

SOCI 3700W
Social Theory
Friday 1:35-4:35pm.
Fontbonne 211

Instructor: Aisha A. Upton

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Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 11:00am-12:15pm and by appointment.

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Course Overview:

This course is designed to give students an overview of sociological theory. In this course we will critically engage with the many different theoretical orientations and theorists that help to shape the ways that sociologists go about conducting their research. We will begin by studying classical theory and thinking critically about what is considered the sociological “canon.”

Through this examination, we will discuss the importance of including subjugated voices into our understanding of foundational sociology. This will highlight the invaluable work of scholars like W.E.B. Dubois and Ida B. Wells.

Course Objectives:

The main objective for this course is for you to be able to apply sociological theories to understand issues and events in the world that you live in

This course also meets the Department of Sociology’s Goals for student learning:

1. Understanding Sociological Content

- Demonstrate familiarity with the three major paradigms in sociological thought
- Use any of the competing methods of making knowledge claims in sociology
- Identify and describe the major contributions of the leading theorists in the discipline
- Converse at some level about the most central concepts in the discipline:
 - community and alienation
 - deviance, conformity, and social control
 - social stratification by class, race, gender, and other social categories
 - identity and the self
 - social institutions and social change
- Converse in considerable depth about two or more of the above ideas

2. Development of Intellectual And Academic Skills

- effectively read, interpret, and apply concepts from complex theoretical texts
- effectively derive sociological knowledge from non-sociological texts
- use appropriate empirical methods to collect, analyze, and interpret data
- appropriately use and cite research and other published knowledge sources
- acquire habits and methods of study appropriate to the first year of graduate school

3. Development of Transferable Professional Skills

- use information technology effectively
- use appropriate statistical methods and software
- write clearly in both technical and persuasive modes
- use empirical or analytical methods to illuminate a real-world question

4. Self-Awareness And Community Participation

- view social and political activism as an appropriate means of social change
- develop strategies for impacting social change through personal action, social movements, community organizations, the law and public policy
- adopt a skeptical posture toward the status quo
- use sociological concepts and knowledge in understanding her own circumstances (the “sociological imagination”)
- articulate a coherent concept of social justice

Readings:

Calhoun, Craig, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk. 2012. *Classical Sociological Theory*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell. Third Edition.

Calhoun, Craig, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk. 2012. *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell. Third Edition.

How you will be graded:

This seminar combines two elements: (1) engagement as a group with planned content related to central course themes and (2) student-led discussion.

Course Requirements:

Participation: 50 points

Weekly response papers: 50 points

Five-page response papers: 50 points

Research Paper 50 points

Total: 200 points

A: Clearly superior work; obviously beyond a “good job” in some combination of the following respects: creativity, originality, depth, clarity, and critical, independent thinking

B: A good job, meeting all the expectations of the assignment. “B” work goes beyond minimum competence by showing insight, creativity, clarity

C: Adequate work, generally meeting expectations but lacking in some areas

D: Inadequate work, but not failing

F: Incomplete, dishonest, or simply not a serious effort

93%= A

90%= B

87%+= B+

83%+=B

80%+=B-

77%+=C+
73%+=C
70%+=C-
67%+D+
60%+=D
<60%

Participation and Attendance:

Because this is a discussion-based class, your participation in class is crucial! Participation includes, (1) *coming to class*¹. If you are not in class to participate, your grade will suffer. You are allowed to miss **one day** (week) of class without penalty. Each subsequent absence will cause your grade to go down by one letter grade. In my experience, students who regularly attend classes have a better experience in courses, get the most out of those experiences, and tend to get better grades. I guarantee that you will get out of this course what you put into it. (2) *Reading the required texts*. Again, you will get out of this course what you put into it. It would behoove you to not get behind on the reading. (3) *Regularly contributing to class discussions* (talking in class), discussion leading, and bringing in outside material. Please note that your ability to contribute to class discussions is directly correlated with your class attendance and your complete reading of the assigned texts. Not every comment/question must be brilliant and insightful; questions and “thinking aloud” are important to the learning process. I cannot stress enough how important contributing to class discussions will be to you, other students, and me as the instructor. Speak up!

Discussion leading:

Each student will be assigned two class meetings to lead discussion. Leading discussion means coming prepared to summarize the reading/material for the week and preparing 3-5 discussion questions. The questions should be substantive questions (questions that can lead to a discussion). If you would like, you can incorporate outside material.

Bringing in outside material and discussion question:

Each week every student should bring in some outside material that they see as connected to the weekly reading. This material could be a piece of news, another reading, a video, etc. The purpose of this component is for you to make a personal connection to the reading.

Weekly Two Page Informal Writing Responses:

On ten Fridays throughout the semester, you will turn in a two-page informal writing response. These writing responses are **not** formal papers. The purpose of the response papers is for you to reflect on the readings/discussions. Do you still have any burning questions? Is there something that you really like/dislike? Do you see a connection between something we’ve covered in class to a cultural artifact? This is your space to put it out into the world. On the Fridays that these are due, bring some of your thoughts to class to add to our discussion. These must be turned in on D2L by 11:59 on the day of our class meeting.

