

Sociology 2120 [A2]
THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

Fall Semester, 2008
Grande Prairie Regional College
Schedule TBA

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Sociology asks two fundamental questions: What is society? How should we study it? This course examines the methodological and theoretical issues behind these questions by introducing the works of various ‘classical’ (19th century) and ‘contemporary’ (20th -21st century) social thinkers. This course is designed to introduce students to the theoretical foundations of sociology and, in particular, how sociology explains and critiques the economic, political, and socio-cultural formations of capitalism. The principal themes are: (1) the historical roots of sociology, (2) the revolutionary sociology of Karl Marx, (3) the academic sociology of Emile Durkheim, and (4) the *verstehen* sociology of Max Weber. It will also be shown how sociological theory is itself a ‘social product’ by identifying the assumptions and biases of various theorists as they engage(d) in the sociological enterprise.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the course are as follows: (1) to acquaint students with a variety of paradigms or schools of social theory and with the major disputes over the meaning and the existence of ‘the social’; (2) to introduce students to both classical and contemporary works of social theory; (3) to explain the application of social theory in contemporary social research and sociological investigation as applied to modern society, and; (4) to develop critical and reflective skills, and to explore the importance of social theory for other academic and non-academic pursuits.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Model Seminar (20%)..... dates to be determined
Respondent to Model Seminar (10%)..... dates to be determined
Mid-Term Test (25%)..... date to be determined
Research Paper Proposal (15%)..... date to be determined
Research Paper (30%)..... date to be determined

REQUIRED TEXTS

[other materials and readings will be distributed on an as-needed basis]

Charles Hurst, 2005 (2nd ed.), Living Theory: The Application of Classical Social Theory to Contemporary Life. Pearson/Allyn and Bacon: Boston.

George Ritzer, 2003, Contemporary Sociological Theory and its Classical Roots: The Basics. McGraw Hill: Boston.

You are of course encouraged to read beyond the assigned course book(s). Check out popular magazines, academic books and journals and other sources for coverage of topics discussed in this course: such materials are available in the GPRC library, on the world wide web, through inter-library loans, and elsewhere.

SEMESTER TESTS, EXAMS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Model Seminar** (20%): Each student will sign up for ONE date during the term at which time they will participate in a model seminar on text and other assigned readings. On specified days, groups of 2-3 students (depending on final enrolments) will lead the class in a discussion of the material. Your job is to critique, question, interpret and think about the material. This is not a group presentation – you will be evaluated individually – and so you are not required to meet with your panel ahead of time. Each student will present their critical responses to the readings and will have the chance to respond to other panel members and the class in general. **Further details will be discussed in class.**
2. **Respondent to Model Seminar** (10%): Each student will sign up for ONE date during the term at which time they will be responsible for responding to the model seminar panel. Here, you will come prepared with questions for the students leading the class discussion. You must hand in 4-5 type-written questions on a sheet, along with your name, ID, course name and date.
3. **Mid-Term Test** (25%): This test will be a combination of terms and concepts to be defined, as well as short-response essay questions. **More details in class!**
4. **Research Paper Proposal** (15%): This very short assignment gets you started on your final paper and gives you feedback on your planning. If your paper topic changes significantly after the proposal, you need to discuss it with me. Your proposal should include: (a) statement of topic and your objectives, (b) statement about the importance and relevance of your topic, (c) identification of the theorists you are citing and their arguments. Your proposal should also include 6-10 scholarly sources you are using, and these sources should be annotated. Total pages, double-spaced, would be 2 pages, plus the annotated sources.

5. **Research Paper** (30%): Your final paper or project should undertake a critical and in-depth examination of a topic or set of topics arising from the coursework – and should reflect your earlier submitted proposal; it should be something what has captured your interest during the term. A standard paper format is recommended for the final paper. Your paper should also include the scholarly sources you cited for your proposal, and perhaps several more, *but these do not have to be annotated*. Paper length is between 8 and 12 pages, double-spaced, including your bibliography *but not your title page*. **Additional technical guidelines for the final paper will be discussed in class.**

Please note that plagiarism detection software may be used in this course, and students may be required, individually or collectively, to submit key assignments/components in electronic form.

