

General Sociological Theory
SOCI 4301

Professor: **Jeremy Slack**
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(or by appointment)
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Course Description:

How do we make sense of the world around us? Social theory helps us explore this question and create meaning out of data and facts. In this class we will explore different interpretations of social problems. The goal, in many ways is to challenge or at least show the intellectual history between our current modes of thinking and destabilize concepts that many of us take for granted. This course will challenge many of your preconceived interpretations of our social, economic and cultural norms. This is a survey course and we will cover a broad range of thinkers, however, there are many more interpretations. You are expected to understand the basic tenets of principal theorists widely used in the social sciences. We will also discuss the principal theoretical debates and their consequences. You will learn how to apply these theoretical approaches to everyday life and current events.

Goals:

- Understand and be able to describe basic theoretical concepts
- Summarize principal debates in social theory
- Critique current dominant modes of thinking and their historically contingent nature
- Apply social theory to current events and everyday situations

BOOK THAT YOU NEED TO BUY:

Allan, Kenneth. 2011. *The Social Lens* (Second Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

* You must bring your textbook to class each day. Buying the textbook is essential. If you have problems getting a book for ANY reason, please see the TA or me immediately.

Grading:

In class quizzes and group activities 1-3 points each

Everyday there will be an activity or reading quiz. Part of your points will count as an attendance grade. It is best to come to class prepared, but even if you are not prepared, it is better to show up than to miss class. (50 points total)

Small Papers 10 points each

You will have three two page papers due this semester. You must take a current event or a something from your life, or some social scientific data and interpret it using one of the theories we discuss in class. I will assign the first one for every student. You may choose the following two based on any of the readings. If you do not like your grade on one of the papers, you may do a fourth paper and the lowest grade will be replaced. (30 points total)

Group Presentation 40 points

Based on your writings for the small papers, you will develop a theoretical interpretation of an important issue or an event. I will set aside class time to create groups based on shared interest in either a topical issue and explore different theoretical perspectives on it, or a theoretical perspective from which to explore different issues. This will be the culmination of your work in class. It should show a development from your writings into a more thoroughly researched and theorized topic.

Exams 25 points each

You will have two exams based on the readings and in-class lectures.

Academic Honesty Statement

The course will follow the University of Texas at El Paso's policies on academic honesty. These policies can be found at <http://studentaffairs.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=4386>

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another person's as ones' own. And, collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions.

Academic dishonesty is an assault upon the basic integrity and meaning of a University. Cheating, plagiarism, and collusion in dishonest activities are serious acts which erode the University's educational and research roles and cheapen the learning experience not only for the perpetrators, but also for the entire community. It is expected that UTEP students will understand and subscribe to the ideal of academic integrity and that they

will be willing to bear individual responsibility for their work. Materials (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill academic requirements must represent a student's own efforts. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

All material submitted must be the student's own work. Ideas and expressions cited from the work of others must be credited appropriately. Avoid plagiarism by giving credit where credit is due, using quotation marks when using words directly from another source, and preferably putting things in your own words. I prefer your own phrasing, even if it is imperfect, to a beautifully phrased statement that is borrowed from some other source. Violations will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions.

Academic Assistance and Disability Statement

In Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, if a student needs an accommodation then the Center for Accommodations and Support Services located at UTEP need to be contacted. If you have a condition that may affect your ability to perform successfully in this course, you are encouraged to discuss this in confidence with the instructor and/or the director of the Center for Accommodations and Support Services. You may call (915) 747-5148 for general information about the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the rights that you have as a UTEP student with a disability. You also can visit the CASS website at <http://sa.utep.edu/cass/> or the CASS office in Room 106 East Union Building.

Individuals with disabilities have the right to equal access and opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor and the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Course Rules

I expect your full attention during class. This is an upper division course and it is imperative that everyone behaves themselves in an adult, respectful manner. Please see me immediately if you feel that anyone in the class (including the instructor) is behaving in a disrespectful manner.

NO COMPUTERS OR CELL PHONES ALLOWED DURING LECTURE.

EMAIL POLICY – Email communication can be a great way to communicate, however it is not suited for all conversations. Since attendance is not mandatory in this course (although it is highly recommended since your quiz grades will suffer), I prefer emails for technical issues (blackboard etc.) and for setting up an appointment to talk. I will not respond to vague emails such as “what did we do today?” or “was there anything important in class?”

I reserve the right to change the syllabus at any time. This is a living document and should be treated as such. My goal is to tailor the course to the needs of the students and create the most appropriate learning experience.

SCHEDULE

Day	Date	Social Theory	Assignment	Due Today
1	T, 1/22	First Day of Classes		
2	TH, 1/24	No Class		
3	T, 1/29	Intro (CH- 1)	1-21	
4	TH, 1/31	Spencer (CH- 2)	21- 49	
5	T, 2/5	Marx (CH 3)	49-69	
6	TH, 2/7	Marx (CH 3)	69 - 80	
7	T, 2/12	Weber (CH 4)	83- 102	
8	TH, 2/14	Weber (CH 4)	102 - 118	Short paper #1 due
9	T, 2/19	Durkheim (CH 5)	121 – 144	
10	TH, 2/21	Durkheim (CH 5)	144-152	
11	T, 2/26	Review and Group work		
12	TH, 2/28	Mid Term Exam		
13	T, 3/5	Gilman and Dubois (CH 7)	187 - 198	
14	TH, 3/7	Gilman and Dubois (CH 7)	198 -209	
15	T, 3/12	Gramsci and Other Marxists	No Reading	
16	TH, 3/14	Gramsci and Other Marxists	Prison Notebooks (PDF)	
	T, 3/19	Spring Break, no class	----- -	-----
	TH, 3/21	Spring Break, no class	----- -	-----
17	T, 3/26	Structures of Inequality (CH 10) Bourdieu	305 - 323	
18	TH, 3/28	Wilson (CH – 11)	323 - 332	Short Paper #2
19	T, 4/2	Chafetz (Ch – 11)	332 - 349	

20	TH, 4/4	Goffman (CH – 13)	383 - 396	
21	T, 4/9	Foucault (CH – 16)	483 - 503	
22	TH, 4/11	Foucault	Discipline and Punish (PDF)	
23	T, 4/16	Review Exam 2	491 - 513	
24	TH, 4/18	Exam 2		
25	T, 4/23	Baudrillard (CH – 16)	503 - 544	
26	TH, 4/25	Patricia Hill Collins (CH – 17)	540 – 552	
27	T, 4/30	Cornel West	553 - 568	Short Paper 3 Due
28	TH, 5/02	Presentations		
29	T, 5/07	Presentations		
30	TH, 5/09	Last day of classes		
	W, 5/05	Dead Day		
	5/08–5/12	Finals TBA		