

**Sociology 203**  
**Sociological Theory**  
Spring 2008, Section 0301  
Monday & Wednesday 3:30-4:45  
Room 3203, Art-Sociology Building

Instructor: Anthony Hatch  
Office: 4149 Art-Sociology Building  
Office Hours: Mondays 4:45-5:30  
Email: ahatch@socy.umd.edu  
Phone: 301-405-6424

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course traces the development of sociological theory from its origins in the 1800s to the present through an explicit focus on key theorists and their ideas. This historical period has witnessed enormous social change in terms of economic, political, and cultural forms of human organization and practice. Accordingly, people develop theories of social life commiserate with the historical and social contexts in which they live—this is as true today as it was during the time of Marx and Du Bois. Thus, in this course we will analyze sociological theories as they are produced in and shaped by specific historical contexts. An important part of this historical context is the history of sociology and of the social sciences, broadly defined.

Despite our focus on key theorists whose ideas have influenced multiple strands of social theory, we will also examine the ideas of individuals (and groups) who are not typically considered to be part of the mainstream theoretical canon. Theories of social life often emanate from individuals and groups who do not reside in the “Ivory Tower”. Thus, we will also focus a significant portion of the course on *critical* social theories that grapple with the central questions facing groups of people differently situated in particular political, social, and historical contexts characterized by conditions of injustice. The intent of these critical social theories is not only to understand ‘the social’ but also to advance an understanding of social life that challenges and undermines the social arrangements that create conditions of injustice.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- Introduction to sociological theory.
- Introduction to the history of sociology.
- Gain understanding of critical social theories.
- Improve public presentation, reading comprehension, critical thinking, and writing skills.

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

Lemert, Charles (editor). 2004. *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classical Readings* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Westview Press: Boulder, CO.

Selected essays in PDF format.

Selected readings from Goodwin, Jeff and James M. Jasper (eds). 2007. "The Contexts Reader."  
W.W. Norton & Company: New York.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

This course uses a student directed format where we learn from and teach each other.<sup>1</sup> You will be evaluated in part on your contributions to making the class successful for yourself and others. This is also a writing intensive course where you will be evaluated on your efforts to articulate your thoughts and to improve your critical reading, thinking, and writing skills. Thus, your final grade will consist of the following:

<b>A. Reflection Essays</b>	40 percent	200 points	Eight essays @ 25 pts each
<b>B. Initiations and Engagement</b>	20 percent	100 points	Two initiations @ 50 pts each
<b>C. Midterm</b>	20 percent	100 points	One exam @ 100 pts
<b>D. Final Exam</b>	20 percent	100 points	One exam @ 100 pts

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Total Points</u>
A =	450 – 500
B =	400 – 450
C =	350 – 400
D =	300 - 350
F =	less than 300

### **A. Reflection Essays** (40 percent of your final grade; eight essays @ 25 points each)

Over the course of the semester, you are to write eight 2-page reflection essays that each provide a critical evaluation/analysis/synthesis of one or more course readings. You must write four essays before the midterm and four after the midterm; you are free to choose the readings upon which you will draw in crafting your essays. The purpose of reflection essays is to encourage you to read and reflect critically on the course readings in a timely manner in preparation for class, and to aid in the development of your critical thinking and writing skills. In these essays, you are to reflect in a thoughtful manner on the *theoretical* ideas presented in the readings. The more thought and effort you put into these papers, the more you will benefit from this class. For instance, you might compare how the readings grapple with one theme or idea, or identify an issue that is missing from the readings and how this absence impacts your interpretation. What more would you add to the conversation? How were your own ideas challenged and/or changed? In an effort to help you improve your writing, I will provide you written feedback on your reflection essays. Please refer to the essay grading criteria (at the end of the syllabus) for further guidance as to my expectations for your essays. I strongly encourage you to keep both a printed and an electronic copy of all of your written work. Please print and turn in your essays in class.

