpret the grades you receive in the following terms:

#### *1) In-Class Presentations (Immanent Critique):*

An 'A' or 'A-' will only be given to presentations that are clearly superior in form as well as content. Typically, such immanent critiques of self-selected textual passages are coherent, well organized, and adhere to the given time frame. 'A' students show their critical and careful reading of the text(s) and generate genuine interest and excitement for their topic. They lead discussions effortlessly, distribute speaking time fairly, and stay focused on their theme.

#### *2) Interpretative Contrast & Comparison Papers:*

Much of the above pertains to your essays as well. In addition to treating the subject in a sophisticated and creative manner, 'A' papers exhibit elegant and clear prose. Such papers draw connections between non-obvious points; they are well organized and furnish adequate citations of primary and secondary sources without losing their own unique and distinct voice. To get an 'A', you must demonstrate your ability to go *beyond* the expected.

### **Office Hours**

Monday, 9:30 – 11:00 am; and by appointment.

Students are encouraged to see me during office hours on a regular basis. Please clarify any difficult readings and/or other problems as soon as they arise. Don't wait until the last few weeks of the semester.

### **Academic Conduct and Plagiarism**

Students are expected to abide by the university's policies regarding academic integrity. Actions that are academically dishonest include, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of information, interfering with the education of another student. Violation of these policies will not be tolerated and will result in serious consequences including receiving no credit for the assignment, a failing grade, or, in serious cases, it might lead to suspension or expulsion. The university policy on academic dishonesty can be found at the UH Mānoa Student Conduct Code Policies Section IV Proscribed Conduct. For detail information, please consult the following website:

[http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct\\_code/proscribed\\_conduct.php](http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct_code/proscribed_conduct.php)

### **Disability Accommodation**

If you have a disability for which you need an accommodation, please make an appointment with the UH Mānoa KOKUA Program (Disability Access Services) at (808) 956-7511, or via email [kokua@hawaii.edu](mailto:kokua@hawaii.edu). For more information please access its website:

<http://www.hawaii.edu/kokua/>

### **Subject to Change Statement**

This syllabus and schedule are provisional and are subject to change. It is at the discretion of the instructor to do so for the purpose of furthering the educational objectives of the course. While the instructor will notify students of any changes through class announcements and email communications, it is students' responsibility to check on the course syllabus periodically for changes.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **WEEK 1 (Jan 8): Introduction to the Course**

Read Calhoun, *Introduction*, pp. 1-24.

### **WEEK 2 (Jan 15): NO CLASS: MARTIN LUTHER KING HOLIDAY**

## **PART I: SELF, RACE, GENDER**

### **WEEK 3 (Jan 22): Micro-Sociological Analysis: Schutz, Goffman, Blumer**

*Readings for week 3:* 1) Alfred Schutz, Erving Goffman, and Herbert Blumer selections, in Calhoun, pp. 27-74.

### **WEEK 4 (Jan 29): Race & Gender: Smith and Hill Collins**

#### **Student Presentations #1**

*Readings for week 4:* Dorothy Smith and Patricia Hill Collins selections in Calhoun, pp. 389-416.

### **WEEK 5 (Feb 5): (Non)Violence & Anticolonial Liberation: Fanon & Gandhi**

*Readings for week 5:* 1) Fanon, required reading # 7; 2) Gandhi, required reading # 8.

### **WEEK 6 (Feb 12): Race & Integration: Fanon, King, Patterson**

#### **Student Presentations #2**

*Readings for week 6:* 1) Frantz Fanon and Orlando Patterson selections in Calhoun, pp. 417-434; 2) M.L. King, required reading #9.

### **WEEK 7 (Feb 19): NO CLASS: PRESIDENTS' DAY HOLIDAY**

## **PART II: POWER, INEQUALITY, KNOWLEDGE**

### **WEEK 8: (Feb 26): Power & Inequality: Gramsci, Tilly, Lukes, Giddens**

*Readings for week 8:* 1) Antonio Gramsci, Charles Tilly, Steven Lukes, and Anthony Giddens selections in Calhoun, pp. 237-286.

### **WEEK 9 (Mar 5): Power in America: Mills**

#### **Student Presentations #3**

*Readings for week 9:* 1) C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*.

### **WEEK 10 (Mar 12): Institutions, Discipline, Knowledge: Foucault**

#### **Student Presentations #4**

*Readings for week 10:* 1) Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*.

### **PART III: STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONS, LEGITIMATION, SOCIAL CRISES**

#### **WEEK 11 (Mar 19): Social Structures and Practices: Bourdieu**

*Readings for week 11:* 1) Pierre Bourdieu selections in Calhoun, pp. 325-386.  
**PAPER #1 DUE. No late papers will be accepted.**

#### **WEEK 12 (Mar 26): NO CLASS: SPRING RECESS**

#### **WEEK 13 (Apr 2): Legitimation Crisis: Habermas**

*Readings for week 13:* 1) Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*.

#### **WEEK 14 (Apr 9): Territory, Authority, World-Systems Theory: Arrighi, Sassen, Wallerstein**

##### **Student Presentations #5**

*Readings for week 14:* 1) Giovanni Arrighi, Saskia Sassen, and Immanuel Wallerstein selections in Calhoun, pp. 563-601.

### **PART IV: MODERNITY, SOCIAL CHANGE, GLOBALIZATION**

#### **WEEK 15 (Apr 16): Aspects of Modernity: Elias, Bauman, Latour, Giddens**

##### **Student Presentations #6**

*Readings for week 15:* 1) Norbert Elias, Zygmunt Bauman, and Bruno Latour selections in Calhoun, pp. 493-530; pp. 546-560; 2) Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Chapter 1 (see reading # 5)

#### **WEEK 16 (Apr 23): Globalization: Giddens, Sassen, Steger & James**

##### **Student Presentation #7**

*Readings for week 16:* 1) Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Chapter 2 (reading # 5); 2) Saskia Sassen, "Globalization or Denationalization?" (reading #6); 3) Steger and James "Levels of Subjective Globalization" (reading #10).  
none.

#### **WEEK 17 (April 30):**

**Concluding discussion**

**PAPER #2 DUE: TUESDAY, MAY 8, AT 3PM. No late papers will be accepted.**