

**Department of Sociology
Dartmouth College
Spring 2020**

Constructing Social Theory (Sociology 16)

Professor: Sunmin Kim

Office: 301D Blunt

E-mail: sunmin.kim@dartmouth.edu

Course Description:

This course offers an introduction to the sociological theories developed in the late twentieth century. Focusing on the works of Erving Goffman, Pierre Bourdieu, Michele Foucault, and postcolonial and intersectional theorists, this course traces how sociology as a discipline produced concepts and frameworks to account for crucial issues of our time. Through these theorists' work, we will examine micro-interaction and impression management; culture and reproduction of inequality; discipline and power over bodies; and the question of voice and positionality. Rather than treating social theory as a set of abstractions removed from reality, this course presents them as products of social construction, and situates them firmly within their contexts of development as well as the biographies of theorists. By taking this course, students will learn a) what contemporary social theory entails; b) how to read and critically engage with theoretical texts; and c) how to apply abstract concepts across different contexts. This course fulfills the theory requirement for majors in the Department of Sociology.

Disclaimer for Remote Learning (Spring 2020 only)

This course was NOT originally designed as a course for remote learning, and therefore leaves much to be desired in terms of content and delivery. Given the exceptional circumstances that we are in, I humbly ask everyone to be patient and understanding. I do recognize that many of us are going through tough times and I have tried to do my part by relaxing unrealistic demands on assessment and grading. Please feel free to get in touch and discuss any issue that may prevent you from focusing on this course.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Lectures: I will pre-record my lectures and post them with lecture slides on Canvas every Monday and Wednesday. Please refer to course schedule for details.

Readings: You should read the texts before watching my pre-recorded lectures. For instance, before watching the lectures for week 2, you should have read Goffman. The articles and books featured in this course are highly original works and many students and scholars find it difficult to get through them on the first try. More than any other course, this course focuses on reading and understanding difficult, abstract texts, and you will have a hard time processing the meaning of the social theories you are encountering for the first time. You may have to read the assigned texts more than once, and sometimes things will become clear only after you read them multiple times. You are welcome to ask me any questions about the readings during the live Q&A

sessions on every Friday. All materials are available either through Canvas or the Dartmouth library website.

Note that some weeks are heavy on readings (more than 150 pages) while others are not. It is advised that you take advantage of the “easy” weeks to read the material assigned for other weeks.

Canvas: <https://canvas.dartmouth.edu/courses/38907>

Requirement: Reading Responses (100%)

Weekly quotes: each week, you are invited to submit a quote (a sentence or longer, but no more than three sentences) from the assigned reading of the following week, along with your reason for submitting it (no less than 500 words).

For example, for the first assignment (due on April 5th) you should read either *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* or *Asylum* by Erving Goffman and submit a quote from these books. You should also discuss why the particular quote is meaningful to you. Be sure to list the author and source (article or book) as well as the page number. You are more than welcome to submit a passage that was hard for you to understand, but you should articulate why it was hard to understand and narrate how you tried your best to decipher its possible meaning. I will incorporate some of your submissions into my lecture and the live Q&A sessions. A good submission would look something like the following:

Erving Goffman, *Asylum: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (1961), xiii

“A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.”

This passage is obviously a very important one, since Goffman is clearly defining the main topic of his book. By establishing a new concept, total institution, Goffman cuts through commonly established social divide between different institutions and shows us what connects different organizations such as schools, psychiatric wards, prisons, and military barracks. The first component of his definition is space (“place of residence”) and its relation to other spaces (“cut off from the wider society”). Then he discusses what exists in the space (“a large number of like-situated individuals”), followed by what they do (“residence” and “work). Lastly, he clarifies how the space and people meet—by being “enclosed” and “formally administered.” In a sense a total institution is an example of how power manifests itself as a *real* thing: power becomes real in the form of an institution, with a formally designated space and bodies filling it...[continues; no less than 500 words]

As shown above, a good submission will not only focus on the particular quote but also address the content of the text in a comprehensive manner. You should try to demonstrate the fact that you have read all assigned pages of the material and thought seriously about its subject matter.

The quotes are due 12PM EST on every Sunday. You will upload them in Canvas (“assignments”). Your submission will be graded pass or fail. If you read all the assigned readings and submit all reading responses on time, you will automatically get the credit for this course. Failure to do so would result in no credit, but I will work with you to minimize the possibility.

