

CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORY

SOCI 430 | Section 502

TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY.

Spring 2019 | Syllabus

Location: Harrington
Education Classroom
Building 110

Class Days: Tu/Th

Class Time: 3:55p-5:10p

Prerequisite: SOCI 230

Credit Hours: 3

Required Materials: There is **no textbook** for this course. Required readings will be available on *eCampus*. Paper and a writing utensil are needed for discussions.

Instructor

Stephanie M. Ortiz, MA

Email

Smo07007@tamu.edu

Office Location

Academic Building

Room 436

Office Hours

Tuesdays 2:30-3:30p

And by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a broad survey of major contributions to sociological theory over the last half century. I chose texts from a variety of voices to expand our ability to take part in a range of ongoing dialogues and debates within sociology. We begin by reviewing and assessing the works of canonized classical theorists. We then cover central themes within sociological theory and end by examining contemporary explanations for emerging concerns.

COURSE GOALS

This course takes seriously Richard Swedberg's notion that social theory is an art. We will cultivate the art of social theory, developing and practicing ways to use theory for our own purposes. Students will gain multiple frameworks with which to analyze social, cultural, political and economic issues that the discipline has wrestled with from the beginning. Ultimately, students will learn to form and evaluate arguments using theory, and will develop writing skills to effectively articulate their positions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Texas A&M has identified student learning outcomes that describe our institutional commitment to your educational goals. These include the ability to demonstrate critical thinking, effective communication, and social, cultural, and global competence. After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- ⇒ Summarize and critique complex arguments
- ⇒ Describe and evaluate theoretical explanations for a range of enduring sociological concerns
- ⇒ Analyze and interpret empirical data to develop an informed position on social issues

Course Requirements: Check your TAMU email daily, because important information regarding this class may be emailed to you. I am not perfect and I may err, so please keep copies of all completed assignments and graded work until final grades are posted. Be sure to discuss grade posting omissions and errors with me immediately. Unless specifically indicated otherwise, students are not to collaborate on graded work.

There are two sets of course requirements that you may choose from: a **Critical Response** (CR) track and a **Theoretical Innovation** (TI) track. The deadline for choosing your track is **January 24th @ 8pm**. Prompts and the rubric for these assignments will be posted on *eCampus*.

The CR Track is recommended for students seeking to apply and critique a broad range of theories.

CR Papers – 240 points/48% of course grade

CR papers are opportunities to more deeply engage with the course topics and apply theories to real-world cases. You must choose **four** prompts throughout the semester to respond to. Note that each prompt has a specific due date. It is your prerogative which four papers you choose to complete, however, I encourage you to choose the prompts that most resonate with you. Two papers must be completed by **Week 8**, and the final two papers must be completed by **Week 14**. Each paper must be between 700 and 750 words.

The TI Track is recommended for students interested in developing their own theory. Students applying to graduate programs could use the final TI paper as a part of their writing sample.

TI Papers – 240 points/48% of course grade

There are **five** aspects of the TI requirement, each with specific due dates and word requirements. The first paper is a 'statement of the problem' you are interested in addressing. The second paper is a review of how sociologists have theoretically addressed this problem. The third paper is a discussion of the major tenets, assumptions and propositions of your theory and the operationalization of concepts your theory makes use of. The fourth paper is a discussion of the broader implications and limitations of your theory. Revised TI papers 1-4 are to be submitted as a final paper, which must be between 2,800-3,000 words.

In addition to the track-specific requirements, all students are required to complete:

Scheduled Exams – 200 points/40% of course grade

Two short answer/essay exams will be administered. All material you are exposed to in this class will be "free game" for the exams, including readings, class discussion, lecture materials, and videos. If you arrive late and a student has already completed the exam and left the room, you will be required to provide official documentation for your lateness before you can take a make-up exam. Rescheduled exams will be given only to those who provide documentation of excused absences. It is also your responsibility to reschedule

missed exams in a timely fashion. Exams should be rescheduled within no more than 24 hours of your return to class, and must be taken no more than a week after you return to class. Make-up exams will consist of different questions, but will maintain the same format as scheduled exams.

Attendance – 60 points/12% of course grade

Students are expected to attend class regularly and to arrive on time. I will randomly select **10** class periods in which to take attendance. If you are absent, you do not earn credit for attendance that day. University rules related to excused and unexcused absences are located at <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07>. If you cannot make it to class, it is your responsibility to find out what was discussed. I do not give “private lectures,” so you must obtain missing lecture notes from another student.

Grading: Grades can be accessed on *eCampus*. All grades in this course must be earned. There will be no curving or extra credit offered. I do not accept late work. It is against university policy and federal law to discuss grades using email, so if you have specific questions or concerns, please visit during office hours. A grade of “Incomplete” will only be given in cases of emergencies late in the semester and when official documentation is provided. Please inform me of any difficulties or hardships negatively affecting your class performance as soon as possible to maximize the amount of time available to manage the problem.

