**SOCIAL THEORY**

**Sociology 3001**

**Spring 2018**

**T/Th 11:30-1:00 pm**

**Seigle 104**

Professor Wingfield

Office Hours Tuesdays 1:00-2:00 and by appointment

Seigle 219

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Course Description:

Overview of major theoretical frameworks used by sociologists to understand social behavior and group patterns. Explores classical theories, including those developed by Marx, Weber, and Durkheim along with contemporary perspectives such as exchange and feminist theories. Class discussions and writing assignments emphasize application of theory to understand current social experiences and structures. The course has no specific prerequisites, but students should be prepared for intensive study of challenging ideas and the application of these ideas in new contexts relevant to modern society.

Purpose:

The purpose of this course is to expose students to traditional and modern sociological theory. As students, you should become familiar with the concepts and ideas inherent to these theories, but more importantly, you should be able to critically analyze and apply these theories to various aspects of social life. Social theory is exciting, informative, and engaging. This course should clarify some of the more arcane aspects of theory so that you are able to understand and apply what you learn to your own experiences and environment.

Policies:

* Please complete the readings before each class meeting. I expect you to read the material carefully, think critically about the readings, and be fully prepared to discuss what we’ve read. Since this class incorporates both lecture and discussion, it is essential that everyone has read the material and arrives at class prepared to share their insights. Please be forewarned that I will give pop quizzes if it appears very few students have done the reading. (If you miss class on the day of a pop quiz there will be no opportunity for a make-up.)
* Your class participation is important, valuable, and will be assessed as part of your final grade for this class. Participation includes speaking up in class as well as attendance, focus, engagement, and attention. In order to get a high grade for class participation, you should consistently attend class and arrive *on time* having carefully read the material. Regular tardiness, chronic absenteeism, and/or lack of preparation for class will adversely affect your class participation grade.
* Electronic devices of any kind (laptops, iPads, iPhones, iAnything that has a screen and gets plugged in) are not permitted during class. They should be off your desk and out of sight before class begins; otherwise they may be confiscated for the duration of class.
* No audio or video recording without the instructor’s advance written permission (available via email).
* All assignments must be submitted in hard copy. Assignments should be about 5 double spaced pages, margins should be one inch, and typeface should be no larger than size 12 Times New Roman font.
* Hard copies of all assignments (essays, midterm, and final) should be in my possession before class ends on the due date or they will be considered late. Any late assignments will be docked one letter grade for each day that they are late. In other words, if your assignment is due Tuesday and I receive it Thursday, the highest grade you will be able to receive is a C. Unless you have email correspondence from me that says otherwise, assume that *any* assignment received after the end of class on the due date will be penalized.
* If you must miss class on the day an assignment is due, have another student submit a hard copy to me in class or to my box in the sociology department. (Having someone else submit your paper does not waive or extend any late penalties that may accrue, so please stress to anyone submitting a paper on your behalf that they must get your assignment in on time.)
* Essays received more than two (2) calendar days after the due date will not be accepted unless I have granted you an extension. Midterms and finals received more than one (1) calendar day after the due date will not be accepted unless I have granted you an extension. Extensions will be granted only in the case of a serious and unforeseeable problem, the definition of which is subject to my discretion. (Printing problems, untimely computer crashes, and heavier-than-normal workloads are examples of problems that do *not* warrant an extension.) Thus, it is best simply to submit assignments on time.
* In most cases, adjustments to grades will be given in the case of numerical miscalculations only. If there’s any confusion about my expectations for an assignment, please address this **before** the assignment is submitted. Once papers are returned to you, no grades will be changed unless I’ve made a mathematical error.
* Assignments may be graded by Kiara Sample. I will review all assignments Kiara grades prior to returning them to ensure that our grading patterns are consistent. However, if you feel that she has graded your paper very differently from the way I would have graded it, you may bring the paper to my attention and I will give it an additional read. (Keep in mind that while I will review your paper, this does not guarantee that I will agree with you that there has been a significant difference in the grading.) In the event that you feel there is a grading discrepancy, please consult with Kiara prior to bringing your paper to me. You can contact Kiara at kiarasample@wustl.edu.
* All students are subject to the policies outlined both in this syllabus and verbally as the course progresses. It is **your responsibility** to find out what took place during any classes you missed, and you are subject to any amendments or policy changes that were established on such days, whether or not you were present in class.
* In this class, we will discuss topics that can be sensitive and provoke heated discussion. Some conversations may discomfit or upset some of your previously held beliefs. While I do not promise that you will be comfortable or agree with all of the points raised (either in the material or by your classmates), we must maintain a respectful atmosphere towards each other and be careful to disagree without being disagreeable.