Office Hour Meeting:

In lieu of office hour meetings, I will host a live Q&A session every Friday at 11AM using Zoom. I am imagining the session to be like a Youtube or Instagram live stream. I will sit in front of the camera and take questions. Depending on how things go, I can try a few different things, including individual video chats and call-ins, but we will experiment first with the live session format and see how it goes.

Note on live Q&A sessions: unlike many other live sessions, ours is a setting in which you are not anonymous. There will be consequences for trolling.

Accessibility:

A Message on Technology from Dean Kathryn Lively: “If you want to enroll in courses for spring, and IF you are in a location where you have little or no internet access, we have a team standing by to review your individual options. If you would like to talk to someone about this, please send a note right away to spring2020@Dartmouth.edu. You can expect a response within 24-48 hours. And please, to all of you who may have general or other questions about remote learning, hold those for now so that we can focus on your peers who face the biggest challenges. Instead, go to Student Tech Check at <https://services.dartmouth.edu/TDClient/1806/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=101369> for general information.”

Student Accessibility Needs: Students requesting disability-related accommodations and services for this course are encouraged to schedule a phone/video meeting with me as early in the term as possible. This conversation will help to establish what supports are built into my online course. In order for accommodations to be authorized, students are required to consult with Student Accessibility Services (SAS; student.accessibility.services@dartmouth.edu; SAS website; 603-646-9900) and to email me their SAS accommodation form. We will then work together with SAS if accommodations need to be modified based on the online learning environment. If students have questions about whether they are eligible for accommodations, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

Course Schedule and Assigned Readings:

*The books and articles listed below are available in Canvas (“Files”). The books marked with * are available electronically via the Dartmouth library website.*

Week 1 (“easy”)

March 30 Lecture: Introduction to the Course

April 1 Lecture: What is Social Theory?

Abend, Gabriel. 2016. “The Meaning of Social Theory.” *Sociological Theory* 26(2): 173-199 (only read 177-187).

Healy, Kieran. 2017. “Fuck Nuance.” *Sociological Theory* 35(2): 118-127.

Bargheer, Steffan. 2014. “The Usefulness of Theory.” *Perspectives: Newsletter of the ASA Theory Section* 36(2) ([available at: http://www.asatheory.org/current-newsletter-online/the-usefulness-of-theory](http://www.asatheory.org/current-newsletter-online/the-usefulness-of-theory))

April 3 Lecture: Goffman I

The Life and Work of Erving Goffman

Shalin, Dimitri (2013) “Interfacing Biography, Theory, and History: The Case of Erving Goffman.” *Symbolic Interaction* 37(1): 2-40.

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Anchor Books: 1-16 (“Introduction”).

Week 2

April 5 Reading response due by 12PM EST

April 6 Lecture: Goffman II

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Anchor Books: 17-76 and 238-256 (“Performances,” and “Conclusion”).

April 8 Lecture: Goffman III

Goffman, Erving. 1961. *Asylum: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Anchor Books: 1-12 and 125-170 (“On the Characteristics of Total Institutions: Introduction” and “The Moral Career of the Mental Patient”).

April 10 Live Q&A session

Week 3 (“easy”)

April 12 Reading response due by 12PM EST

April 13 Lecture: Goffman IV

Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Simon and Schuster, Inc: 1-40 and 140-147 (“Stigma and Social Identity” and “Deviations and Deviance”).*

April 15 Lecture: Goffman VI

Lee, Jooyoung. 2009. “Escaping Embarrassment: Face-work in the Rap Cipher” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 72(4): 306-324.

Bailey, Charlotte and Imogen Tyler 2019. *From Stigma Power to Black Power* (available at: <https://www.thesociologicalreview.com/from-stigma-power-to-black-power-an-academic-essay/>)

April 17 Live Q&A session

Week 4

April 19 Reading response due by 12PM EST

April 20 Lecture: Bourdieu I

The Life and Work of Pierre Bourdieu

Video: *Sociology is a Martial Art* (available at: <https://vimeo.com/92709274>)

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1989. “Social Space and Symbolic Power.” *Sociological Theory* 7(1): 14-25.

