

**GENERAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY
COURSE SYLLABUS
Spring 2021**

Course Number: SOCI4301 (21564)

Time: Synchronous weekly meeting Tuesdays 10:30 – 11:50

Instructor: Angela Frederick

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Office Hours: Virtual meetings by appointment

Office: N/A

Phone: N/A

TA: Laura Schwanke

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Office Hours: Virtual meetings by appointment

How to join Zoom for class:

Link: <https://utep-edu.zoom.us/j/8022413824?pwd=VXhjeXNJZHgrdUthb0FPOGZqY2dYZz09>

Meeting ID: 802 241 3824

Password: 677396

COURSE OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS

Course Overview. This class is a survey course in social theory, covering important thinkers from the classical and contemporary eras. The bulk of the classical approaches we will discuss concern efforts to come to grips with rapid social change in Western Europe and North America. Many of the theories, particularly from European thinkers, have been variously critical of the forms and paths of capitalist modernity as it transformed social practices and social landscapes across the 'West.' In the portion of the course devoted to contemporary theory, we will take up questions of power, inequality, and identity. In addition to engaging directly with theory, a central component of this course will be to explore how sociologists apply and challenge theory as they analyze empirical evidence.

As sociology majors and minors, this course is an important part of your program. It will be different than the upper division electives that you have already taken and should complement what you have learned in other classes. The reading might be more difficult than what you are used to reading in other sociology classes. Understanding theory, for most students, requires reading the same paragraph multiple times, looking up unfamiliar words in a dictionary, and pausing to think about what you have read before moving on to another paragraph. I encourage you to ask questions in class about what you read, as it is likely that other students have similar questions.

Learning Objectives. Students who complete this course should achieve the following objectives:

- Understand and be able to describe major theoretical perspectives in sociology.
- Know about the social and political contexts in which sociological theories were developed.
- Be able to apply sociological theories to your life, current events, and sociological topics.

Required Readings. The following book is required for the course. All additional assigned readings will be available on the course Blackboard page. Please note: you should always refer to your syllabus to confirm the reading assignment for each week.

- Ritzer, George, and Jeffrey Stepnisky. 2017. *Sociological Theory*, 10th ed. Los Angeles: Sage Publishers.

Requirements. Grades for this course are distributed as follows:

- **Weekly Application Projects (WAP) (25%).** Corresponding with each weekly unit during the semester, you will complete an application exercise. These exercises will be uploaded to the week's Blackboard folder by Wednesdays at noon. Each exercise will take one to two hours to complete and will involve assignments such as reflecting on short articles and videos. You must submit your weekly exercise to Blackboard by Sunday night at 11:59 p.m. Your lowest grade for these projects will be dropped, and the remainder of your grades will be averaged to comprise 25% of your final grade.
- **3 Exams (25% each). Details about these exams will be provided.**

Grading Scale. The grading scale in this course is as follows:

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

Course Structure. The course structure will be as follows:

- I will provide a weekly lecture via Zoom on Tuesdays at 10:30. I highly encourage you to join in for these lectures, as you will have the opportunity to ask questions and interact with your peers. Attendance is not mandatory however, and I will upload both the week's PPT and the Zoom lecture recording to the week's folder in Blackboard after each Tuesday session. We will not meet another time during each week.
- You are responsible for studying the material from our lectures and keeping up with your readings. Theory can be quite difficult, so manage your time accordingly.
- It is your responsibility to follow your syllabus closely and to go to Blackboard to submit your weekly WAP assignments and to take your exams. Extensions on assignments will

not be granted simply because you were not keeping up in class and did not know about an assignment.

- With the exception of your required textbook, all course materials will be available on the course Blackboard page. Be sure to familiarize yourself with course folders so you know where to find PPTs, exams, and assignment descriptions throughout the semester.
- Please note that announcements regarding the course will be provided within your weekly lecture and PPTs. Therefore, it is your responsibility to engage with lectures and course materials weekly so that you do not miss important announcements.
- While your TA and I are happy to assist with questions, you should first review your course materials to make sure your question is not already answered.