### **B. Initiations and Engagement** (20 percent of your final grade, two initiations @ 50 pts each)

Initiations: Recall that this course uses a student directed format where we learn from and teach each other. Thus, in groups of two and three, each of you will initiate two 20-minute "presentations" based directly on the course readings. Initiation entails a) summarizing the core

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<sup>1</sup> I have adapted Patricia Hill Collins' student directed format as an organizing element of this course.

ideas contained or implied in the readings, b) explaining, analyzing, and/or interrogating those ideas, and then c) serving as co-leaders of class discussion for that day. The purpose of this exercise is to encourage you to develop your intellectual preparation, collaboration, presentation, and leadership skills through a thoughtful engagement of the class using the theoretical ideas of our authors as a basis for discussion.

How you present the ideas is up to you. You are encouraged to use any additional materials/technologies to help you in your initiation such as making a brief PowerPoint presentation, showing a YouTube video, playing music in class, organizing group games, or presenting a little primary research that will aid in our understanding of the material. These are all merely suggestions—your creativity here is strongly encouraged; however, try not to overuse particular elements or instruments.

Each member of the group will receive the same grade for the initiation—it is your responsibility to ensure an equitable distribution of labor and performance within your groups. While there is no standardized way to initiate, I will evaluate your initiations based upon the following criteria:

- (1) Your group's successful construction of an initiation that incorporates important details and insights from all of the readings (10 points)
- (2) Your group's successful demonstration of an understanding of the core theoretical ideas contained in the readings (10 points)
- (3) Your group's production of clearly written materials or audiovisual aids (10 points)
- (4) Your group's ability to stimulate and contribute to class discussions (10 points)
- (5) Your group's incorporation of creative or innovative elements (10 points)

Class Engagement: It is the responsibility of the rest of the members of the class to engage in a thoughtful conversation/dialogue/debate that flows from the initiators' presentation. Your level of class engagement will be determined in large part based upon your active participation in class discussions.

**C. Midterm** (20 percent, one exam @ 100 pts)

We will have a take-home midterm that covers all of the readings and lectures in the first half of the class. The midterm will consist of several short answer questions and one essay question. You will receive your midterms in class on March 12<sup>th</sup> and they are due in class on March 26<sup>th</sup>.

**D. Final Exam** (20 percent of your final grade, one exam @ 100 pts)

We will have a cumulative final exam that covers all of the material in the course. The exact format of this exam will be determined at a later date (take home/in-class, etc.).

**Extra Credit: Reflections in Contemporary Social Theory** (5 points each)

For extra credit, write a two-page reflection essay that expresses your reaction(s) to an article published in one of three sociological theory journals (*Sociological Theory*, *Signs*, *Patterns of Prejudice*—all of which are available via UM Library's Research Port). To receive full credit, you must provide at least one paragraph that summarizes the article, and one paragraph that expresses your reactions to the ideas in the article. The article must have been published during the period from 2003 to the

present. You must turn in your essays *before* the last day of class (May 12th). For the whole class, you may earn no more than **20** extra credit points.

## **OTHER VERY IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION**

This course requires a high level of student organization and preparedness. I do not expect this to be an easy course, but I do expect it to be an engaging, enriching, and informative one. Your attendance and participation in class is considered an integral component of this course.

### Attendance Policy

Attendance at each class is mandatory. University approved absences (e.g. sports, etc.) must be documented with formal written excuses.

### Late Work Policy

All written work and examinations must be turned in on time as indicated on the course calendar. **Without PRIOR approval from me (email is good for this), late work will not be accepted, and you will automatically receive zero points on the assignment.**

### Practicing Academic Integrity

One major difference between high school and college, and indeed between college and graduate school, and so on is the emphasis placed on practicing academic integrity—this means that you are properly representing *your own ideas* in your academic assignments. The following practices constitute violations of the UMCP Code of Academic Integrity (University of Maryland, College Park Code of Academic Integrity, approved by the Campus Senate February 13, 1989). Please know that such violations will be taken seriously. This means that if I suspect that you have violated one or more of these prohibitions, I will recommend that your case be put before the University Honor Council.

