The first wisdom of sociology is this:
Things are not what they seem.
—Peter Berger (1963)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Most simply, theory refers to anyone’s attempt to explain the way things are, but critical social theories stand out because they teach us that things are not always as they seem. In other words, critical social theory explains what is hidden in plain sight. As opposed to developing universal social laws, social theories explain historically and geographically-specific circumstances. People use theories not only to explain the world, but also to construct it; and most social theorists are explicitly political in their aims—they explain the world as it is in order to shape it as they think it should be. This class will primarily focus on the critical social theories that have shaped sociology since the 1960s. We will explore contemporary theories vis-à-vis thematic interrogations.

The roots of sociological theory are grounded in the works of the founding fathers of sociology, a great generation of 19th century European theorists that include Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. Each was dedicated to developing general conceptual systems that would be applicable to all social systems. In better understanding the world around them, they hoped to be able to better diagnose and fix the pathologies and social woes of their time. Inspired by such intellectual fervor, social theorists in the 20th century continued to critique existing social inequalities and conditions by constructing other approaches to identifying and explaining the patterns and problems of the world they perceived around them. The various historical contexts and new frames of reference paved the way for more diverse intellectual engagements to arise. A notable departure from classical theory, the contemporary social theories highlighted in this course will offer a more nuanced and in-depth analysis of the role of the self within larger social structures and social phenomena. We will especially highlight contributions made by theorists from the margins (e.g., women, the colonized, people of color, and queer theorists).

NOTE: I reserve the right to adjust the syllabus as needed to reflect the needs of the students and the course—given that I will always give you fair notice if changes arise.
**COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Upon successful completion of this course, including all readings, lectures, discussions, and assignments, students will be able to do the following:

1. Distill complex social theories and their applications
2. Evaluate the usefulness of social theories for explaining the formation of contemporary social structures
3. Compare and contrast significant ideas of different theorists
4. Explore the impact of social theory in bringing about change for social structures

**COURSE FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS**

The course will include a combination of lecture, discussion, and film & other media analysis. This course is theory-intensive and the reading assignments are challenging (even if they are not very lengthy), so plan sufficient time not simply to complete the readings prior to each class meeting but also to reflect on the issues raised by them. The quality of class discussions depends decisively on reading preparation. Lectures and discussions complement and supplement the required readings, rather than simply summarize them. Because of the emphasis on intellectual exchange, you must come to class prepared to critically engage in discussion.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

The required texts for this course will be available for purchase at the Dartmouth Bookstore and Wheelock Books. They are also on reserve in the library. Additional readings must be accessed through our course Canvas site: [http://canvas.dartmouth.edu](http://canvas.dartmouth.edu).


**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

1) Participation and Discussion Facilitation 10%
2) Critical Reading Responses 15%
3) Unit Writing Assignments 55%
4) Final Exam 20%

Letter grades will be assigned as follows. Note: I do not round grades (e.g., 77.9% is a C+ not B-).

- A 100-94%
- A- 93.9-90%
- B+ 89.9-87%
- B 86.9-83%
- B- 82.9-80%
- C+ 79.9-77%
- C 76.9-73%
- C- 72.9-70%
- D 69.9-60%
- F <60%

**OFFICE HOURS LOCATION**

The easiest way to find my office is to go through the back entrance of the White Church/The Church of Christ (through the RED door), located at 40 College Street, next to the SAE House. There are several other entrances, but this one is the easiest for you to locate my office. Once you go through the red door, walk up the half flight of stairs. Go through the door at the top of the stairs and make an immediate left. The Society of Fellows office is directly across from the Ombuds Office and next to the single stall/gender neutral bathroom. If you come in through the other entrances, follow those landmarks and you will find my office. If you see children, you are in the basement. And if you see the sanctuary, walk towards the restrooms near the back of the church.
ASSIGNMENTS

Participation and Discussion Facilitation (10%)
Your participation will be evaluated based on your regular involvement, including but not limited to Canvas discussions, in-class engagement, and active listening. You will submit a self-evaluation at the end of term to personally reflect on your contributions to the course. A prompt will be provided.

During class, I will call on 2-3 students to facilitate class discussions based on the questions they submitted via Canvas. Students will be selected at random. This assignment cannot be made up.

I understand that not all students feel comfortable speaking up on a regular basis, but your weekly critical reading responses and questions should help you collect your thoughts and give you ideas to actively contribute to class discussion. Class participation is about thinking carefully, listening, and posing questions to others as much as it is about sharing your ideas. If you would like, you could also come up to speak to me after class or during office hours.

