

Sociology 321: Survey of Sociological Theory, Section 1, CRN 81997, 3 Units, Fall 2018-2019

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9:30-10:20pm, GAR 103

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Office Hours MWF 10:30-11:15pm or by appointment, Saunders Hall 237,
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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.

These, roughly are the key principles with which I approach teaching this course:

- We will focus on a relatively small number of concepts and ideas from each author and/or school of thought, rather than trying to cover the full breadth of the relevant literature.
- Using these concepts and ideas, we will learn a "system of thought" that can be used to analyze virtually all important current (including local) social issues, not just those that originally inspired the formation of the theories.
- We will test each system of thought by applying it to numerous examples during class time. In addition, your essay assignments will be aimed at developing the skill to apply a system of thought to analyze current issues that you choose.

The course texts are Craig Calhoun et al., [*Classical Sociological Theory*](#) and [*Contemporary Sociological Theory*](#) 3rd eds. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). These are available at the University bookstore.

Most of the course materials will be placed on the [Laulima](#) course site. The course should appear automatically on your homepage at Laulima once you are registered for the course.

Student Learning Objectives:

- Students should be able to concisely describe each sociological theory in terms of its practical understanding of the fundamental nature of human groups and interaction.
- They should be able to apply each sociological theory to a wide range of social problems across time and space, explaining how the implications of the theory differ from that of other applicable theories.
- They should be able to write concise essays comparing, integrating, and extending the findings of a variety of sociological theories to a single current social problem, using skillful adaptation of multiple theories to provide a nuanced explanation of the causes and effects underlying the problem.

Grades in the course are based on point totals, with the total for 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. Essays must be turned in prior to the last class on the week that they are due, and should focus on theories covered between the due date of previous essay (or the beginning of class for the first essay) and the current essay's deadline. You should write at most one short essay on any single theory. The essays in total will be worth 45 points maximum. The requirements and scoring and guidelines for using source material for the essays can be found in the resource section of the course website. You are encouraged to choose essays on similar substantive issues, which will help you to learn how to apply multiple theories to the same problem or set of related problems.

The course requirements also include a take-home final paper. The final will count for 25 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. They will be due at the end of the period assigned for the course on the University [final exam schedule](#). A detailed description of the final paper can also be found on the course website.

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, without an excused absence, will receive at most half-credit for attendance on that day. Excused absences can be given if there are outside events for which your participation is a University requirement or 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 provide some sort of official documentation that describes how these conditions are filled.

Class participation is important in ensuring that we learn as much as possible in this course. Therefore, up to 5 points of extra credit can be awarded for those engage in

constructive participation in class discussions.

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 students' responsibility to be familiar with rules on plagiarism and other aspects of the [Student Conduct Code](#); ignorance of the rules is not a valid excuse. It is becoming increasingly easy to detect plagiarism electronically, and it cheats the other students in the class who are following the rules.

Efforts will be made to provide reasonable accommodation for students who are registered with the [KOKUA Program](#), the UH Manoa office for students with disabilities. For more information on KOKUA, please contact them at Queen Lili'uokalani Center for Student Services 013, phone 956-7511, or email kokua@hawaii.edu.