365 Contemporary Social Theory

Maureen Mullinax

Follow this and additional works at: http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/sociology_syllabi_spring_2014

Recommended Citation

http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/sociology_syllabi_spring_2014/4

This Restricted-Access Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the Sociology Syllabi 2014 at Exhibit. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sociology Syllabi Spring 2014 by an authorized administrator of Exhibit. For more information, please contact exhibit@xavier.edu.
This course examines contemporary sociological theory and social theory with a focus on its interdisciplinary and postmodern conceptions. In addition to structural functionalism, the Frankfurt School, and symbolic interactionism, we explore feminist theories, postmodernism, postcolonial theory, theories of sexualities, and the cultural turn in sociology. Drawing on empirical applications of these theoretical resources, we will specifically examine the operation of power and the maintenance and transformations of inequality in local, global and transnational spatial contexts.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this course you should be able to:

- Outline the social, political and historical contexts of the development of social theory in the contemporary period as well as multiple links to classical social theory
- Define key concepts of these theoretical traditions
- Compare and contrast the major theoretical paradigms that have influenced the theorizing of the social
- Analyze the application of these theoretical paradigms and concepts by selecting and critically reviewing empirical studies in peer-reviewed social science journals
- Apply the insights of social theory to contemporary issues especially those centered around the intersecting social positions of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability and geography.

Required Texts


Additional readings on Blackboard.
Course Requirements (detailed guidelines to follow)

10% Participation
20% Reading responses (due every Thursday, beginning January 23)
5% Journal article class discussion leader (in assigned pairs)
5% Geographies of Privilege class discussion leader (in assigned pairs)
10% Research proposal draft
25% Empirical research proposal
15% Midterm exam
10% Final exam

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93% - 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90% - 92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87% - 89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83% - 86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80% - 82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77% - 79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73% - 76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70%-72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67% - 69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63% - 66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60% - 62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contemporary Theoretical Application Group Project:
For this exercise your group will research and collectively choose a contemporary empirical research article that applies the theoretical insights of your assigned theorist. This process will involve:

1) researching potential articles (4-5) for the class to read
2) meeting with me to pitch articles and solicit my approval
3) posting the approved article by 1:00 pm on the Saturday prior to the date it is to be read
4) setting the framework and then guiding the discussion on your assigned day

Participation and Attendance 20%
I expect you to attend every class. Multiple absences and/or consistently coming late or leaving early will negatively impact your participation score. Your participation will be evaluated on the consistency and thoughtfulness of your contributions to our conversations. Your score will also include performance on in-class writing assignments and quizzes as well as a peer evaluation of your input into the group project.

Evaluation
Formal assignments will be graded according to the following criteria:
1. strength of application of course concepts and theories (consistent and robust)
2. use of supporting evidence from course materials and additional resources when relevant
3. clarity of writing style
4. technical accuracy (have you followed instructions and copy edited your writing?)

Overall scores will reflect the following:

A work shows exceptional mastery of course materials and exemplary analytical and presentation skills.

B work shows good, thoughtful understanding of course materials and above average analytical work.

C work shows adequate, though not distinctive, understanding of course materials and average analytical work.

D work shows poor understanding of course materials and incompetent critical analysis.

F work shows little or no serious engagement with course materials or analytical tasks.
Your participation will be evaluated in terms of the following:

A You were consistently well prepared for class, actively listened, and contributed thoughtful insights and questions to both group and class discussions.

B You were mostly prepared for class and frequently demonstrated thoughtful engagement with the material in both group and class discussions.

C You were inconsistently prepared for class and infrequently engaged with the material and group and class discussions.

D You were minimally prepared and showed a lack of interest in the course material and group and class discussions.

F You showed a lack of interest in the course and regularly demonstrated a lack of commitment to the class through non-participation in group and class discussions.

Additional Course Policies

Missed Quizzes, Exams or Late Assignments
Quizzes or in-class writing exercises may not be made up. I will only offer make-up exams in cases I define as extreme emergencies. Any emergency must be documented. In these rare cases, I will determine a make-up exam period and process.

Extra Credit
I will offer no extra credit in this class.

Technology
All electronic devices must be turned off and stored by the beginning of class. 5 points will be deducted from your total course points each time I see you using these devices for any purpose. Computers may not be used in class unless we are doing in-class research.

Communications and Office Hours
We will use Blackboard this semester. The syllabus, additional materials and any changes to the schedule or to course information will be posted there. Please consult your email and Blackboard regularly for information about possible changes to the course schedule.