- (1) CHEATING: Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
- (2) FABRICATION: Intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise (including “signing in” for other students).
- (3) FACILITATING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate any provision of the Code.
- (4) PLAGARISM: Intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise. (This includes using pieces from texts where you change only a couple of words here or there and do not cite the source.)

\*\*\*An important note about doing research on the Internet. The Internet is a fine place to begin researching a topic, including sociology, but it should not be your last stop. In our writing workshop, we discuss using information contained on websites as evidence or as the basis of an argument in scholarly writing. A good general practice is for you to keep good records about the websites you reference in your work including the exact URL location, date, and any other identifying information that you feel is relevant. Occasionally, I will either print the information on paper or copy a website’s contents to a new file. Either way, any concerns that I have about Internet sources or their veracity can be addressed later.

### Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities should contact the Disability Support Service (314-7682) to help you determine and implement any appropriate academic accommodations that you might need to be successful in this or any course. Please notify me if you have made accommodations through this service.

### Campus Writing Resources

This is writing intensive course. The Writing Center (0125 Taliaferro Hall, 301-405-3875) is an excellent and free resource for students who are completing any undergraduate writing assignment. I also encourage you to contact me directly for additional help with writing—office hours are a good place to start. I am more than willing to read and respond to anything you send me in advance (this is called a draft).

## **COURSE CALENDAR**

### **1. January 28: Course Overview and Syllabus**

### **2. January 30: What is social theory? Why theory? What are its challenges and promises?**

#### Readings

Lemert, Charles “Social Theory: Its uses and pleasures” (pp. 1-20)

### **3. February 4: Analyzing social theory in historical context**

#### Readings

Lemert, Charles. “Modernity’s Classical Age: 1848-1919.” (pp. 21-27)

Calhoun, Craig. “Sociology in America: An Introduction” (pp. 1-38)

### **4. February 6: Defining Critical Social Theory**

#### Readings

Collins, Patricia Hill. “The Politics of Critical Social Theory.” (pp. ix-xxiii in Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice) (PDF)

Christian, Barbara. “The Race for Theory.” (PDF)

### **5. February 11: Classical theories—Karl Marx**

#### Readings

Marx, Karl. “Estranged Labour” (pp. 30-36)

Marx, Karl. “Class Struggle” (pp. 37-41)

Marx, Karl. “Fetishism of Commodities” (pp. 58-60)

Marx, Karl. “The Manifesto of the Communist Party—Bourgeois and Proletarians.” (PDF)

## **6. February 13: Classical theories—Emile Durkheim**

### Readings

Durkheim, Emile “Sociology and Social Facts” (pp. 73-75)

Durkheim, Emile “The Cultural Logic of Cultural Representations” (pp. 90-99)

Durkheim, Emile “Anomie and the Modern Division of Labor” (pp. 71-72)

## **7. February 18: Classical theories—Max Weber**

### Readings

Weber, Max. “The Spirit of Capitalism and the Iron Cage” (pp. 100-104)

Weber, Max. “The Types of Legitimate Domination” (pp. 112-115)

Weber, Max. “Class, Status, Party” (pp. 115-125)

## **8. February 20: Classical theories—American pragmatism and interactionism**

### Readings

James, William. “The Self and Its Selves” (pp. 157-162)

Cooley, Charles Horton. “The Looking-Glass Self” (pp. 185)

Mead, George Herbert. “The Self, I, and the Me” (pp. 220-225)

Zussman, Robert. “Keywords: The Self” (Research Port)

## **9. February 25: Classical theories—William Edward Burghardt Du Bois**

### Readings

Du Bois, William E. B. “Double-Consciousness and the Veil” (pp. 163-168)

Du Bois, William E. B. “Black Reconstruction and the Racial Wage” (pp. 238-241)

Du Bois, William E. B. “The Propaganda of History.” From *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880.* (PDF)

## **10. February 27: Early American Critical Race Theories**

### Readings

Walker, David. “Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World.”