It is your responsibility to ensure that all your work is at a level appropriate to your year in college/university studies. Always spell- and grammar-check your work; always keep a hard copy or disk copy of your work as back-up. There is writing help on campus, and if in doubt you are always welcome to ask me, your instructor, for clarification. Poor spelling, grammar and organization always interferes with the clear communication of ideas and you *will* lose marks if your over-all communication is ineffective.

Attendance at lectures is strongly encouraged; the same applies to your participation in class discussions. ***Be an active participant in your education!***

Late assignments (or any assignment/course components) will result in an automatic loss of 5 marks (of the value of the work) PER DAY, up to and including the day of a late submission, unless immediate or prior arrangements, based on exceptional circumstances, have been made. Documented personal or family emergencies, of course, will be accommodated.

WEEKLY TEXT/LECTURE SCHEDULE

We will refer to the table of contents of the Text for the chapter title and chapter content for the topic(s) for each week in the semester. Lectures may not strictly follow the book sequence, but you will still be responsible for the contents of the chapters for each particular week. Also, the chapters and weeks will overlap, giving you the chance to get 'caught up' or to read ahead, as the case may be.

Week 1 – creating and defining sociological theory; the relevance of theories past and the value of theory. Ritzer, Chapter 1; Hurst, Chapter 1

Week 2 – a primer on Marx, Durkheim, Simmel and Weber. Ritzer, Chapter 1; Hurst, Chapter 1, continued.

Week 3 – the Classical ‘grand theories’: Marx, Durkheim, Simmel, Weber and Veblen in detail; revolutionary, academic, organizational and intersubjective sociology. Ritzer, Chapter 2; Hurst, Chapter 2

Week 4 – society as industrial, rational and individualistic; solidarity, alienation and authority. Ritzer, Chapter 2; Hurst, Chapter 2, continued.

Week 5 – Classical theories of everyday life: social action, social behaviorism, symbolic interactionism, the lifeworld, phenomenology. Ritzer, Chapter 3; Hurst, Chapter 3

Week 6 – private lives and public connections, the meaning of self, the individual and the community, public eye and private life. Ritzer, Chapter 3; Hurst, Chapter 3, continued.

Week 7 – contemporary theoretical approaches to the social world: structural-functionalism, conflict theory, general systems theory, feminist approaches to the macro-social order. Ritzer, Chapter 4; Hurst, Chapter 4

Week 8 – separatism and status, the arrangement of social space, ethnic sequestration. Ritzer, Chapter 4; Hurst, Chapter 4, continued.

Week 9 – contemporary Grand Theories: neo-Marxism, micro-macro analysis, analyzing modernity: the colonization of the life-world, the risk society, globalization. Ritzer, Chapter 5; Hurst, Chapter 5

Week 10 – cynicism, distrust and corruption: symptoms of an uncivil society; commodification and the value of human life; the superficial self. Ritzer, Chapter 5; Hurst, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6

Week 11 – contemporary theories of everyday life: ethnomethodology, exchange theory, rational choice theory, feminist theory and the micro-social order. Ritzer, Chapter 6; Hurst, Chapter 6

Week 12 – contemporary integrative theories: structuration theory, culture and agency, reflexive sociology, contemporary feminist theories. Ritzer, Chapter 7 and 8; Hurst, Chapter 6, continued.

Week 13 – post-Modern Grand Theories: post-modern sociology, simulations, consumer society, dream worlds, sociology of postmodernity. Ritzer, Chapter 9; Hurst, Chapter 6 and 7.

Six Ways To Make This Course More Valuable:

- 1. Participate, to engage your learning**
- 2. Question, to enhance your learning**
- 3. Read, to expand your learning**
- 4. Reflect, to measure your learning**
- 5. Apply, to transfer your learning**
- 6. Innovate, to adapt your learning**