Critical Reading Responses (15%)
These critical reflections will serve as writing exercises to help develop your abilities to think and write critically about the texts you read. This is particularly difficult in a contemporary theory class, in which we will cover a great depth and breadth of material. Generally, for each day of assigned readings, you should respond to the following elements:

1. 1-2 sentence summary of the main idea for each assigned reading. Do not inject your critique in this portion of the response—only describe/summarize the reading.
2. At least two discussion questions related to the theme of that particular class and the assigned readings. You may include clarification and analytical questions to engage multiple ideas and/or texts. If you have a critique of the text, pose it as a discussion question.

You may reference previous course readings and discussions if relevant, but you must focus on the reading assignments for that day. These responses should be succinct (~350 words or fewer) and will be submitted via Canvas by 8:59am before each class meeting. Your responses will be evaluated based not only on completion but more importantly, on depth and intellectual vitality. I will drop your three lowest scores. You may respond to others’ posts after you have submitted yours for additional participation.

Unit Writing Assignments (55%)
For each theory unit, you are responsible for submitting a typed, double-spaced paper (1400-word maximum) that uses ASA citation format. The paper will offer a carefully crafted analysis, application, and critique of that unit’s material. The specific content is up to you. However, you must substantiate your claims with evidence distilled from assigned readings, outside scholarship, and relevant cases for application. Specific prompts and rubrics will be provided for guidance.

- Choose a specific sociological topic or social problem you will explore across all assignments.
- Carefully summarize the theory or theorist’s logic and argument.
- Apply that unit’s theories to an analysis of the specific sociological topic or social problem you have chosen.
- Offer a critique about the limitations of the theoretical approach. Support your claims as to why that particular theoretical approach is not sufficient in your application or inquiry.

Essay-Based, Take-Home Final Exam (20%)
Exam questions will require you to synthesize and analyze all course readings, discussion, and lecture material. The exam is cumulative. You will be graded on how well you incorporate all elements of course material into your essay answers. Exams will be submitted as Word or PDF files via Canvas.
GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

Honor Principle
All academic work is to be conducted in accordance with Dartmouth’s principles of academic honor (http://www.dartmouth.edu/judicialaffairs/). It may also be helpful for students to read Dartmouth’s statement on sources and citations: https://writing-speech.dartmouth.edu/learning/materials/sources-and-citations-dartmouth. Cheating, plagiarism, use of the same work in multiple courses, and unauthorized collaboration will not be tolerated.

Student Accessibility Services and Other Accommodations
Students with disabilities enrolled in this course and who may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Accessibility Services office (http://www.dartmouth.edu/~accessibility/) may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.

Classroom Etiquette
Be on time, be engaged, avoid using your handheld electronic gadgets, and do your part to help make a great learning experience. You may only use tablets and laptops during class for note-taking or accessing your readings. I will not police your electronics usage. But, your use of devices for non-class purposes will negatively affect your participation grade. Be respectful to me and your fellow students. The tone with which we engage one another is extremely important and should come from a place of mutual respect and understanding. You are encouraged to critique and disagree with views raised in the course material or by others in the class, but you must do so with a reasoned approach based on a thorough consideration of the other argument. Your contributions to course discussion must be grounded in the readings and supported by textual and/or empirical evidence. With that said, it is also possible for individual students to dominate the discussion without regard to others’ input and feedback. Remember to “step up” but also “step back.” Disrespectful behavior and personal attacks will not be tolerated.

Late Policy
On any unit writing assignment, your grade will be reduced by 10% for each day late. No assignments accepted more than 5 days late. Reading responses will not be accepted if they are late. No make-up examinations or written assignment extensions will be granted except in extremely rare cases in which some unforeseen crisis/emergency arises. Some examples include severe illness requiring a doctor’s visit or hospitalization, death in the family, or college-excused events (which must be approved ahead of time). General malaise, forgetfulness, poor planning, helping family member or friends, computer problems, etc. etc. are NOT considered extreme circumstances.

Absences
I will not take attendance for this course. However, it is of your best interest to attend all courses, as I will not offer mini-lectures in office hours or X-Hours. Please ask your classmates for their notes if you are absent. Chronic absences will cause a significant loss of points from your participation grade, as will routinely showing up to class late or leaving early. Please see class policies on late and missed work. Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Re-Grading of Assignments
If you believe that I made an error in grading an assignment, please provide me with a written explanation of why your grade should be changed, not to exceed one page, along with a clean (unmarked) copy of the work in question. Based on your rationale and my careful examination of your work, your grade may go up, go down, or remain the same. You have one week from the date the assignment is returned to you to request that it be re-graded.

