

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA
Fall 2016

Sociological Theory

SOCI 4053, Section 1

Tuesday & Thursday, 3:30-4:45 PM, Pafford 306

Dr. Emily McKendry-Smith

Office: Pafford 319

Office hours: Monday 1-3, Tuesdays & Thursdays 11-3, or by appointment

Email: mckendry@westga.edu (please do not email me on CourseDen)

Course Information:

The social theories we will be examining in this course have been divided into four thematic sections. In the first section, we will be examining the “classical sociological theories” of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber. Although not all of these authors wrote as sociologists, their works have come to be regarded as among the foundations of the discipline. The ideas of these theorists will provide us with a foundation, which we will then use to examine more contemporary theoretical works addressing similar themes as these classic authors.

In the second section of the course, we will examine a number of theories on the importance and relevance of communities. Through reading *Everything in Its Path*, Kai Erikson’s study of a natural disaster in West Virginia, we will examine the importance of community in the modern world and the effects that precipitate when communities are disturbed. We will follow this up by considering Robert Putnam’s work suggesting that traditional forms of community may be disappearing in modern America.

We will examine modern communities in a different, more negative, light in the third section of the course. Reading Zygmunt Bauman’s work *Modernity and the Holocaust* will allow us to study the phenomena of rationalization and bureaucracy when taken to an extreme end, while George Ritzer’s work on “McDonaldization” will provide more familiar examples of rationalization.

In the final section of the course, we will examine the roles that power, authority, and violence play in everyday life. The text for this section of the course, Randall Collins’s *Violence*, will also allow us to examine a micro-sociological theory.

Course Goals:

The initial goals of this course are to be able to read and comprehend social theory, and to be able to articulate that understanding both verbally and in writing. Additionally, you will learn to recognize theories when they occur in unexpected contexts or modified forms and to explicated

exactly how they have been illustrated and/or adopted. Finally, you will learn to analyze and judge theories and to form your own conclusions as to their utility in explaining the social world.

Course Etiquette:

- I expect everyone attending class to have done the assigned readings and to be prepared to discuss them.
- I expect everyone to practice sensitivity and respect in all course discussions. You should feel free in class discussions to share as much as you are comfortable with about your experiences and background, but you must keep in mind that your classmates' beliefs and experiences may be different from yours and are equally deserving of respect. I expect you to also respect everyone's race, gender, sexuality, nationality, religion, etc.
- **We will begin and end class on time.** In addition, unless you have an emergency or an extremely compelling reason, you should plan to stay for the entire class period.
- **Do not use your cell phone during class.** Keep cell phones in your bag/pocket, not out on your desk. If you are texting in class, I will ask you to leave.
- You may use computers during class only for course-related activities.
- Please check your UWG email and CourseDen daily M-F – I will do the same!
- **Course assignments must be posted to CourseDen and turned in to me at the beginning of class in hard copy.** I will not accept or grade assignments turned in over email.

Contacting your professor:

The best way to contact me outside of class is to visit my office hours. If you can't make these hours, please let me know and we can arrange to meet at another time. If you feel that you are having a problem, please come with specific questions so that I can help you. You should also feel free to visit even if you are not having a "problem" in the course and just want to chat about something. I will also usually be available for a few minutes before and after class.

For more complicated questions, I recommend that you contact me via email – mckendry@westga.edu. I check my email frequently and will respond to you within 48 hours. When you email me, remember to note in the email which class you are taking, and also to use correct grammatical English and normal capitalization.

Preparing for class:

For each hour spent in class, you will probably need to set aside at least two hours for work outside of the class session such as reading, reviewing your notes, and completing your assignments.

Readings are listed in the syllabus on a daily basis. It is your responsibility to prepare for class each day. I recommend doing the reading for the each day before our class meeting, and then reviewing them again briefly afterwards. Your readings are an important resource to succeeding in this course. You will need to be familiar with the terms and concepts we discuss, and periodically reviewing your readings is the best way to stay familiar with important ideas.

In addition, you will find our discussions much more meaningful if you spend some time before class to make some notes listing what you think are the main points of the author's argument, as well as any questions you have about the reading.

Honor Code and UWG Policies:

The University Honor Code is in effect for all written assignments and exams. Please read the provisions of the Honor Code carefully, and make certain that you understand and follow them. Violations of the Code will not be tolerated.

You can view the Honor Code and other policies here:

http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf

I expect you to do all of your own work. Initial instances of academic dishonesty (ie plagiarizing on an assignment or cheating on a quiz/exam) will result in a grade of 0 for that assignment/quiz/exam. Additional instances of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course. I will report all instances of academic dishonesty to the Office of Student Conduct.

Readings:

I have assigned the following three books for our course. They are available for purchase at the university bookstore and online. I strongly encourage you to obtain your own copy of these books.

- Erikson, Kai T. 1978. *Everything in its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. 2001. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Collins, Randall. 2008. *Violence: A Micro-sociological Theory*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

All other readings will be available on CourseDen.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

All written assignments must be turned in hard-copy at the beginning of class. I will not grade papers that I receive over email. Grammar and composition are not a formal part of your assignment grades, but both are necessary to clearly present your ideas in a relatively small number of pages. If I cannot understand what you are trying to say, it is as though you have not said it, which may result in a lower grade.

