

Sociology 321: Survey of Sociological Theory, Section 1, CRN 72816, 3 Units, Fall 2013-2014
Tuesday and Thursday, 10:30-11:45am, Kuykendall 306
Professor: Sun-Ki Chai, office hours TTh 9-10:20am, Saunders Hall 237, sunki{atmark}awaii.edu

Theory is perhaps the part of sociology that seems most difficult to understand for the average student. What exactly do social theorists study, and how does it relate to real life? Basically, the answer is that theorists study the same thing that all sociologists study: social phenomena such as poverty, democracy, war, crime, education, health, and ethnicity. The main difference between "regular" sociologists and theorists is that theorists try to look at the big picture. Rather than starting off by analyzing a particular society or point in time, they try to see if there are any general rules of human existence that can be said to apply throughout the world and across history. Because of this, their writings can often be more abstract than those of other sociologists. Nonetheless, their main purpose is far from abstract, but rather based on a desire to understand the real world. Indeed, sociological theory is useless unless it helps us to explain or predict events in our own lives and the lives of those around us. Good theories are not useful just for intellectual purposes; they should also provide us with hints for how we can live better.

This course will attempt to teach you about sociological theory in a way that allows you to see how theories are applied to understanding reality. It will therefore include discussion not only of the theories themselves, but also examples of how they are used in a practical manner to address issues that affect us all in our everyday lives.

The course text is Michelle Dillon, *Introduction to Sociological Theory: Theorists, Concepts, and their Applicability to the Twenty-First Century* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). Note: This is the [first edition](#), and is listed on Amazon and other online retailers. Although a second edition may be also be listed, it has not been published yet.

Grades in the course are based on point totals, with the total for non-extra credit assignments adding up to 100 points.

There are a number of regular, small, writing assignments in this course. During the semester, students will be expected to write several short essays at regular intervals, which will be based on the lectures and readings, as well as an article that you have chosen from outside the assigned material. The essays in total will be worth 48 points maximum. The [requirements and scoring](#) for the essays can be found in the resource section of the course website.

The course requirements also include a take-home final paper. The final will count for 22 points maximum. It will be based upon essay questions, and will cover both the material presented in the lectures and in the assigned readings, as well as a testing your ability to do original analysis of the theories we have covered. A [detailed description](#) of the final paper can also be found on the course website.

Plagiarism is a violation of [campus policies](#) and is strictly prohibited. Students who plagiarize or otherwise violate student integrity policies on an assignment for any reason will be subject to a failing grade, and further discipline will be administered for significant, deliberate violations. It is becoming increasingly easy to detect plagiarism electronically, and it cheats the other students in the class who are following the rules.

Attendance will be taken in the course, and will count for 30 points maximum. One point will be subtracted your attendance grade for each class missed. Students who arrive after class begins or who leave before class ends will receive half-credit for attendance on that day. Excused absences can be given if there are outside events for which your participation is crucial for your or others' well-being, your role cannot be adequately filled by another person, and whose occurrence and timing are outside of your control. You must bring documentation from a responsible person associated with the event or event that describes how these conditions are filled, such as a medical doctor's memo or a note from a coach.

Class participation is essential for the amount of learning we gain in this course. Therefore, up to 10% extra credit can be given for your constructive participation in class discussions. Up to 5% will be given to those who participate in class conversation in a civil and relevant manner, based on frequency of participation. An additional maximum of 5% can be given to those whose participation also reflects prior critical and analytical thought about class material.

The course grade will be based on a modified C=70 | B-=80 | A-=90 scale (C- is not awarded in this course), with the possibility of cutoff points being lowered somewhat depending on the distribution of class point total at the end of the semester. Therefore, the exact cutoff lines will not be known until after the final paper, but you can be confident of a grade if your total course grade exceeds the levels listed above. Please consult the [UHM catalog](#) for general information on credits and grades.