Professional Communication. Emails should be constructed in a professional manner with appropriate salutation, sentence structure, and closing. “Hey” is not a professional salutation, and my title is not “Mrs.” I will not respond to emails that fail to meet these professional standards.

Grading Policy. All assignments should be submitted before their deadlines. I do not grant extensions on papers or exams, except in the case of extreme emergencies for which official documentation is required. Five points will be deducted from your paper grade if you submit the paper later than the deadline on the day the assignment is due, and ten points will be deducted from your paper grade for each additional day your assignment is late. Excused students are those with legitimate crises who notify me in a timely manner.

Honor Code. As in all courses at UTEP, students are expected to act honorably in accordance with our mutual educational objectives. If you use someone else’s idea, opinion, concept, or fact, you must cite your source. If you use more than three consecutive words from someone else, you must put the phrase in quotation marks and cite your source. This includes notes from class. Failure to do so is plagiarism, and all such cases will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

Disability & Universal Design. We will make it our top priority to build a community that is fully inclusive of all body types, identities, and ways of learning. This will require each of us to be attentive, flexible, and vigilant. If we are engaging in any practices throughout the semester that lead you to feel overlooked, unwelcome, or alienated, I welcome you to come talk with me or to bring it to the entire community. You will be heard. If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services as soon as possible.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Notes:

- Your textbook chapters contain an enormous amount of information about many theorists. In the course schedule below, I identify the scholars with whom you are responsible for engaging. For each assigned chapter, read the broader information the authors provide about the particular school of thought. Then focus your attention on the theorists I identify for each week.
- The goal in completing your weekly reading is to familiarize yourself with the theories before we engage with them during class on Tuesdays. You do not need to try to memorize the material in each chapter. It is better to turn to the course lectures to focus on particular aspects of the theories.
- This is a tentative schedule. Our schedule might change as the semester progresses.

PART I: Classical Theory

Week 1 (1/18-1/22): Introductions

- Chap 1.

Week 2 (1/25-1/29): Karl Marx & Daniel Bell

- Chap 2.

Week 3 (2/1-2/5): Emile Durkheim

- Chap 3.

Week 4 (2/8-2/12): Max Weber & George Ritzer

- Chap 4.

Week 5 (2/15-2/20): Antonio Gramsci

- *Reading uploaded to Blackboard.*

Week 6 (2/22-2/26): **EXAM 1**

- Tuesday, February 23rd: Exam review.
- **EXAM 1 DUE SUNDAY AT 11:59 p.m.**

PART II: Modern Sociological Theory

Week 7 (3/1-3/5): Modern Sociology in the U.S.

- Chap 6 (du Bois).

Week 8 (3/8-3/12): Symbolic Interactionism

- Chap 9 (Mead, Goffman, Scheff & Hochschild).

Week 9 (3/15-3/19): Spring Break

Week 10 (3/22-3/26): Postmodern Social Theory

- Chap 17, section on postmodern social theory (Michele Foucault).

Week 11 (3/29-4/2): Theorizing Structure & Agency

- Chap 13, section "Agency-Structure Integration" (Bourdieu).

Week 12 (4/5-4/9): **EXAM 2**

- Tuesday, April 6th: Exam review.
- **EXAM 2 DUE SUNDAY at 11:59 p.m.**

PART III: Theorizing Power & Identity

Week 13 (4/12-4/16): Theorizing Gender

- Chap 12 (West & Zimmerman, Acker).

Week 14 (4/19-4/23): Critical Theories of Race and Racism

- Chap 15 (Omi & Winant, Bonilla Silva)

Week 15 (4/26-4/30): Theorizing Intersectionality

- Readings uploaded to Blackboard (Crenshaw, Collins)

Week 16 (5/3-5/7): Exam 3

- Tuesday, 5/4: Exam review.
- **EXAM 3 DUE SUNDAY at 11:59 p.m.**