Five Page Writing Responses:

¹ Please contact me if you experience a personal or family emergency. I am strict about late assignments, but not inflexible.

On two Fridays of the semester there will be a five-page paper response due. In the five-page papers I expect you to connect your ideas directly to the readings that we have covered thus far. What separates the five-page response from the two-page response is that they are formal. This means that in these papers you should have a clearly articulated focus for your writing and that you should use citations for both readings from class and any additional readings (if you choose to use them).

Final Paper:

Details about the final paper will be discussed in class.

Other things you should know:

Technology policy:

I do not mind if you use technology in the classroom with the exception of cell phones. Again, I will not permit the use of cell phones. Texting, GroupMe, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, and any other app/site that exist to talk to people outside of the classroom have no place in the classroom unless specifically directed. Other technology such as laptops and tablets for note-taking are allowed. Please refrain from using your technology for social media, as this is a distraction for you and for other students. In class discussions we need to be respectful of other people while they are talking. To that end, it's important that we pay attention to each other rather than our screens.

In-Class Discussion Policy:

Due to the topic of the course, in this class we will cover difficult and controversial topics (race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.) to which we may not all agree. You are welcome to share your own opinions/ask questions about these topics and are expected to listen to others when they share their opinions/ask questions – even if you do not agree. Everyone in class is expected to be respectful of others. With this in mind, personal or group-based attacks will not be tolerated.

E-mail policy:

Please make sure to consult the course syllabus, other handouts, or D2L before submitting inquiries via email. I will respond to your email as soon as I can, but please allow 48 hours after you initially email to email me again.

Writing Assistance at the O'Neill Center:

If necessary, we will refer students to the O'Neill Center for writing assistance. Please do not get offended if you are referred. Instead, please view it as an opportunity to improve your writing skills. The center offers a service designed to meet the needs of students, and the staff members are competent, friendly, and non-threatening. We, at St. Kate's, attempt to do our best to accommodate students to help them achieve a successful outcome. When the instructor and the student work together, a successful outcome is usually met.

Academic Dishonestly:

Absolutely no incidents of academic dishonesty or academic misconduct will be tolerated. The best way to avoid being academically dishonest is to properly cite any ideas/words that are not originally your own.

Special Accommodations:

Saint Catherine University is committed to equal access for all and recognizes that disability

is an aspect of diversity. The University's goal is to create learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and welcoming. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to the learning environment, accurate assessment or your achievement, please contact the Resources for Disabilities office as soon as possible. Access Consultants can be reached in the O'Neill Center at 651-690-6563 to discuss academic adjustments or accommodations.

If you need accommodations for a disability, please inform us immediately at the beginning of the semester to work out appropriate arrangements. We cannot grant any accommodations without notice from Disability Services. This information will be kept confidential. Please note that notifying us at the end of the semester or thereafter will not be useful to your situation.

Incompletes:

There will be no incompletes given for this course unless you have performed satisfactorily (at least 70%) in most of the requirements, and you have an emergency [i.e., sudden illness/hospitalization of self or immediate family member (medical documentation required), death of immediate family, etc.]. You will be required to write a formal contract for completion of the project. An "I" grade automatically converts to an "F" grade one year after the final exam of the term in which the "I" was given.

Preliminary Course Schedule

**This schedule is subject to change*

Friday February 8: Introductions.

Friday February 15: No class. D2L discussion thread.

Reading: *Classical Sociological Theory* Part I.

Friday February 22: The Sociological Theory Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels

Reading: *Classical Sociological Theory* Part III.

Friday March 1: The Sociological Theory of Emile Durkheim

Reading: *Classical Sociological Theory* Part IV.

Friday March 8: The Sociological Theory of Max Weber.

Reading: *Classical Sociological Theory* Part V.

Assignment: First five-page paper due.

Friday March 15: Self and Society in Sociological Theory.

Reading: *Classical Sociological Theory* Part VI: chapters 25-28.

Friday March 22: W.E.B. Dubois and other marginalized voices in classical theory

Reading: *Classical Sociological Theory* Chapter 30 and readings available on D2L.

Friday March 29: No Class. Spring Break.

Friday April 5: Micro-Sociological Analysis

Reading: *Contemporary Sociological Theory* Part I.

Friday April 12: Power and Inequality

Reading: *Contemporary Sociological Theory* Part IV.

Assignment: Second five-page paper due

Friday April 19: Easter Break

Friday April 26: The Sociological Theory of Michel Foucault

Reading: *Contemporary Sociological Theory* Part V.

Friday May 3: The Sociological Theory of Pierre Bourdieu

Reading: *Contemporary Sociological Theory* Part VI.

Friday May 10: Race, Gender, and Difference

Reading: *Contemporary Sociological Theory* Part VII.

Friday May 17: Race, Gender, and Sexuality

Reading: Readings available on D2L.

Assignment: Final paper due.