Douglass, Frederick. “The Present Condition and Future Prospects of the Negro People

“The Present Condition and Future Prospects of the Negro People.” Speech at annual meeting of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, New York City, May 11, 1853” (Research Port)

Wells-Barnett, Ida Bell. “The White and Black of It.” (Research Port)

## **11. March 3: Early American Feminist Theories**

### Readings

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. “Women and Economics” (pp. 170-174)

Cooper, Anna Julia. “The Colored Women’s Office.”

Woolf, Virginia. “A Room of One’s Own.” (pp. 257-258)

## **12. March 5: Modern German Critical Theories**

### Readings

- Lemert, Charles. "Social Theories and World Conflict: 1919-1945." (pp. 187-198)  
Lukacs, Georg. "The Irrational Chasm Between Subject and Object" (pp. 202-204)  
Benjamin, Walter. "Art, War, and Fascism" (pp. 255-256)  
Gramsci, Antonio. "Intellectuals and Hegemony" (pp. 259-261)

## **13. March 10: Modern Theories of Knowledge**

### Readings

- Mannheim, Karl. "The Sociology of Knowledge and Ideology" (pp. 213-217)  
Berger, Peter and Thomas Luckmann. "Society as a Human Product." (pp. 384-388)  
Merton, Robert. "Science and the Social Order." (PDF)

## **14. March 12: Modern Theories of Language and Culture**

### Readings

- Saussure, Ferdinand de. "Arbitrary Social Values and the Linguistic Sign" (pp. 148-156)  
Levi-Strauss, Claude. "The Structural Study of Myth." (pp. 310-314).  
Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses." (pp. 317-321)

**\*\*\*Take-home midterm to be distributed at the end of class**

**March 17-21**

**Spring Break**

## **15. March 24: Theories of struggle**

### Readings

- Lemert, Charles. "The Golden Moment: 1945-1963" (pp. 271-282)  
Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand. "Nonviolent Force: A Spiritual Dilemma" (pp. 261-262)  
King, Martin Luther, Jr. "The Power of Nonviolent Action." (pp. 345-348)

## **16. March 26: Theories of European Colonization**

**\*\*\*Midterm due in class**

### Readings

- Cesaire, Aime. "Between Colonizer and Colonized." (pp. 342-344)  
Fanon, Frantz. "Decolonizing, National Culture, and the Negro Intellectual." (pp. 358-363)  
Carmichael, Stokely and Charles V. Hamilton. "White Power: The Colonial Situation" (PDF)

## **17. March 31: 2<sup>nd</sup> Wave Feminist Theories**

### Readings

de Beauvoir, Simone. "Woman as Other" (pp. 339-341)

Friedan, Betty. "The Problem That Has No Name." (pp. 355-358)

Smith, Dorothy. "Knowing a Society from Within: A Woman's Standpoint." (pp. 388-389)

## **18. April 2: Poststructuralist Theories**

### Readings

Lemert, Charles. "Will the Center Hold? 1963-1979." (pp. 365-376)

Derrida, Jacques. "The Decentering Event in Social Thought." (pp. 405-409)

Foucault, Michel. "Knowledge as Power." (pp. 465-470)

## **19. April 7: Theories of the Modern Nation State**

### Readings

Skocpol, Theda. "The State as a Janus-Faced Structure." (pp. 397-400)

Foucault, Michel. "Lecture Eleven," From Society Must Be Defended. (PDF)

Goldberg, David Theo. "Introduction: The State of Race Theory," From The Racial State. (PDF)

Lukes, Steven. "Keywords: Power." (Research Port)

## **20. April 9: Postmodern Theories**

### Readings

Lemert, Charles. "After Modernity, 1979-1991/2001" (pp. 445-456)

Lyotard, Jean-Francois. "The Postmodern Condition." (pp. 457-459)

Bauman, Zygmunt. "Liquid Modernity." (pp. 587-590)

Baudrillard, Jean. "Simulacra and Simulations: Disneyland" (pp. 471-476)