Additional University Policies

**Accommodations based upon sexual assault:**

* The University is committed to offering reasonable academic accommodations to students who are victims of sexual assault.  Students are eligible for accommodation regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action.  Depending on the specific nature of the allegation, such measures may include but are not limited to: implementation of a no-contact order, course/classroom assignment changes, and other academic support services and accommodations.  If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your request to Kim Webb (kim\_webb@wustl.edu), Director of the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center.  Ms. Webb is a confidential resource; however, requests for accommodations will be shared with the appropriate University administration and faculty.  The University will maintain as confidential any accommodations or protective measures provided to an individual student so long as it does not impair the ability to provide such measures.
* If a student comes to me to discuss or disclose an instance of sexual assault, sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking, or if I otherwise observe or become aware of such an allegation, I will keep the information as private as I can, but as a faculty member of Washington University, I am required to immediately report it to my Department Chair or Dean or directly to Ms. Jessica Kennedy, the University’s Title IX Coordinator.  If you would like to speak with the Title IX Coordinator directly, Ms. Kennedy can be reached at (314) 935-3118, jwkennedy@wustl.edu, or by visiting her office in the Women’s Building.  Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to Tamara King, Associate Dean for Students and Director of Student Conduct, or by contacting WUPD at (314) 935-5555 or your local law enforcement agency.
* You can also speak confidentially and learn more about available resources at the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center by calling (314) 935-8761 or visiting the 4th floor of Seigle Hall.

**Bias Reporting:**

* The University has a process through which students, faculty, staff and community members who have experienced or witnessed incidents of bias, prejudice or discrimination against a student can report their experiences to the University’s Bias Report and Support System (BRSS) team.  See:  [brss.wustl.edu](http://mailingsresponse.wustl.edu/trk/click?ref=z1030up2e7_0-1126x31263x047&)

**Mental Health:**

* Mental Health Services’ professional staff members work with students to resolve personal and interpersonal difficulties, many of which can affect the academic experience. These include conflicts with or worry about friends or family, concerns about eating or drinking patterns, and feelings of anxiety and depression.  See:  [shs.wustl.edu/MentalHealth](http://mailingsresponse.wustl.edu/trk/click?ref=z1030up2e7_0-1126x3313x047&)

Required Text:

Dillon, Michele. (2011). Introduction to Sociological Theory. New York: Wiley-

 Blackwell. 2nd edition.

Required Book Chapters:

Ritzer chapters are available through Ares. You can access them here: <http://ares.wustl.edu/ares/>. All other required readings are available through the library in ebook format or in an electronic database.

Feagin, Joe and Sean Elias. 2013. “Rethinking Racial Formation Theory: A Systemic Racism Critique.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36 (6): 931-960.

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. 2013. “Resistance is Futile? A Response to Feagin and Elias.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36 (6): 961-973.

Morris, Aldon. 2015. *The Scholar Denied*. Berkeley, CA: UC Press

Ritzer, George. “Early Women Sociological Theorists and Classical Theory.” Chapter 10, Classical Social Theory 6th edition. New York: McGraw Hill.

Ritzer, George. “W.E.B. DuBois.” Chapter 11, Classical Social Theory 6th edition. New York: McGraw Hill.

Ritzer, George. “George Herbert Mead.” Chapter 15, Classical Social Theory 6th edition. New York: McGraw Hill.

Required Film Viewing:

*Fight Club*

*Why We Fight*

To access streaming reserves, students log into Ares (<https://ares.wustl.edu/ares/>) with their WUSTL key.  In Ares, they should navigate to the Course Home and click the “View Item” link.  Films licensed from a vendor may require either Flash or Google Widevine. The library’s streaming help page at <http://libguides.wustl.edu/reserves/streaminghelp>  is a good first step for troubleshooting problems.

Please note that *Fight Club* is rated R for explicit violence, language, and some sexual content. *Why We Fight* also contains explicit language and some footage of the September 11 terrorist attacks. If you object to or are unable to watch these films, please let me know within the first two weeks of the semester and we will find an alternate assignment.)