CRITICAL RESPONSE TRACK

<u>Grade Component</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
CR #1	60	12%
CR #2	60	12%
Midterm Exam	100	20%
CR #3	60	12%
CR #4	60	12%
Final Exam	100	20%
Attendance	60	12%
TOTAL	500	100%

THEORETICAL INNOVATION TRACK

<u>Grade Component</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
TI #1	25	6%
TI #2	50	10%
Midterm Exam	100	20%
TI #3	70	14%
TI #4	50	10%
TI FINAL	45	9%
Final Exam	100	20%
Attendance	60	12%
TOTAL	500	100%

Letter grades will be assigned based on total points earned, as a percentage of points possible. The grading scale is as follows:

Course Grade	Point Range	Percentage Range
A	450 or more	90%-100%
B	400-449	80%-89%
C	350-399	70%-79%
D	300-349	60%-69%
F	0-299	0%-59%

Class Conduct and Expectations - I appreciate your cooperation with these important aspects of creating a class of which we all want to be a part!

Respect - I believe that learning should be an empowering process. I also understand that this process can be challenging or uncomfortable at times. In this course, we will address topics that may cause strong emotional responses. Further, you may find some theories in this course controversial or their explanation of the social world may challenge your beliefs. As the course goals demonstrate, the aim of this course is not necessarily consensus, but rather the development of critical thinking and writing skills. Thus, debate, critiques of theory, and questions are not only encouraged, **they are expected!** I also expect that you take an active role in the creation of a classroom culture in which other students feel comfortable participating. To this end, you will respect your classmates and the instructor. This means that you will not interrupt or attack anyone. You may challenge or assess claims; however, you must use critical evidence that does not rely on mere personal beliefs, anecdotes, or opinions.

Active Listening – Listening with the intent of *understanding*, as opposed to with the intent of responding, can lead to more thoughtful dialogue and discussion. I expect you to take notes, keep your hand down until others are finished speaking, and ask for clarification when needed. Please refrain from having side conversations with classmates.

Technology Use – silence your cell phone at the start of class. If you use your laptop during class, refrain from any activities not class-related. **You may not record my lectures or photograph my slides.** Students needing an accommodation involving an exemption to this rule must provide official documentation from Disability Services.

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy - “An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.” Upon accepting admission to Texas A&M University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code (above), to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor System. Students will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the TAMU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor System.

Plagiarism: As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with this definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you have the permission of that person. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the latest edition of the Texas A&M University Student Rules, under the section "Scholastic Dishonesty."

Americans with Disabilities Act: The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, contact Disability Services currently located in the Disability Services building at the Student Services at White Creek complex on west campus or call 979-845-1637. For additional information, visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University and the College of Liberal Arts are committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws provide guidance for achieving such an environment. Although class materials are generally considered confidential pursuant to student record policies and laws, University employees — including instructors — cannot maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues that jeopardize the health and safety of our community. As the instructor, I must report (per Texas A&M System Regulation 08.01.01) the following information to other University offices if you share it with me, even if you do not want the disclosed information to be shared: Allegations of sexual assault, sexual discrimination, or sexual harassment when they involve TAMU students, faculty, or staff, or third parties visiting campus. These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In many cases, it will be your decision whether or not you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting, you are encouraged to make an appointment with the Student Counseling Service (<https://scs.tamu.edu/>). Students and faculty can report non-emergency behavior that causes them to be concerned at <http://tellsomebody.tamu.edu>.

Course Schedule

Please have each unit's readings completed by that **Thursday's class period**. Not only will the readings be integral to class discussion, you are better able to prepare questions / have issues addressed in-class if you have already completed the readings.

Week	Subject	Readings
1 Jan 15-1	Welcome to the Course!	None
2 Jan 22-24	Assessing Classical Theory <i>What is theory? How do we theorize? Whose theories do we privilege in our discipline?</i>	Johnson, Doyle P. "Other Significant Pioneers in Sociology" in <i>Contemporary Sociological Theory – An Integrated Multi-level Approach</i> , 2008. Hunter, Marcus Anthony. "Du Boisian sociology and intellectual reparations: for coloured scholars who consider suicide when our rainbows are not enuf." <i>Ethnic and Racial Studies</i> 39, no. 8 (2016): 1379-1384.
3 Jan 29-31	Framing	Saguy, Abigail C. "Problem Frames" in <i>What's wrong with fat?</i> . Oxford University Press, 2012. Dynes, Russell R., and Havidán Rodríguez. "Finding and Framing Katrina The Social Construction of Disaster" in <i>The Sociology of Katrina :Perspectives on a Modern Catastrophe</i> . 2010. Mika, Marie. "Framing the issue: Religion, secular ethics and the case of animal rights mobilization." <i>Social Forces</i> 85, no. 2 (2006): 915-941.
4 Feb 5-7	Power	Okimoto, Tyler G., and Victoria L. Brescoll. "The price of power: Power seeking and backlash against female politicians." <i>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</i> 36, no. 7 (2010): 923-936. Giddens, Anthony. "State, Society and Modern History" in <i>The nation-state and violence</i> . Vol. 2. Univ of California Press, 1985.