Canvas
Canvas will be our primary source of communication outside of class. Make sure you check it regularly and notify me immediately if you have any trouble accessing the course Canvas site.
**Course Schedule**

Bring all texts to class. Unless explicitly noted, all listed readings are required. Readings are to be completed by class time on the day noted below. This logo (Course Canvas) denotes that the text can be accessed in both the Modules and File functions on our course Canvas site.

**Unit 1. Conflict Theory and Critical Pedagogy**

Week 1, Monday 3/28 – Introductions and Course Overview


Week 1, Wednesday 3/30 – Conflict Theory


Week 1, X-Hour Thursday 3/31 – Office Hours

Week 1, Friday 4/1 – Conflict Theory, continued


Week 2, Monday 4/4 – Conflict Theory and Critical Pedagogies


Week 2, Wednesday 4/6 – Conflict Theory and Critical Pedagogies, continued.


Week 2, X-Hour Thursday 4/7 – Unit 1 Writing Assignment Workshop

NOTE: Office Hours Canceled Today

**Unit 2. Constructing and Centering “The Self”**

Week 2, Friday 4/8 – Interrogating “the Self”


Week 3, Monday 4/11 – Performing “the Self”


Due: Unit 1 Writing Assignment (via Canvas by 1:44pm)

Week 3, Wednesday 4/13 – The Self and Empire

271-280 in *On Sociology and the Black Community*, edited by D.S. Green and E.D. Driver.


Week 3, X-Hour Thursday 4/14 – Unit 2 Writing Assignment Workshop

**Unit 3. Disciplining “The Self(ves)”**

Week 3, Friday 4/15 – Disciplining the Body


Week 4, Monday 4/18 – Disciplining the Body, continued


**Due: Unit 2 Writing Assignment (via Canvas by 1:44pm)**

Week 4, Wednesday 4/20 – Disciplining the Body, continued


Week 4, X-Hour Thursday 4/21 – Office Hours

Week 4, Friday 4/22 – Constructing Fractured Selves

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2015. *Between the World and Me*.

Week 5, Monday 4/25 – Constructing Fractured Selves, continued

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2015. *Between the World and Me*.

**Tuesday 4/26: Extended Office Hours (10a-1p) for Midterm and Unit 3 Writing Assignment Inquires**

Week 5, Wednesday 4/27 – No Class - Catch up on your readings

Week 5, Friday 4/29 – No Class - “You’re welcome”

**Unit 4. Intersectionalities**

Week 6, Monday 5/2 – Performing Gender


(Recommended) de Beauvoir, Simone. 1949. *The Second Sex*.

**Due: Unit 3 Writing Assignment (via Canvas by 1:44pm)**

Week 6, Wednesday 5/4 – Global Feminisms


(Recommended) Minh-ha, Trinh. 1989. *Native, Woman, Other*.

Week 6, X-Hour Thursday 5/5 – Office Hours

Week 6, Friday 5/6 – Global Feminisms, continued

Week 7, Monday 5/9 – Global Feminisms, continued

Week 7, Wednesday 5/11 – Affect

Week 7, X-Hour Thursday 5/12 – Affect, continued
In-class film: “History and Memory” (Rea Tajiri)

Week 7, Friday 5/13 – Affect, continued

Week 8, Monday 5/16 – Affect, continued

NOTE: Office Hours Canceled Today

Unit 5. Application
Week 8, Wednesday 5/18 – Theory and Practice
Guest: Professor Yen Le Espiritu (UCSD)

Week 8, X-Hour Thursday 5/19 – Unit 4 Writing Assignment Workshop

Week 8, Friday 5/20 – Theory and Practice, continued

Week 9, Monday 5/23 – Theory and Practice, continued

Due: Unit 4 Writing Assignment (via Canvas by 1:44pm)

Week 9, Wednesday 5/25 – Theory and Practice, continued
Guest Skype Appearance: Q&A with Gilda Ochoa

Week 9, X-Hour Thursday 5/26 – Office Hours

Week 9, Friday 5/27 – Final Review
Due: Participation Self-Evaluation (via Canvas by 11:59pm)

Final Exam available on Canvas on Monday 5/30 at 8am. Due Saturday 6/4 at 2:59pm via Canvas.