Course Assignments:

Paper 1: Discuss the Durkheimian, Weberian, and/or Marxist themes reflected in *Fight Club*.

Paper 2: Apply functionalist, conflict, and/or symbolic interactionist perspectives to a current event.

Important Dates:

*Assignment Due Dates*:

Paper 1: Feb 15

Midterm: March 8

Paper 2: April 10

Final Exam: April 26

*Deadlines for Requesting Extensions*:

Paper 1: Feb 8

Midterm: March 1

Paper 2: April 3

Final Exam: April 19

*Deadlines for Make Ups or Late Paper Submissions*:

Paper 1: Feb 17

Midterm: March 9

Paper 2: April 12

Final Exam: April 27

Course Outline:

Jan 16: Introduction to course

Jan 18: Dillon Ch. 1--Marx

*Classical Theorists*

Jan 23: Class Discussion of Marx

Jan 25: No class

Jan 30: Dillon Ch. 2--Durkheim

Feb 1: Class Discussion

Feb 6: Dillon Ch. 3—Weber

Feb 8: Class activity

Feb 13: Class discussion of the film *Fight Club*

Feb 15: Ritzer Ch. 15—Mead [[Paper 1 Due]]

*Overlooked Classical Theorists*

Feb 20: Ritzer Ch. 10--Women Theorists

Feb 22: Class Discussion

Feb 27: No class

March 1: Ritzer Ch. 11—DuBois; Morris, Introduction (pp. 1-14) [[Midterms distributed]]

March 6: Class Discussion

March 8: Take home midterm exams due

March 13: Spring Break

March 15: Spring Break

*Classical Theoretical Perspectives*

March 20: Dillon Ch. 4—Structural Functionalism

March 22: Class activity

March 27: Dillon Ch. 6--Conflict theory

March 29: Class discussion of the film *Why We Fight*

April 3: Dillon Ch. 8—Symbolic interaction

April 5: Class activity

*Contemporary Theoretical Perspectives*

April 10: Dillon Ch. 7—Exchange theory [[Paper 2 due.]]

April 12: Class discussion

April 17: Dillon Ch. 10--Feminist theory

April 19: Class discussion [[Take home final distributed]]

April 24: Racial theory: Omi and Winant 2013; Feagin and Elias 2013

April 26: Discussion and course wrap-up [[Take home final due]]

Grade Distribution

Paper One: 15%

Paper Two: 20%

Midterm: 25%

Final: 35%

Class participation 5%

Grading Scale

97-100 A+

93-96 A

90-92 A-

87-89 B+

83-86 B

80-82 B-

77-79 C+

73-76 C

70-72 C-

60-69 D

59 and below F

**RUBRIC FOR WRITING ESSAYS**

\_\_/20 As the last sentence of the first paragraph, does the writer offer a

concise, specific thesis sentence that answers the essay question?

\_\_/20 Has the writer answered the question throughout the paper?

\_\_/20 Does each paragraph address only one idea that elaborates on and supports the thesis statement?

\_\_/20 Does the writer stay on topic and avoid tangents?

\_\_/20 Does the writer consistently offer evidence (quotes and/or

paraphrases that are *correctly cited*) from the readings to

support her argument?

**Applying These Guidelines in Practice:**

**Thesis statement:** The thesis statement should be the last sentence of your first paragraph. It should be a simple, concise, arguable statement that you will then prove in the rest of your paper.

*Examples of strong thesis statements*:

* Marx’s theory of alienation is prevalent in the film Fight Club.
* This paper will apply Durkheim’s and Weber’s ideas to the film Fight Club.
* Marxist, Durkheimian, and Weberian theory are all found in the film Fight Club.

*Examples of weak thesis statements:*

* This paper will examine Marxist ideas of alienation, class consciousness, and exploitation as they are present in the film Fight Club, and will explore how these concepts shape the major themes of the movie.
* In Fight Club, workers are alienated and this is a key theme throughout the film.
* According to Weber, increasing rationality of bureaucratic institutions has a significant impact on those employed in these institutions.

