Instructor: Paige L. Sweet
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Office hours by appointment

Course Description
We all construct and use social theories in our everyday lives. Theory is simply a means of understanding and explaining the social world around us. Social theory allows for seeing patterns, forces, and power relations, encouraging us to make sense of all kinds of social phenomena – ranging from everyday interactions between friends to decades of violent colonization.

In this course, we will read theoretical texts every week, and then we will spend time understanding how they have been used to understand specific social phenomena. Theory must be relevant to real life “social facts” for it to survive, and we will work toward bridging the abstract concepts in our readings with the world around us. By the end of the class, you will likely find that some theories are your favorites – more relevant to your everyday life and your own sociological interests than others.

Usually, sociological theory is divided into two separate courses: classical theory and contemporary theory. However, we will cover both sets of theory in one semester. Although the dividing line between the two sets of theory is arbitrary, classical theory usually refers to the works of the “founding fathers”: Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim. These were the first thinkers who conceptualized “the social” or “society” as an object of analysis. Next, we will explore several important theorists who bridge the gap between the “classical” and the “contemporary.” We will challenge the theory “canon” by including theorists who write about gender and race. Then, we will move into “contemporary theory,” exploring some of the key themes and debates that have characterized the profession from the 1960s until the present.

This course requires you to read a lot of social theory, which will be abstract and difficult. I assign primary texts, meaning that they were written by the theorist him/herself. While we will contextualize the readings by learning about the theorist’s life, it is important that you learn to read with patience and diligence. I am here to help, as are your colleagues. If you are struggling to understand course material on your own, that’s okay! No sociologist learns theory on her own. When you come to class, we will put the reading in historical and biographical context and in conversation with other readings. Through lectures, multiple readings of the material on your own, and class discussions, we will – together – arrive at a deeper understanding of the social world and of the history of sociological thought.
Course Grading System

Participation: 20% of grade

- Participation in class discussion is necessary for your development as a critical scholar and for your understanding of the course material. This is an upper-level course with difficult reading material that requires us to establish an informed and critical discourse with each other. Participation includes actively listening, as well as sharing your ideas, criticisms, and frustrations with course material. I expect students to come to class having read and taken notes on all material.

- Every Thursday, we will begin class with students’ own observations about the material. This may be in the form of a discussion question, an observation, a critique, or a connecting thought to previous readings. If you have come to class unprepared for this exercise, I will deduct from your participation grade.

- Attendance is absolutely essential to your success in this course. I expect students to attend all classes. You are allowed two unexcused absences, but more than two will result in a reduction of your grade. Additional absences will only be excused with formal written documentation. If you expect to miss class because of a religious observance, you will need to notify me beforehand. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to catch up.

In-Class Writing & Quizzes: 10% of grade

- We will frequently have in-class quizzes or writing assignments based on reading material. Quizzes will be open-note. It is your responsibility to prepare for potential quizzes by reading the assigned material. Requests for make-up quizzes will not be accommodated. I will drop your lowest quiz grade at the end of the semester.

Midterm Exam: 25% of grade – in-class exam on Thursday, October 19

- This will be a “blue book” essay exam covering the concepts and theories from the first half of the course. Students will be given 4 prompts when they walk into the midterm and are expected to answer two questions. Open-note, 1 hour 30 minutes. We will have a group “study day” in advance of the exam, in class, on Tuesday, October 17th.

Three Short Papers: 15% each – due Thursday Sep. 28 in class, Thursday Nov. 16 in class, Thursday Dec. 14 by email at 1:00 pm

- You will be asked to write three 5-page papers, each worth 15% of your overall grade. Due dates are noted on the syllabus. I will provide paper topics two weeks before they are due. The best papers will make connections between theorists or ideas, generating an original analysis. Grading rubrics will be distributed in class.

Assignment Format
Papers should be double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, 11 or 12-point font. You will hand in a hard copy to me during class, except for the final paper, which will be submitted via email.

Assignment & Grading Policy
Please be aware that I do not accept late assignments. If you are struggling to complete the assignment, I strongly encourage you to meet with me in advance of the due date so that we can
come up with a plan. Becoming a clear, concise writer and communicator is a critical part of college education – but it is not easy. We will work together to develop your writing skills, and my evaluations will become progressively more challenging as the course (and your skill) advances. I will provide you with detailed grading rubrics in advance of each due date.

