

**SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY**  
**111 THOMAS BUILDING\***  
**SUMMER, 2007**  
**MTWRF 11:10 AM – 12:25 PM**

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**\*NOTE ON COURSE LOCATION:** Normally class will meet in Thomas 111. However, due to renovations, from June 11-15, we will meet in Thomas 210.

**Introduction**

This course provides an introduction to sociological theory, focusing primarily on the classical period. For the first four weeks, we will grapple with the works of the giants of sociological theory: Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber (pronounced “Vaber”). The final two weeks will deal with theories of the self as well as the theories of culture in a capitalist society made popular by The Frankfurt School. Students will be introduced to important sociological concepts such as *exploitation*, *alienation*, *anomie*, and *rationalization*. This will be facilitated by attention to key debates in the field, most notably pertaining to the understanding of and response to modernity. While this discussion will be necessarily historical, in part, much of our discussion will center on what these core sociological insights suggest for contemporary society.

This course will also cultivate several skills that will be of use to students in the future. First, we will study what “theory” is and learn strategies for approaching complex theoretical texts. Students will also learn to construct their own theoretical arguments, using their “sociological imaginations” to see their own lives within a broader social framework. Finally, this course will require students to put complex ideas into coherent words through writing assignments. All three of these skills will help enhance students’ analytical thinking aptitude – a skill useful in nearly any professional.

**Required Texts**

Calhoun, Craig et al. (eds.). 2007. *Classical Sociological Theory*. Blackwell Publishing.

Copies are available in bookstore, but probably also online for a better price. Students are encouraged to find the best price, but get a copy quickly as it will be needed during the first week.

Occasionally, required readings will be handed out in class and made available in PDF format on ANGEL (<http://www.angel.psu.edu/>).

**Requirements**

The development of good social theory requires serious efforts in reading, writing, and discussion with peers. To encourage all three, your progress in the course will be measured in several ways. The following are the course assessments:

1. **Participation** (10%) - Attendance is not mandatory, but active participation is essential to having good class discussions. Therefore, you will be expected to complete the readings and be prepared for each class. Each week will include a mixture of lectures and discussion. Being prepared means arriving promptly, remaining in class for the whole session, and actively contributing and listening.
2. **Quizzes** (25%) – Frequent, extremely short quizzes on the readings will take place in class on a random basis. Most questions will be easily answer by anyone who has completed the assigned reading.
3. **Reading Theory Paper** (10%) – Due in the third week, this assignment will require students to engage with writings of one theorist (approximately 2-3 pgs.). See forthcoming assignment sheet for details.
4. **Film Review** (10%) – Due in the fourth week, students will be required to write a review of a film from the perspective of a social theorist (approximately 2-3 pgs.).
5. **Term Paper** (20%) – Due in the fifth week, this assignment will entail a substantial analysis of several theoretical perspectives (approximately 6-8 pgs.). A handout on this assignment is forthcoming.
6. **Timeline** (5%) – Students will create their own timeline (which can be used during the final exam). This will be turned in on the last day of class.
7. **Final Exam** (20%) – The course will include one, end-of-class exam, which will be taken in-class. Substantial questions pertaining to several of the different theoretical paradigms explored during the course will be the basis.

**Summary:**

10% Participation  
 25% Quizzes  
 10% Reading Theory Paper  
 20% Term Paper  
 10% Film Review  
 5% Timeline  
 20% Final Exam

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100% Final Grade

**Final Grades:**

94%-100%	A	90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+	84-86	B
80-83	B-	77-79	C+
74-76	C	70-73	C-
60-69	D	<60	F

**Late Policy:** On any assignment, your grade will be reduced by one unit for each day late

(e.g., 1 day, from A to A-; 2 days, B+; 3 days, B, and so on).

**Missed Exam:** Don't do it. A make-up exam will be given at my discretion and I reserve the right to change the format. As a general rule, death and hospitalization are the only excuses.

**Cheating and Plagiarism:** Not tolerated. You will receive a zero for the exam/paper in question with no chance of a make-up. You will also be reported to the University's Judicial Affairs office for possible further sanctions.

**Civility and Respect:** This course will include discussions of class, nationality, religion, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. I expect students to show respect toward all the subjects of our study. More importantly, I expect you to treat your classmates and your instructor with respect and dignity at all times – especially when you disagree with them.