Week	Subject	Readings
5 Feb 12-14	Violence & Trauma	<p>Williams, Christine. "Got Power?" <i>Contexts</i>.</p> <p>Vera-Gray, Fiona. "Introduction" in <i>Men's Intrusion, Women's Embodiment: A critical analysis of street harassment</i>. Routledge, 2016.</p> <p>Ramirez, Johanna L., Kirsten A. Gonzalez, and M. Paz Galupo. "'Invisible during my own crisis': Responses of LGBT people of color to the Orlando shooting." <i>Journal of homosexuality</i> 65, no. 5 (2018): 579-599.</p> <p>Fanon, Frantz. "On Violence" in <i>The wretched of the earth</i>. Vol. 36. New York: Grove Press, 1963.</p>
6 Feb 19-21	Emotions	<p>Ahmed, Sara. "The Organization of Hate" and "The Affective Politics of Fear." in <i>The cultural politics of emotion</i>. Routledge, 2013.</p>
7 Feb 26-28	Digital Inequalities	<p>Brickell, Chris. "Sexuality, power and the sociology of the internet." <i>Current Sociology</i> 60, no. 1 (2012): 28-44.</p> <p>Jakubowicz, Andrew. "Alt_Right White Lite: trolling, hate speech and cyber racism on social media." <i>Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal</i> 9, no. 3 (2017).</p> <p>Megarry, Jessica. "Online incivility or sexual harassment? Conceptualising women's experiences in the digital age." In <i>Women's Studies International Forum</i>, vol. 47, pp. 46-55. Pergamon, 2014.</p>
8 Mar 5-7	EXAM WEEK	Tu: In-class review Th: Exam #1

Week	Subject	Readings
9 Mar 19-21	Queer Theory	<p>Martin, Karin A. "Normalizing heterosexuality: Mothers' assumptions, talk, and strategies with young children." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 74, no. 2 (2009): 190-207.</p> <p>Ward, Jane. "Gender labor: Transmen, femmes, and collective work of transgression." <i>Sexualities</i> 13, no. 2 (2010): 236-254.</p>
10 Mar 26-28	Racism	<p>Seamster, Louise, and Victor Ray. "Against Teleology in the Study of Race: Toward the Abolition of the Progress Paradigm." <i>Sociological Theory</i> 36, no. 4 (2018): 315-342.</p> <p>Bell, Joyce M., and Douglas Hartmann. "Diversity in everyday discourse: The cultural ambiguities and consequences of "happy talk"." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 72, no. 6 (2007): 895-914.</p> <p>Lorde, Audre. "The Uses of Anger" in <i>Sister Outsider</i>.</p>
11 Apr 2-4	Feminisms	<p>Carrillo, Jo. "And When You Leave, Take Your Pictures with You." in <i>This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color</i>.</p> <p>Hooks, Bell. "Men" in <i>Feminist theory: From margin to center</i>. Pluto Press, 2000.</p> <p>The Combahee River Collective. "A Black Feminist Statement." In <i>...But Some of Us Are Brave</i>. 1982.</p> <p>Elias, Ana Sofia, Rosalind Gill, and Christina Scharff, eds. "Introduction" in <i>Aesthetic labour: Rethinking beauty politics in neoliberalism</i>. Springer, 2017.</p>
12 Apr 9-11	Intimate Economies	<p>Brents, Barbara G., and Crystal A. Jackson. "Gender, emotional labour and interactive body work: Negotiating flesh and fantasy in sex workers' work."</p>

Week	Subject	Readings
		<p>labour practices" in <i>Body/Sex/Work: Intimate, Embodied and Sexualized Labour</i>. 2013.</p> <p>Tung, Charlene. "The cost of caring: The social reproductive labor of Filipina live-in home health caregivers." <i>Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies</i> 21, no. 1/2 (2000): 61-82.</p>
<p>13 Apr 16-18</p>	<p>Mobilization</p>	<p>Hill Collins, Patricia. "The new politics of community." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 75, no. 1 (2010): 7-30.</p> <p>McAdam, Doug. "Social movement theory and the prospects for climate change activism in the United States." <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i> 20 (2017): 189-208.</p> <p>Lorde, Audre. "The Transformation of Silence into Action."</p> <p><i>Precious Knowledge</i> Film Clip</p>
<p>14 Apr 23-25</p>	<p>Hope & Healing</p>	<p>Ginwright, Shawn A. "Radically healing black lives: A love note to justice." <i>New directions for student leadership</i> 2015, no. 148 (2015): 33-44.</p> <p>Ginwright, Shawn A. "Transforming Trauma into Hope and Power." In <i>Hope & Healing in Urban Education</i>, 2015.</p>
<p>15 Apr 30-May 2</p>	<p>Course Wrap-Up</p>	<p>TI Track: Final paper workshop Apr 30</p> <p>May 2: In-class review for Final Exam</p>

FINAL EXAM: Monday, May 6 @ 1:00-3:00pm in HECC 110