SURVEY OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

If you are not planning to go to graduate school in sociology, why do you have to study sociological theory? (Is sociological theory relevant to your life?) This simple but profound question motivates objectives of the course.

The first course objective is to understand how sociology has evolved historically. Having a sense of how sociology has developed helps you contextualize what you learn in other sociology courses. To accomplish this objective, you are going to read classical and contemporary sociological theories to understand core questions and controversies that generations of sociologists have grappled with.

The second and more important objective is to master theoretical concepts in sociology as heuristics to understand and explain phenomena in your everyday life. You are going to read sociological theories not simply to understand the history of sociology but also to acquire an intuition of what good sociological theories look like, so that you can start constructing your own.

GRADING

Participation 5%
Four Response Papers 20% + 25% + 25% + 25% = 95%

Participation

Over the course of the semester, you will comment on the assigned reading (at least) once in class. When you make a comment, you are required to do the following: (1) quote a specific passage from the assigned reading of the day and (2) explain why you think the
passage is interesting, persuasive, problematic, etc. by referring to real and specific examples in the world. You can make a comment in class anytime after the first week. At the beginning of every class, I will ask whether you have a comment on the reading.

Response Paper

You will write a short paper (4 pages, double-spaced) for each of the four sections of the course: “Classics,” “Self & Society,” “Structure & Agency,” and “Critical Theory.” In your response paper, you are required to do the following: (1) summarize briefly the gist of arguments made by theorists in the section by focusing on how their arguments relate to each other (e.g. do they corroborate, complement, or contradict each other?); (2) assess strengths and weaknesses of their arguments in light of specific and real examples from current events found in local, national, or world news; and (3) attach copies of newspaper/magazine articles that you used for your paper.

When you write a response paper, you must quote at least one specific passage from each theorist covered in the section. This is a crucial requirement. For the proper citation format, follow instructions regarding “references in the main text” at Quick Style Guide: http://www.asanet.org/page.ww?name=Quick+Style+Guide&section=Sociology+Depts

I will provide more specific instructions regarding each paper as a due date approaches.

ACCOMMODATIONS

If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, please notify me privately or contact the KOKUA Program (808-956-7511) in room 013 of the Queen Lili’uokalani Center for Student Services. I would be happy to work with you and the KOKUA Program to ensure reasonable accommodations in my course.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is representing the work of others as your own (including copying other students’ work or using Internet resources without proper citation). Those who plagiarize will receive an F, and any sanctions imposed by the university. For more details, review the UH-Manoa Student Conduct Code (1992).

CLASSROOM POLICIES

Turn off cell phones during class.

REQUIRED TEXT
COURSE SCHEDULE

Introduction

January 11: Introduction (no reading)


Classics

January 18: Karl Marx. “The German Ideology” and “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.” Pp. 82-95 in CST


**Response paper #1 is due in class on February 10 (Thursday)**

Self & Society


February 15: Preschool in Three Cultures Revisited (55 min)


March 3: *The Slanted Screen* (61 min)

**Response paper #2 is due in class on March 8 (Tuesday)**

**Structure & Agency**


March 10: Robert Merton. “Social Structure and Anomie.” Pp. 460-469 in *CST*


March 22 & 24: Spring Recess

March 29: Jay MacLeod. “Social Immobility in the Land of Opportunity” and “Social Reproduction in Theoretical Perspective.” Pp. 3-24 in *Ain’t No Makin’ It (ANMI)* [Laulima]

March 31: Jay MacLeod. “Leveled Aspirations” and “Reproduction Theory Considered.” Pp. 113-153 in *ANMI* [Laulima]

April 5 and 7: *City of God* (133 min)

**Response paper #3 is due in class on April 12 (Tuesday)**

**Critical Theory**


April 19: Jurgen Habermas. “Civil Society and the Political Public Sphere.” Pp. 388-402 in Contemporary Sociological Theory [Laulima]

April 21: Iris Marion Young. “Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy.” Pp. 120-135 in Democracy and Difference [Laulima]


Wrap-up

May 3: TBA

** Response paper #4 is due 4PM on May 6 (Friday) in my mailbox in the sociology department (Saunders 247)