

**SOC 612: CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY  
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I AT MANOA - SPRING 2015**

**INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Nandita Sharma**  
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**CLASS SCHEDULE: Thursdays: 12:00-2:30PM**  
**Location: SAKAM B211**

**Course Description:**

Contemporary sociological theory is not only a continuation or expansion of prior forms of knowledge production but is also a profound challenge – even an unhinging – of some of the foundational assumptions of the discipline, particularly in regards to concepts of “society,” “culture” and “the human.” Contemporary developments in sociological theory re-examine ideas of *who* can hold knowledge, *what* comprises knowledge, *why* we come to know what we know, *where* the space of knowledge production is, and *how* knowledge production is integral to the creation of social differentiations and gross disparities. Contemporary theorists also challenge the idea that there exist separate and discrete social, cultural, economic, and political spheres, reject essentialism, and reject the notion that there exists a “pure” or “scientific” methodology in social analysis. We will examine these developments through our reading of some the key texts informing contemporary sociological theory, particularly those associated with post-structuralism, post-modernism (including efforts at deconstruction), post-colonialism and cultural studies. In doing so, we will see how contemporary theorists have re-shaped our understanding of the relationship between the construction of social norms, an ever-expanding global capitalism, people's subjectivities and resistance to processes of expropriation, exploitation and subjugation.

**Required Readings:**

ES Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1978.

PB Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Trans. Richard Nice, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

JB Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1990.

SH Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies,” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, David Morley and Huan-Hsing Chen (eds.), New York and London: Routledge, 1996. (pdf provided).

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:**

Participation (preparation and level of engagement)	10%
Discussion Questions (each class)	20%
Short Papers on Readings (2 in term = 15% each)	30%
Final Research Paper (22-25 pp)	40%

**CLASS ATTENDANCE:** Your attendance is expected. You are responsible for everything that is covered during class time. Moreover, attendance is usually a good indicator of your participation in this course (i.e. interest, commitment and enthusiasm), which accounts for 10% of your grade. Just as importantly, you are expected to come *fully prepared* for each class by having completed your assigned readings and having developed questions and comments that will allow you to be an *active* participant in class discussions.

**CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:** All assignments must be submitted on the day they are due. A late paper will incur a penalty of 10% off the grade for each day past the due date.

## **STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES**

Students will develop their critical learning skills by: examining the historical origins of key ideas, concepts and categories shaping human experience today; examining the relations or ruling that organize dominant ideas, concepts and categories and; examining how people have variously contested these ideas, concepts and categories. Students will also develop their reading, writing and oral presentation skills in order to become clear thinkers and articulate communicators of theoretically informed empirical research.