

**Department of Sociology
Dartmouth College
Spring 2021**

Constructing Social Theory (Sociology 16)

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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, and Michele Foucault, as well critical race theory, postcolonial theory, and intersectionality, this course traces how sociology as a discipline produced concepts and frameworks to account for crucial issues of our time. Through these theories, 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.

Course Requirements and Grading:

READINGS, READINGS, READINGS: This is the most important part of this class. **YOU SHOULD READ THE ASSIGNED TEXTS BEFORE ATTENDING THE LECTURES.** For instance, before attending the lectures for week 2, you should have read Goffman. 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 either through e-mail (brief questions only) or in class sessions. 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:

Attendance (10%): Missing a class session will result in reduction of 1 percentage point of the overall course grade.

Reading Responses (40%):

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. 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”) in the WORD file format. 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 40% of the credit for this course.

Leading class discussion (20%): Every student should assume the role of discussion leader at least once throughout the term. The discussion leader should thoroughly read the assigned readings and prepare at least three discussion questions for the class discussion session, which will usually take place on Fridays. Before presenting the questions and leading the class through the discussion, the discussion leaders should provide a quick, 5-10 minutes summary of the lectures from Monday and Wednesday. Discussion leaders will be graded on pass/fail basis. That is, if a student present three relevant questions and successfully facilitate class discussion, she will receive 20% of the credit for this course (“pass”). I will send out the link for the discussion leader sign-up sheet in the first day of the class.

Midterm (30%): There will be a take-home midterm consisting of five questions. Students will be asked to write 500 words for each question. The questions will touch broadly on the themes covered in the first half of the course. Here are a few examples:

- What does Goffman mean by “self”? How does he conceptualize it? Refer to specific examples in his text.
- Are we living in an asylum? What would Goffman say?
- “All the world’s a stage,” Shakespeare wrote, “and all the men and women merely players.” What does this mean in terms of social theory?
- What is cultural capital? What is habitus? How do they relate?
- How does culture matter for the reproduction of inequality? Use the examples from Dartmouth.

The midterm questions will be revealed on May 5th and answers are due by the midnight May 7th. In the class session on May 5th, after the questions have been revealed, students will get a chance to discuss the questions among themselves.

Grade breakdown:

A 94-100 A- 90-93.99

B+ 87-89.99

B 83-86.99

B- 80-82.99

C+ 77-79.99

C 73-76.99

C- 70-72.99

D 60-69.99

F <60

I follow Dartmouth's Scholarship Ratings:

http://www.dartmouth.edu/~reg/transcript/grade_descriptions.html

Earning an "A" entails the following:

Excellent mastery of course material

Student performance indicates a very high degree of originality, creativity, or both. Excellent performance in analysis, synthesis, and critical expression, oral or written Student works independently with unusual effectiveness.

Please note that the grade cut-offs are firm. Scores are not rounded up (or down) to the nearest grade just because a student is close to another grade. Thus, for instance, a 79.99% is a C+ and not a B-.

Office Hour Meeting:

I will hold weekly office hour meetings via Zoom every Tuesday from 2:30 PM to 4:00 PM, using the same link as the class sessions. You should sign up in advance at the following link:

<https://www.wejoinin.com/sunmin.kim@dartmouth.edu>

You should sign up for a meeting at least once throughout the term. If you sign up early in the term in the first couple of weeks, I can get to know you and help you learn better as we move forward.

Accessibility:

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.

Notification Regarding Recording

(1) Consent to recording of course meetings and office hours that are open to multiple students. By enrolling in this course,

a) I affirm my understanding that the instructor may record meetings of this course and any associated meetings open to multiple students and the instructor, including but not limited to scheduled and ad hoc office hours and other consultations, within any digital platform, including those used to offer remote instruction for this course.

b) I further affirm that the instructor owns the copyright to their instructional materials, of which these recordings constitute a part, and my distribution of any of these recordings in whole or in part to any person or entity other than other members of the class without prior written consent of the instructor may be subject to discipline by Dartmouth up to and including separation from Dartmouth.