## **21. April 14: Contemporary Critical Race Theories**

### Readings

West, Cornell. "The New Cultural Politics of Difference." (pp. 505-514)

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. "Race as Trope of the World." (pp. 515-521)

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. "Racial Formation." (PDF)

Morning, Ann. "Keywords: Race." (Research Port)

## **22. April 16: Contemporary Feminist Theories**

### Readings

Chodorow, Nancy. "Gender Personality and the Reproduction of Mothering." (pp. 401-404)

Butler, Judith. "Imitation and Gender Insubordination." (pp. 557-567)

Hartsock, Nancy. "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?" (pp. 487-493)

### **23. April 21: Contemporary Black Feminist Theories**

#### Readings

The Combahee River Collective. "A Black Feminist Statement." (PDF)

Collins, Patricia Hill. "Black Feminist Thought in the Matrix of Domination." (pp. 535-546)

Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." (pp. 440-444)

### **24. April 23: Theories of the Postcolonial Condition**

#### Readings

Said, Edward. "Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals." (pp. 640-643)

Minh-ha, Trinh T. "Infinite Layers/Third World." (pp. 526-530)

Spivak, Gayatri Chahravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (pp. 531-534)

### **25. April 28: Contemporary Theories of Culture**

#### Readings

Hall, Stuart. "The Global, the Local, and the Return of Ethnicity." (pp. 602-608)

Bourdieu, Pierre. "Structures, *Habitus*, Practices." (pp. 435-439)

Gusfield, Joseph R. "Keyword: Culture." (Research Port)

### **26. April 30: Contemporary Theories of Science and Technology**

#### Readings

Haraway, Donna. "The Cyborg Manifesto and Fractured Identities." (pp. 522-525)

Clarke, Adele E., Laura Mamo, Jennifer R. Fishman, Janet K. Shim, and Jennifer Ruth Fosket. 2003. "Biomedicalization: Technoscientific Transformations of Health, Illness, and U.S. Biomedicine." *American Sociological Review* 68:161." (Research Port)

Evans, John H. "A Brave New World? How Genetic Technology Could Change Us." (Research Port)

### **27. May 5: Contemporary Theories of Sexuality**

#### Readings

Weeks, Jeffrey. "Sexual Identification is a Strange Thing." (pp. 553-556)

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Epistemology of the Closet." (pp. 655-659)

Connell, R.W. "Masculinities and Globalization." (pp. 659-661)

Kimmell, Michael S. and Rebecca F. Plante. "Keywords: Sexualities." (Research Port)

### **28. May 7: Contemporary Theories of Globalization**

#### Readings

Lemert, Charles. "Rethinking the Unthinkable After 2001." (pp. 575-586).

Wallerstein, Immanuel. "Geo-political Cleavages of the Twenty-first Century." (pp. 591-595)

Beck, Ulrich. "World Risk Society." (pp. 630-634)

Sassen, Saskia. "The U.S. at a Time of Global Conflict: Challenges We Face Beyond War." (pp. 452-455) (Research Port)

## **29. May 12: Theorizing our Present**

### Readings

TBA

**May 21**

### **End of Final Exam Period**

### Reflection Essay Grading Criteria<sup>2</sup>

I have high expectations for your written essays (both in the reflections and in your examinations). Your essays will be graded according to their content, structure, use of language, and formatting. I will use the following elements as a guide to evaluate your written essays.

#### *Content*

- Presenting a main point and using detailed information to support your argument(s).
- Demonstration of your understanding of relevant concepts.
- Incorporation of course reading.
- Incorporation of original ideas and insights.
- Developing a discussion that incorporates interesting details from multiple sources (personal experience, readings, and/or outside primary or secondary sources).
- Demonstrating critical thinking by moving in thought beyond merely summarizing, defining, or reporting to analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, drawing conclusions, or gaining insight.
- Engaging the reader through topic choice, original approach, and thorough development.

#### *Structure*

- Creating a coherent structure with an effective introduction/body/conclusion.
- Providing a clear introduction that identifies the topic/main point that establishes your intent in the paper.
- Using transitions where necessary within paragraphs and to introduce new ideas.
- Concluding in a way that draws your main points together in a thoughtful manner.

