

Sociology 192 Sociological Theory
Classical and Contemporary Theory: it's not what you think

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W 6-9, AMD 250

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The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas.

Karl Marx, 1846

Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men's conduct. Yet very frequently the 'world images' that have been created by 'ideas' have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest.

Max Weber, 1915

Society cannot make its influence felt unless it is in action, and it is in action only if the individuals who comprise it are assembled and acting in common. It is through common action that society becomes conscious of and affirms itself; society is above all an active cooperation.

Emile Durkheim, 1912

Postmodernism is not what you think.

Charles Lemert, 1997

This course in social theory will examine a series of theorists, from the founders of Sociology to the most current practitioners of social theory in both the US and abroad. We will focus on broad theories about society as a whole, on general theories of social existence, and on the interrelations between theories, theorists, and the present day. The course will ask students to examine the world with a critical eye from a theoretical point of view: questioning assumptions and thinking creatively about analysis and explanation. Students will be evaluated based on several paper assignments and written lecture responses.

There is one required text, available at the Hornet Bookstore, and one required reader, available online at WebCT. A copy of the reader and the text will also be on reserve at University Library. **Students are expected to keep up on the readings and come to lecture**, where we will discuss the readings. There will be no exams. Instead, students will be given the opportunity to explore ideas and issues in a series of response papers: The emphasis of the course is on ideas.

I am available outside of the office hours above—email me to set up an appointment. ***Please use my office hours!*** The more that people come to raise issues and to ask clarifying questions, the better I can improve the quality of the course. ***Your best bet for a quick response is to email me.*** I check this regularly (usually several times a day).

FURLOUGH DISCLAIMER:

Due to the massive budget cuts in the State of California faculty have been furloughed for 2 days per month. Some of these days may be instructional days, and as the CSU administration and the faculty labor union said, “cuts of this magnitude will naturally have consequences for the quality of education.” Some of these furlough days, listed below, will be taken when class would normally have met. Alternative assignments may be given to make up for the lost classes.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- *Course reader (SacCT).*
- Lemert, Charles. *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*. **3rd Edition** (but the 2nd is OK, though page numbers may be different)
- Hurst, Charles. *Living Theory*. (Recommended)

I. introduction

1. 9/02/09 a science of society: Descartes, Newton, Hobbes, Locke (SacCT: Lemert “Social Things” and de Tocqueville “Democracy in America”)

II. classical theory: marx/weber/durkheim

2. 9/09/09 Marx (Lemert: 21-41)
3. 9/16/09 Marx (Lemert: 41-67)
4. 9/23/09 Weber (Lemert: 99-125)
5. 9/30/09 Weber (SacCT: weber)
6. 10/07/09 Durkheim (Lemert: 70-83)
7. 10/14/09 Durkheim (Lemert: 83-99)

FIRST ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE BY TODAY. THREE 2-PAGE RESPONSES MUST BE TURNED IN.

III. an alternate classical beginning

8. 10/21/09 DuBois, Gilman, Cooper, Kropotkin (Lemert: 163-180)
9. 10/28/09 extending Marx: Bakunin, Kropotkin, Goldman (SacCT Goldman, “Marriage” and Kropotkin “Anarchism”) and Pierce, Cooley, Mead (Lemert: 180-185, 220-25)

IV. social theory comes of age

11. 11/04/09 Western Marxism (Lemert: 202-08, 218-19, 255-56, 259-61, 428-30)
12. 11/11/09 VETERAN’S DAY CLASS CANCELLED (per university policy)
Mills, Bourdieu, breaking away (Lemert: 348-52, 435-443, 383-90, 405-09)

V. postmodernism and current social theory

13. 11/18/09 POMO I (Lemert: 445-60, 465-76)
responses (Lemert: 477-504)
14. 11/25/09 FURLOUGH DAY CLASS CANCELLED (due to budget cuts)
POMO II (Lemert: 522-26, 531-553)
15. 12/02/09 POMO III (Lemert: 557-68, 609-14, 635-44, SacCT: “postmodernism is not what you think”)

SECOND ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE BY TODAY

16. 12/09/09 Toward a “conclusion” (SacCT: Harvey “Edilia”)

COURSEWORK COMPONENTS AND FINAL GRADES

There are 3 distinct components of coursework for this class:

14 IN-CLASS COMMENT CARDS (one per lecture with one week off)

7 TWO-PAGE RESPONSE ASSIGNMENTS (one every week with one week off)

2 EIGHT-TEN PAGE (TYPED DOUBLE SPACED) ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

These coursework components are designed to give you credit for attending lecture, reading, thinking critically about the content of lectures and readings, and writing down your ideas on the content of lectures and readings. The point is to engage with the ideas in the class. The IN-CLASS RESPONSE PAPERS are to be a thoughtful response to the lecture that critical engages with the substantive material of the course. The TWO-PAGE RESPONSE PAPERS are designed to engage the readings for the week. The ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS give you a chance to engage with an entire section of the course: readings, lectures, and outside material. All assignments will be assessed as “PASS” or “NO PASS.” *It is difficult to get a “no pass” on an assignment, unless you clearly do not engage with the readings/lecture, or plagiarize.*

To receive a passing grade (D-) for this course you must submit (on time) at least half of ALL of the assignments for each of the COURSEWORK COMPONENTS (13 cards, 4 response papers and 1 essay). I reserve the right to add new assessment tools to this syllabus, including, but not limited to pop quizzes, exams, or reading journals. **Your final grade is then based upon whether you complete the rest of the assignments for each COURSEWORK COMPONENT or not. Therefore,**

To earn a D, you must complete the above PLUS 1 COURSEWORK COMPONENT

To earn a C, you must complete the above PLUS 2 COURSEWORK COMPONENTS

To earn a B, you must complete the above PLUS 3 COURSEWORK COMPONENTS

To earn an A, you must complete ALL coursework components and have your work be CONSISTENTLY OUTSTANDING. This is indicated by a STAR on the returned assignment. This is not difficult to achieve, but requires more effort than simply doing the “busy work.” Grades of C+ or A- (etc.) will be assigned for partial work, partial completion of a component, or for other circumstances. **It is always to your advantage to turn in a partially completed assignment.**

PLEASE NOTE:

- **THERE IS NO NEED TO EXPLAIN YOUR ABSENCE FROM LECTURE.**
- **I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE PAPERS, EMAILED PAPERS, OR ANY OTHER WAY THAN IN LECTURE.**
- **YOU CANNOT TURN IN MULTIPLE PAPERS OF THE SAME COMPONENT AT ONCE.**
- **PLAGIARISM IS A VERY SERIOUS ISSUE AND WILL BE DEALT WITH FIRMLY.**

It is expected that you will turn in your own work. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, quoting or paraphrasing without citation, using another student’s work from this semester or the past, using your own work from another class (either this semester or from the past), or using quotes or full papers from the internet. If you don’t know what plagiarism is, please go to <<http://www.csus.edu/admbus/umannual/UMP14150.htm>> to educate yourself. Above all, please act with integrity—do not risk your academic career, it’s not worth it.

I strive to make this course accessible to all students. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any special needs that you might have, including, but not limited to accommodation in regards to ability or impairment.

COURSEWORK COMPONENT GUIDELINES

The coursework components are designed to give you credit for attending lecture, reading, thinking critically about the content of lectures and readings, and writing down your ideas on the content of lectures and readings. The point is to engage with the ideas in the class. All assignments will be assessed as “PASS” or “NO PASS.”

The **IN-CLASS RESPONSE PAPERS** are to be a thoughtful response to the lecture. Write your comments on the normal 3x5 card provided during each lecture. Though they are informal, the cards do need to be thoughtful and insightful. I will accept personal observations or the relating of personal experiences only if they apply directly to the content of the lecture. I will not accept personal experiences if they are banal and relate only tangentially, or if the relation is not clearly stated. For instance, an acceptable response card might read: “Weber’s theory of the iron cage feels real to me. I know that I often feel locked into rational bureaucratic systems that make very little sense on first analysis.” An unacceptable response card might say “Yeah, Weber’s right. The DMV sucks, dude.”

The **TWO-PAGE RESPONSE ASSIGNMENT** is a more in-depth response to **the readings only (NOT LECTURE)**. Though it is in-depth, you are limited to just two pages. This is designed to give you an opportunity for more creative and intelligent comment and analysis of the readings for the week. As with the response card, you should stick to just a few ideas and carefully explain your response to them. Consider this a formal assignment: it should be typed, double-spaced, and copy-edited. You can only turn these in during lectures that you attend.

The **ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS** give you a chance to engage with an entire section of the course: readings, lectures, and outside material. The essay should be typed, double-spaced, and copy-edited. Treat this as a formal essay of about 8-10 pages. It should tie together the readings, lecture, and at least **two** outside academic sources (that is, scholarly journals or books), and it **must** include a bibliography and inter-textual citations. **Internet sources, newspaper articles, and magazines are not accepted.** As with any formal essay it should have an introduction, the substance of your argument, and a conclusion.

You may choose any topic that relates to the substantive material of the course. The only requirement is that it builds on the materials from lecture, the readings, your relevant outside sources, and you **must relate this topic to your own life**. Sociology is a lived experience, and this paper should show the connections between social theory and lived behavior as you have experienced it. Some topic ideas for the essay are posted on sacCT.