(2) Requirement of consent to one-on-one recordings

By enrolling in this course, I hereby affirm that I will not make a recording in any medium of any *one-on-one meeting with the instructor or another member of the class or group of members of the class* without obtaining the prior written consent of all those participating, and I understand that if I violate this prohibition, I will be subject to discipline by Dartmouth up to and including separation from Dartmouth, as well as any other civil or criminal penalties under applicable law. I understand that an exception to this consent applies to accommodations approved by SAS for a student's disability, and that one or more students in a class may record class lectures, discussions, lab sessions, and review sessions and take pictures of essential information, and/or be provided class notes for personal study use only.

If you have questions, please contact the Office of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Title IX Reporting Requirement:

At Dartmouth, we value integrity, responsibility, and respect for the rights and interests of others, all central to our Principles of Community. We are dedicated to establishing and maintaining a safe and inclusive campus where all have equal access to the educational and employment opportunities Dartmouth offers. We strive to promote an environment of sexual respect, safety, and well-being. In its policies and standards, Dartmouth demonstrates unequivocally that sexual assault, gender-based harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking are not tolerated in our community.

The Sexual Respect Website (<https://sexual-respect.dartmouth.edu>) at Dartmouth provides a wealth of information on your rights with regard to sexual respect and resources that are available to all in our community.

Please note that, as a faculty member, I am obligated to share disclosures regarding conduct under Title IX with Dartmouth's Title IX Coordinator. Confidential resources are also available, and include licensed medical or counseling professionals (e.g., a licensed psychologist), staff members of organizations recognized as rape crisis centers under state law (such as WISE), and ordained clergy (see https://dartgo.org/titleix_resources).

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dartmouth's Title IX Coordinator or the Deputy Title IX Coordinator for the Guarini School. Their contact information can be found on the sexual respect website at: <https://sexual-respect.dartmouth.edu>.

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 29 Introduction to the Course

March 31 Lecture: What is Social Theory?

Benzecry, Claudio, Monika Krause, and Issac Reed (eds). 2017. *Social Theory Now*. The University of Chicago Press: 1-18 ("Introduction: Social Theory Now")

Bargheer, Steffan. 2014. "The Usefulness of Theory." *Perspectives: Newsletter of the ASA Theory Section* 36(2).

April 2 Lecture: Goffman I

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 4 Reading response due by 12PM EST

April 5 Lecture: Goffman II

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

April 7 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 9 Discussion Session

Week 3 (“easy”)

April 11 Reading response due by 12PM EST

April 12 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 14 Lecture: Goffman V

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 16 Discussion Session

Week 4

April 18 Reading response due by 12PM EST

April 9 Lecture: Bourdieu I

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

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Loïc Wacquant. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. The University of Chicago Press: 217-260 (“The Practice of Reflexive Sociology [Paris Workshop]”).

April 21 Lecture: Bourdieu II

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard University Press: 9-96 (“The Aristocracy of Culture,” “The Titles of Cultural Nobility,” and “Cultural Pedigree”).

April 23 Discussion Session

Week 5

April 25 Reading response due by 12PM EST

April 26 Lecture: Bourdieu III

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard University Press: 99-168 (“The Social Space and Its Transformations”).

April 28 Lecture: Bourdieu IV

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard University Press: 260-317 (“The Sense of Distinction”).

April 30 Discussion Session

Week 6 (“easy”)

May 2 Reading response due by 12PM EST

May 3 Lecture: 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*”).

May 5 Lecture: Midterm brainstorming

The midterm questions will be provided in the beginning. Students are welcome to discuss the questions in class.

May 7 No class; the midterm answers due on this day.

Week 7

May 9 Reading response due by 12PM EST

May 10 Lecture: Foucault I

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 12 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 14 Discussion Session

Week 8

May 16 Reading response due by 12PM EST

May 17 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 19 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 21 Discussion Session

Week 9

May 23 Reading response due by 12PM EST

May 24 Lecture: Critical Race Theory

“James Baldwin vs. William Buckley: A Legendary Debate from 1965”

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Tek9h3a5wQ>)

For context, also refer to: “Baldwin-Buckley Race Debate Still Resonates after 55 Years”

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRzkHgMaPL4&t=37s>)

Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States*. Routledge: 1-18 and 103-158 (“Introduction,” “The Theory of Racial Formation,” and “Racial Politics and the Racial State”).

May 26 Lecture: Intersectionality

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”)*

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”)*

May 28 Discussion Session

Week 10

May 30 Reading response due by 12PM EST

May 31 Lecture: Postcolonial Theory

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

June 2 Wrap-up Session: “The Limits of Social Theory”