#### *Language Use and Expression*

- Using accurate and mature vocabulary to make the writing clear and appropriate for conveying your main points.

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<sup>2</sup> These essay grading criteria were adapted from Tracy E. Ore, Sociology 1601, Principles of Sociology, Saint Cloud State University (Sikora, James P. and Njeri Mbugua (eds). 2007. Introductory Sociology Resource Manual, 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Washington: American Sociological Association.

- Using clear, direct, complete, varied sentence structure (e.g., free of fragment or run-on sentences).
- Maintaining consistent verb tense and pronoun reference.
- Avoiding slang, colloquialisms, clichés, and excessive jargon.
- Applying correct mechanical skills (spelling, capitalization, punctuation, etc.)

*Standard Formatting*

- Typed and double-spaced
- Paper is proofread and corrected for typos and other errors.
- Double-spaced and with page numbers
- 12-point and easy-to-read font
- 1-inch margins on the left, right, top, and bottom.
- Stapled
- Each essay needs a title, your name, the date, course information (Sociology 203), and name of the assignment.

*Based on this set of criteria,*

*A “25 point” or “A” essay...*

- Addresses the topic of the assignment fully and explores each aspect thoughtfully.
- Has a clear and substantial thesis.
- Shows substantial depth, fullness and complexity of thought.
- Expresses ideas clearly and commands the reader’s attention.
- Demonstrates clear, unified, and coherent organization.
- Is fully developed and detailed with ideas supported by persuasive reasons and well chosen examples or references to class material.
- Has a superior style (interesting sentence patterns, smooth transitions between ideas, excellent use of vocabulary).
- Has few, if any, minor errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics.

*A “20 point” or “B” essay...*

- Addresses and explores each aspect of the assignment in a satisfactory way.
- Has a clear thesis explored adequately in the essay.
- Shows clarity of thought, but may treat the topic simplistically or repetitively.
- Clearly communicates ideas.
- Is adequately organized.
- Is developed with sufficient examples, reasoning, or references for most of the ideas.
- Has an adequate style (some variety in sentence patterns, transitions between most ideas, vocabulary accurate for the most part).
- Has some errors in grammar, usage or mechanics.

*A “15 point” or “C” essay:*

- Inaccurately responds to or neglects part of the assignment.

- Has a simplistic thesis that may show limited knowledge of the issues involved in the assignment.
- Demonstrates a lack of focus or confused, stereotyped, or simplistic thinking.
- May not always communicate ideas clearly.
- Is ineffectively organized.
- May not provide adequate or appropriate details or references to support generalizations, or may provide details without generalizations.
- Has stylistic weaknesses (little variety in sentence patterns, few transitions, imprecise vocabulary).
- Has occasional major errors in grammar, usage or mechanics or frequent minor errors.

*A “10 point” or “D” essay:*

- Indicates confusion about the assignment or neglects important aspects of the assignment.
- Has an unclear or confusing thesis which shows little understanding of the assignment or which demonstrates a misinterpretation of the assignment.
- Demonstrates confused thinking.
- Often fails to communicate ideas clearly.
- Has very weak organization.
- Has very little development of ideas; uses very few examples or references to support points.
- Has an ineffective style (monotonous or fragmented sentence structure, no transitions, simplistic or inaccurate vocabulary).
- Has many repeated errors in grammar, usage or mechanics.

*A “5 or 0 point” or “F” essay:*

- An indication of an inability to comprehend or to respond meaningfully to the assignment.
- No thesis or has an incomprehensible thesis.
- Deliberately off-topic.
- An inability to communicate ideas clearly.
- Incoherent organization.
- Incomplete or inappropriate development of ideas.
- Incoherent style (difficulties with sentence structure, pattern of vocabulary errors).
- Pervasive pattern of errors in grammar, usage and mechanics.

If you have any questions regarding my grading process, please feel free to see me