I will respond to student emails once a day during the week. I have limited office hours because it is my experience that Xavier students rarely drop by. If you need to meet with me outside of the hours I have listed, please make an appointment. I am often in my office and encourage you to drop by or schedule an appointment if you have a question or concern.

Grievances
If you have a grievance with some aspect of the course (either with me or with your fellow students) please address the problem by setting up an appointment to discuss the issue as soon as possible.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities
Students who feel they need some additional help to perform at their best in the classroom should contact the Disability Services Office for assistance. This includes note taking, exam proctoring, alternate form textbooks, sign language and C-Print, and additional assistance on in-class writing assignments. If you do require any of these accommodations please let me know as soon as possible.
Tentative Schedule

I reserve the right to change the schedule at any point in the semester. You will be notified of these changes in advance via in-class announcement and email. The current syllabus (dated) will be posted on Blackboard.

Contemporary Sociological and Social Theory (Allan)
Geographies of Privilege (GoP)
Blackboard (BB)
Peer-reviewed empirical journal articles and selections from Lemert (TBA)

Week One
1/14 Course introduction—Social Theory and the Sociological Perspective

1/16 Chapter 1 "In the Beginning Was Modernity" (Allan)
"The Promise" (Mills, BB)

Week Two
1/21 Chapter 2 “Defining Moments in Twentieth Century Theory—Talcott Parsons and the Frankfurt School”

1/23 “Sex Roles in the American Kinship System” (Parsons, BB)
“The Culture Industry as Deception” (Horkheimer and Adorno)

Week Three
1/28 Chapter 3 “The Language of Self—Herbert Blumer” and “Chapter 4 Imagining the Self—Erving Goffman” (Allan)

1/30 “Queers in the Line of Fire: Goffman’s Stigma Revisited” (Orne, BB)

Week Four
2/4 Chapter 8 “Structuring Class—Pierre Bourdieu” (Allan)

2/6 Pierre Bourdieu article (TBA)
Stacey (meet by 1/30)

Week Five
2/11 Chapter 9 “Structures of Power—Michel Foucault” (Allan)
Proposal topic due (3/4 – 1 page typed description of topic and rationale for choice based on preliminary assessment of potential theoretical connections)

2/13 Michel Foucault article (TBA)
Jackie and Rachel (meet by 2/6)

Week Six
2/18 Chapter 12 “Reason and Democracy—Jurgen Habermas” (Allan)

2/20 Jurgen Habermas article (TBA)
Anne and Binta (meet by 2/13)

Week Seven
2/25 Midterm Exam

2/27 “Foreword” and “Introduction” (GoP)
In-class work on proposal project. Meet in CLC—4th floor lounge area at tables

Week Eight
Spring Break (3/4-3/6)

Week Nine
3/11 Chapter 15 “Being Black in America—Patricia Hill Collins and Cornel West” (Allan)
3/13  Patricia Hill Collins or Cornel West article (TBA)
Jennifer and Tina (meet by 2/20)

Week Ten
3/18  Chapter 16  “Text, Power and Women—Dorothy E. Smith” (Allan)
3/20  Dorothy Smith article (TBA)
Juwanna and James (meet by 3/13)

Week Eleven
3/25  Chapter 17  “Exposing Sex—Judith Butler” (Allan)
3/27  Judith Butler article (TBA)
Tim and Grace (meet by 3/20)

Week Twelve
4/1   1. “The Geography of Sex Work in the United Arab Emirates” (GoP)
Jackie and Binta
Draft of proposal due
4/3   3. “Chicago’s Southside’s Blues-scapes: Creeping Commodification and Complex Human Response”
(GoP)
Anne

Week Thirteen
4/8   4. “Landscaping Privilege: Being British in South Africa” (GoP)
James and Tina
4/10  9. “Residential Mobility and the Market Value of Whiteness in Boston” (GoP)
Stacey and Grace

Week Fourteen
4/15  12. “Gendered Vulnerabilities and Muslim American Civil Rights Advocacy” (GoP)
Jennifer and Rachel
4/17  Easter Break

Week Fifteen
4/22  13. “Masculine Privilege: The Culture of Bullying at an Elite Private School” (GoP)
Tim
4/24  Work on proposals. I am out of town at a conference.

Week Sixteen
4/29  14. “Zones of Exclusion: The Experience of Scottish Girls” (GoP)
Juwanna
5/1   Proposal Presentations
Proposal due

Finals Week
5/6   Final exam 1-2:50