Strong thesis statements are concise, to the point, and clearly answer the essay question that is being posed. Weaker thesis statements are too long, include too much detail, and/or do not answer the essay question. The thesis sentence is the backbone of the entire paper; as such, your reader should be able to read it and have a clear idea of (a) how you have answered the essay question, and (b) what arguments you will make in the remainder of the paper. *Your thesis statement must be a short, concise statement that answers the essay question, and must be the last sentence of your introductory paragraph; otherwise, you* ***will not*** *get full credit here.*

**Answering the question:** In order for your paper to answer the question posed for the assignment fully and completely, each paragraph should elaborate on and support the statement you made in your thesis. I should be able to isolate any of your supporting paragraphs and clearly see how it elaborates on your thesis sentence. If a paragraph does not directly explain your thesis, it does not belong in the paper!

*A paper that answers the question will*:

* Proceed logically and have a clear flow—for instance, if the thesis argues that Weber’s ideas are present in the film, one paragraph might apply his concept of rationality to Fight Club, another might apply bureaucracy, yet another the dehumanization workers feel in bureaucratic structures.
* Have paragraphs that show how the author is making a case for the thesis s/he has given.
* Flesh out and fully develop the ideas advanced in the thesis.

*A paper that does not answer the question will*:

* Include some paragraphs that clearly elaborate on the idea advanced in the thesis, and some that do not.
* Include several paragraphs that do not explain the ideas put forth in the thesis.
* Develop some, but not all, of the ideas advanced.

**One idea per paragraph:** Generally, paragraphs should only be 4-6 sentences. If your paragraph is less than 4 sentences, it probably needs more development. If your paragraph is more than 6 sentences, you probably have more than one idea.

*A paper that includes one idea per paragraph*:

* Will be structured so that each paragraph explains only one idea. Depending on the thesis sentence given, one paragraph might discuss mechanical solidarity in Fight Club, another might discuss organic solidarity in Fight Club, and the next paragraph might address the role of the collective consciousness in Fight Club.
* Will include paragraphs that generally are only 4-6 sentences

*A paper that does not include one idea per paragraph:*

* Might include one paragraph that discusses mechanical solidarity, organic solidarity, crime, and punishment.
* Might include one paragraph comprised of only two sentences.
* Might include a paragraph that is one full page or longer.

**Staying on topic, avoiding tangents:** Please be sure that papers focus only on answering the questions given and do not veer off topic into other territory.

*A paper that stays on topic:*

* Only addresses paragraphs and ideas that explain the thesis sentence
* Does not incorporate ideas or concepts that are unrelated to the thesis
* Omits material that fails to answer the question

A paper that goes off on tangents:

* Brings up lengthy examples that do not relate to the thesis
* Includes material that does not answer the essay question

**Using evidence from the readings:** In order to get credit for this, you must clearly and correctly cite the readings in your paper. Quotes and paraphrases are okay. Blithe, vague references to the readings are not. To get full credit for this, you should have at least one correctly cited quote or paraphrase from the readings in *each* supporting paragraph of your paper. You may use outside sources, but they do not substitute for course readings. You must also include a references page in order to get full credit here.

*A suitable reference to the readings looks like this:*

* Marx’s (2011) discussion of alienation is clearly evinced by the narrator’s lack of engagement with his work. For instance…
* Weber’s argument that “the costs of bureaucratization include hierarchical offices and impersonal tasks” is shown when the narrator and Tyler Durden give homework assignments for Project Mayhem (2011; 151).
* Durkheim (2011) argues that crime is socially constructed in ways that reflect the level of solidarity in a given society. This is evident in the differences between the ways members of Fight Club and the larger society define crime.

*Unsuitable references to the readings look like this:*

* The narrator clearly does not care about his job, which is similar to what Marx talks about.
* Tyler Durden gave homework assignments to members of Project Mayhem. This shows bureaucracy. (Weber.)
* When members of Fight Club define a crime as talking to the authorities about Project Mayhem, this is an example of Durkheim’s ideas about crime (Division of Labor in Everyday Life).

**Other Tips**:

* Avoid contractions. These are not appropriate for formal essays.
* Do not double space between paragraphs.
* Minimize the use of first person statements like “I think,” “I believe,” “In my opinion,” or other terms that use the first person. This weakens declarative statements.
* Remember that your ideas will be crystal clear to you, but not so to the reader. Be sure to explain all your arguments in detail, even if they seem obvious.
* Assume that your reader has only a passing familiarity with the concepts, and that you have to convince her that your argument is valid. Spell out **exactly** what claim you are trying to make.
* Most importantly—ask me if you have ANY questions!