April 22 Lecture: Bourdieu II

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard University Press: 9-62 (“The Aristocracy of Culture” and “The Titles of Cultural Nobility”).

April 24 Live Q&A session

Week 5

April 26 Reading response due by 12PM EST

April 27 Lecture: Bourdieu III

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard University Press: 63-96 (“Cultural Pedigree”).

April 29 Lecture: Bourdieu IV

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard University Press: 169-225 (“The Habitus and the Space of Life-Styles”).

May 1 Live Q&A session

Week 6 (“easy”)

May 3 Reading response due by 12PM EST

May 4 Bourdieu V

Khan, Shamus. 2010. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul’s School*. Princeton University Press: 151-192 (“Learning *Beowulf* and *Jaws*”).

Riviera, Lauren 2015. *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs*. Princeton University Press: 147-182 (“Continuing the Interview: The Candidate’s Story”).

May 6 No lecture; will use this day to make up for sessions missed due to technical difficulties.

May 8 Live Q&A session

Week 7

May 10 Reading response due by 12PM EST

May 11 Lecture: Foucault I

The Life and Work of Michele Foucault

Foucault, Michele. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Vintage Books: 3-31 and 73-103 (“The Body of the Condemned” and “Generalized Punishment”).

May 13 Lecture: Foucault II

Foucault, Michele. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Vintage Books: 135-169 and 195-230 (“Docile Bodies” and “Panopticism”).

May 15 Live Q&A session

Week 8

May 17 Reading response due by 12PM EST

May 18 Lecture: Foucault III

Foucault, Michele. 1990. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Vintage Books: 1-14 and 133-160 (“We ‘Other Victorians’ and “Right of Death and Power over Life”) .

_____. 2009. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*. Palgrave Macmillan: 55-86 and 115-134 (lectures three and five).*

May 20 Lecture: Foucault IV

Rose, Nikolas. 1999. *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge University Press: 1-14 (“Introduction”).*

Canaday, Margot. 2009. *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*. Princeton University Press: 1-18 (“Introduction”).*

May 22 Live Q&A session

Week 9

May 24 Reading response due by 12PM EST

May 25 Lecture: Postcolonial/Intersectional Theory I

Go, Julian. 2016. *Postcolonial Thought and Sociology*: 64-102 and 103-142 (“The Postcolonial Challenge” and “Reconnecting Relations”).*

May 27 Lecture: Postcolonial/Intersectional Theory II

King, Deborah. 1988. “Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Contest of a Black Feminist Ideology.” *Signs* 14(1): 42-72.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2019. *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*. Duke University Press: 21-53 (“Intersectionality as Critical Inquiry”) (available at <https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/2613/Intersectionality-as-Critical-Social-Theory>).*

Nash, Jennifer. 2019. *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality*. Duke University Press: 1-32 and 133-138 (“Introduction: Feeling Black Feminism” and “Coda: Some of Us are Tired”) (available at <https://read.dukeupress.edu/books/book/2525/Black-Feminism-ReimaginedAfter-Intersectionality>).*

May 29 Live Q&A session

Week 10

May 31 Reading response due by 12PM EST

6/1 Lecture: Postcolonial/Intersectional Theory III

Choo, Hae Yeon and Myra Marx Ferree. 2010. "Practicing Intersectionality in Sociological Research: A Critical Analysis of Inclusions, Interactions, and Institutions in the Study of Inequalities." *Sociological Theory* 28(2): 129-149.

Muñoz, Carolina Banks. 2008. *Transnational Tortillas: Race, Gender, and Shop-Floor Politics in Mexico and the United States*. Cornell University Press: 1-23 (“The Tortilla Behemoth and Global Production”).*

Video: American Factory (available on Netflix)

6/3 Lecture: Postcolonial/Intersectional Theory IV

Cohen, Cathy. 2010. *Democracy Remixed: Black Youth and the Future of American Politics*. Oxford University Press: 108-155 (“Minority Report: Kanye West, Barack Obama, and Political Alienation [with Jamila Celestine-Michener]”).

Jung, Moon-kie. 2006. *Reworking Race: The Making of Hawaii’s Interracial Labor Movement*. Columbia University Press: 144-182 (“The Making of Working-Class Interracialism”).*

6/5 Live Q&A session / Wrap-up