### **Course Outline**

All listed readings are required. The readings are listed using the following shorthand: (C) Calhoun reader, (H) handed out in class and also available on ANGEL. If you were not in class to receive a handout and have problems printing out from ANGEL, please see me in advance to get printouts.

#### **Week 1: Introduction and The Social Contract**

- May 21            Course Introduction/What is Theory?
- May 22            Why Read Theory Today?  
(H) Lemert, "Social Theory: Its Uses and Pleasures," pp. 1-9 and 17-20
- May 23            Assumptions of Theorists  
(H) Alexander, "What is Theory?"
- May 24            The Idea of Society  
(C) Calhoun, "Introduction to Part 1"  
(C) Rousseau, "Of the Social Contract"  
(C) Smith, "The Wealth of Nations"
- May 25            The Enlightenment

#### **Week 2: Karl Marx (1818-1883)**

- May 28            **\*\*NO CLASSES\*\* - MEMORIAL DAY**
- May 29            Introduction to Karl Marx  
(C) Calhoun, "Introduction to Part II"  
(C) Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party"  
(H) Engels, "Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx"
- May 30            Alienation and Historical Materialism

(C) Marx and Engels, "The German Ideology"  
(C) Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844"

May 31 Capitalism and Labor  
(C) Marx, "Wage-Labour and Capital"  
(C) Marx, "Classes"

June 1 Capitalism in the Modern World  
Film: *American Dream* (1990)

### **Week 3: Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)**

June 4 **\*\*READING PAPER DUE\*\***  
Introduction to Emile Durkheim  
(C) Calhoun, "Introduction to Part III"  
(C) Durkheim, "The Rules of Sociological Method"

June 5 Solidarity and Modern Life  
(C) Durkheim, "The Division of Labor in Society"

June 6 Anomie  
Film: *Edward Scissorhands* (1990)

June 7 Suicide  
(C) Durkheim, "Suicide"  
(H) Samuels, "Let's Die Together"

June 8 Collective Conscience  
(C) Durkheim, "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life"

### **Week 4: Max Weber (1864-1920)**

June 11 Introduction to Max Weber  
(C) Calhoun, "Introduction to Part IV"  
(C) Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science"  
(C) Weber, "Basic Sociological Terms"

June 12 Rationalization  
(C) Weber, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism"

June 13 Bureaucracy  
(C) Weber, "Bureaucracy"  
(H) Ritzer, "The McDonaldization of Society"

June 14 Rationalization and Bureaucracy in Modern Life  
Film: *Brazil* (1985)

June 15        **\*\*FILM REVIEW DUE\*\***  
Politics and Authority  
(C) Weber, “The Distribution of Power within the Political Community”  
(C) Weber, “The Types of Legitimate Domination”

**Week 5: The Self**

June 18        The Individual in Society  
(C) Calhoun, “Introduction to Part V”  
(C) Simmel, “Group Expansion and the Development of Individuality”  
(H) Simmel, “On Fashion”

June 19        George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) and The Self  
Guest Lecturer: Matthew Schroeder  
(C) Mead, “The Self”

June 20        W. E. B. DuBois (1868-1963)  
(C) DuBois, “The Souls of Black Folk”

June 21        Erving Goffman (1922-1982)  
(H) Goffman, “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life”

June 22        **\*\*MAJOR PAPER DUE\*\***  
Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)  
(C) Freud, “Civilization and Its Discontents”

**Week 6: Critical Theory and Course Wrap-up**

June 25        Introduction to the Frankfurt School  
(C) Calhoun, “Introduction to Part VI”  
(C) Horkheimer, “Traditional and Critical Theory”  
(C) Mannheim, “Ideology and Utopia”

June 26        The Culture Industry  
(C) Horkheimer and Adorno, “The Culture Industry”  
(C) Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”

June 27        Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) and the Radicalism of the Sixties  
(C) Marcuse, “One-Dimensional Man”  
(H) Raser, “Mar-coo-za, Mar-coo-za”  
Film: *Herbert’s Hippopotamus* (1996)

June 28        Course Wrap-up and Exam Review

June 29        **\*\*FINAL EXAM TODAY\*\***  
**\*\*TIMELINE DUE\*\***