SOC 612: CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I AT MANOA - SPRING 2017

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Nandita Sharma
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CLASS SCHEDULE: Thursdays: 12:00-2:30PM
Location: KUY 401

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. Many contemporary theorists pose challenges to 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:


COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

- Participation (preparation and level of engagement) 10%
- Discussion Questions (each class) 10%
- Short Papers on Readings (4 in term = 10% each) 40%
- Final Research Paper (22-25 pp) 40%

CLASS ATTENDANCE: Your attendance is expected. 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. Moreover, you are responsible for everything that is covered during class time. Just as importantly, you are expected to come full 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. By the end of the course, students will be able to work toward clear and effective verbal and written communications; define and describe key sociological concepts and theories and discuss sociology topics using empirical data from scholarly sources.