Although regular class attendance and participation are necessary for achieving a good grade in this course, they are not formally part of your course grade. You will simply do much better on the assignments and exams if you attend class each day and actively participate in discussions

and group activities. **If you miss class, you are responsible for finding out what occurred during the class session. Do not send me an email asking what you “missed.”**

Your final grade will be based on the following required assignments:

- Reading Responses (20%)
- Midterm Exam (20%)
- Film Analysis Paper (20%)
- Synthesis Paper (20%)
- Final Exam (20%)

Details for assignments will be provided in class on the day they are assigned and will be available on CourseDen.

I do not grade on a curve. You will receive point values, but not letter grades, for individual tests and assignments. I will award final grades using this scale:

A = 90-100 B = 80-89 C = 70-79 D = 60-69 F = 0-59

Week 1

August 11th: Course Introduction

Week 2

August 16th: Classical Sociological Theory

- Seidman, “The Revolutionary Sociology of Karl Marx” (CourseDen)
- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” (CourseDen)
- **Group A Reading Response Due**

August 18th: Classical Sociological Theory

- Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” (CourseDen)
- Karl Marx, “Wage-Labour and Capital” (CourseDen)
- **Group B Reading Response Due**

Week 3

August 23rd: Classical Sociological Theory

- Seidman, “The Promise of Sociology: Emile Durkheim” (CourseDen)
- Emile Durkheim, “The Division of Labor in Society” (CourseDen)
- **Group A Reading Response Due**

August 25th: Classical Sociological Theory

- Emile Durkheim, “The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life” (CourseDen)
- **Group B Reading Response Due**

Week 4

August 30th: Classical Sociological Theory

- Emile Durkheim, "Suicide" (CourseDen)
- **Group A Reading Response Due**

September 1st: Classical Sociological Theory

- Seidman, "The Ironic Social Theory of Max Weber" (CourseDen)
- Max Weber, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" (CourseDen)
- **Group B Reading Response Due**

Week 5

September 6th: Classical Sociological Theory

- Max Weber, "The Distribution of Power within the Political Community: Class, Status, Party" (CourseDen)
- Max Weber, "The Types of Legitimate Domination" (CourseDen)
- **Group A Reading Response Due**

September 8th: Individuals and Communities

- Erikson, *Everything in its Path*, Introduction & Part 1
- **Group B Reading Response Due**

Week 6

September 13th: Individuals and Communities

- Erikson, *Everything in its Path*, Part 2
- **Group A Reading Response Due**

September 15th: Individuals and Communities

- Erikson, *Everything in its Path*, Part 3 – "Looking for Scars" & "Individual Trauma"
- **Group B Reading Response Due**

Week 7

September 20th: Individuals and Communities

- Erikson, *Everything in its Path*, Part 3 – "Collective Trauma" & Conclusion
- **Group A Reading Response Due**

September 22nd: Individuals and Communities

- Putnam, Robert D. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy* 6:1.
- Review for Midterm Exam
- **Group B Reading Response Due**

Week 8

September 27th: Midterm Exam

September 29th: Bureaucracy, Rationality, and Irrationality

- Max Weber, "Bureaucracy" (CourseDen)
- George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*, Chs 1 & 2 (CourseDen)
- **Group A Reading Response Due**

Week 9

October 4th: Bureaucracy, Rationality, and Irrationality

- Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Ch 1
- **Group B Reading Response Due**

October 6th: Fall Break – NO CLASS

Week 10

October 11th: Bureaucracy, Rationality, and Irrationality

- Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Chs 2 & 3
- **Film Analysis Paper Due**

October 13th: Bureaucracy, Rationality, and Irrationality

- Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Ch 4
- **Group A Reading Response Due**

Week 11

October 18th: Bureaucracy, Rationality, and Irrationality

- Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Ch 5
- **Group B Reading Response Due**

October 20th: Bureaucracy, Rationality, and Irrationality

- Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Ch 6
- **Group A Reading Response Due**

Week 12

October 25th: Bureaucracy, Rationality, and Irrationality

- Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Ch 7
- **Group B Reading Response Due**

October 27th: Individuals and Power

- Collins, *Violence*, Chs 1 & 2
- **Group A Reading Response Due**

Week 13

November 1st: Individuals and Power

- Collins, *Violence*, Ch 3
- **Group B Reading Response Due**

November 3rd: Individuals and Power

- Collins, *Violence*, Ch 5 (NOTE THAT WE ARE SKIPPING CH 4)
- **Group A Reading Response Due**

Week 14

November 8th: Individuals and Power

- Collins, *Violence*, Ch 6
- **Group B Reading Response Due**

November 10th: Individuals and Power

- Collins, *Violence*, Ch 7
- **Group A Reading Response Due**

Week 15

November 15th: Individuals and Power

- Collins, *Violence*, Ch 8
- **Group B Reading Response Due**

November 17th: Individuals and Power

- Collins, *Violence*, Ch 9
- **Group A Reading Response Due**

November 22nd & November 24th: Thanksgiving Break – NO CLASS

Week 16

November 29th: Individuals and Power

- Collins, *Violence*, Ch 10
- **Group B Reading Response Due**

December 1st: Individuals and Power

- Collins, *Violence*, Ch 11
- Review for Final Exam
- **Synthesis Paper Due**

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, December 8th, 2:00-4:00 PM