Course Materials
You will need to purchase one book for this course:

All other reading materials will be made available to you on Blackboard. You must bring either an electronic or hard copy of all readings to class with you.

Academic Integrity
The Academic Integrity Policy appears in the Elmhurst College Student Handbook. All work for this course is governed by this policy and violation of its provisions is grounds for a failing grade for an assignment or the entire course. In addition, I am required to notify the Dean of Students office in writing regarding any infractions of the Code of Academic Integrity. This written notification remains in the student’s file for the reminder of their studies at Elmhurst College. *Do not plagiarize.*

Disability Services
Elmhurst College will make accommodations for students with disabilities based on the presentation of appropriate documentation. If you believe you have a disability that may impact your work in this course, contact Dr. Corinne Smith, Disabilities Service Coordinator: corinne.smith@elmhurst.edu (630-617-6448). Located in Frick Room 229.

Learning Center – Academic Support
The Learning Center offers services to support the academic performance of all Elmhurst College students. Sessions are structured to promote principles of effective, self-regulated learning and academic management. Areas of tutoring include math, writing, reading, study skills, and special test preparation. For more information, contact Emmie McAdams, Math Specialist, at emmim@elmhurst.edu (630-617-5376) or Susan Roach, Learning Center Director, at susan.roach@elmhurst.edu (630-617-3155). Located in Frick Center Room 229.
Course Schedule Fall 2017

Week 1: INTRODUCTION
Tuesday 8.29 – Welcome

Thursday 8.31 – What is social theory?

Week 2: MARX
Tuesday 9.5
  - Marx & Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party:” pp. 473-491
  - Marx, “Estranged Labour:” pp. 70-81

Thursday 9.7
  - Engels, “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State:” pp. 734-759

Week 3: WEBER
Tuesday 9.12

Thursday 9.14

Week 4: DURKHEIM
Tuesday 9.19
- Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings. Giddens, Anthony, ed. 1972. Selections:
  - “Moral obligation, duty, and freedom:” pp. 108-122
  - “Forms of social solidarity:” pp. 123-140
  - “The division of labour and social differentiation:” pp. 141-154

Thursday 9.21
- Emile Durkheim. 1912. The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. Chapter 1: pp. 21-44.

Week 5: FREUD
Tuesday 9.26
Thursday 9.28 – **PAPER #1 DUE, HARD COPY IN CLASS**

**Week 6: RACE**

**Tuesday 10.3 – W.E.B. DuBois**

  - Introduction: pp. vii-xi
  - Chapter 1: Of Our Spiritual Strivings: pp. 3-11
  - Chapter 9: Of the Sons of Master and Man: pp. 125-144

**Thursday 10.5 – Frantz Fanon**


**Week 7: GENDER**

**Tuesday 10.10**


**Thursday 10.12**

- Simone de Beauvoir. 1949. *The Second Sex*. Selections:
  - Introduction: pp. xvii-xxx

**Week 8: EXAM**

**Tuesday 10.17 – IN-CLASS STUDY SESSION**

**Thursday 10.19 – IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM**

**Week 9: FUNCTIONALISM**

**Tuesday 10.24**


**Thursday 10.26**


**Week 10: SYMBOLIC INTERACTION**
Tuesday 10.31 – Symbolic Interactionism

Thursday 11.2 – WRITING DAY: NO CLASS MEETING

**Week 11: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION & CRITICAL THEORY**

Tuesday 11.7 – Social Construction

Thursday 11.9 – Critical Theory

**Week 12: FOUCAULT**

Tuesday 11.14 –

Thursday 11.16 – **PAPER #2 DUE, HARD COPY IN CLASS**

**Week 13: BOURDIEU**

Tuesday 11.21 –

Thursday 11.23 THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS

**Week 14: POSTCOLONIAL THEORY & INTERSECTIONALITY**

Tuesday 11.28

Thursday 11.30
  • Gloria Anzaldúa. 1987. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. [selections]
    o Chapter 7: pp. 99-120

**Week 15: FEMINIST & QUEER CRITIQUE**

Tuesday 12.4 – Feminist Standpoint Theory
  • Dorothy Smith. 1987. *The Everyday World as Problematic*. Selections:
Thursday 12.7 – Woman of Color & Queer Critique


**Thursday December 14th by 1:00 pm: PAPER #3 DUE VIA EMAIL**