Constructing Social Theory (Sociology 16)
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*THIS IS A DRAFT. THE FINAL VERSION WILL BE DISTRIBUTED IN THE CLASS*

Course Information:

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 individual theorists’ biography. 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. It fulfills the theory requirement for majors in the Department of Sociology. Prerequisite of sociology 15 (sociological classics) is not required but recommended.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Readings:
It is expected that you will have done the reading by the time class meets on the date for which the assignment is due. These are original works and are often difficult to get through on the first try. More than any other class, this class focuses on reading and understanding difficult, abstract texts, and it is expected that you will have 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 discussed them in the classroom. Regardless, I encourage you to be patient and seek help when you find reading difficult. The instructor (and other students) will help you get through this, but only if you have done the reading. If you fall behind, please consult with the instructor before it is too late.

Canvas: TBD

Requirements: 1 – Participation (20%)
**Inclusive environment:** social science, or knowledge production and sharing in general, is a collaborative affair and not a competition. Our goal is to help each other learn. I expect everyone to think carefully about different learning styles and, more importantly, what each one of us can do to facilitate inclusion in the classroom. That is, everyone should be able to participate in the class while being intellectually stimulated, not intimidated. In this process, we will inevitably tread on sensitive topics such as, but not limited to, class, race, gender, sexuality, and past life experiences. Everyone should actively engage in these topics while being mindful of how others may feel about them.

**Practical tips for those who find in-class participation difficult:** Carefully read the text and think in advance about what you would like to share with others. You may want to speak up in the beginning of the class rather than later, when you have an opportunity to frame the discussion (i.e., The moment I say “does anyone have any thoughts on this?”). Try to speak up at least once every class, even if you feel what you are saying is not important (which, by the way, is never true). Consult with the instructor in office hour meetings or after class about participation.

10 points will be given based on your attendance. You are entitled to miss two lectures throughout the term without penalty. 1 point will be taken off every time you miss a lecture after that. In other words, four unannounced absences during the term will give you 8 out of 10 on participation points. If you have to miss a lecture because of medical and other reasons, please consult with the instructor. It helps if you prepare the relevant set of documents (e.g., doctor’s notes) in advance.

Another 8 points of your participation grade will be assigned based on your participation in classroom discussions. If you maintain good attendance and listen carefully what others have to say, you can expect to obtain 5 points out of 8. If you participate actively in every discussion and contribute significantly to everyone’s learning, you can expect 8 out of 8.

Last 2 points of your participation grade will be based on office hour meetings with the instructor. You should meet with the instructor individually at least twice throughout the course of the term. I encourage you to sign up for a meeting with me in the first couple of weeks, so we can get to know each other and talk about why you are taking this course. You will receive 1 point for each meeting, with the maximum of 2 points total.

2- Reading Responses (20%)

**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, you should submit a quote from Goffman’s *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* or *Asylum*, and discuss why the particular quote was meaningful to you. Be sure to list the author and source (article or book) as well as 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 you submissions into my lecture and use them as a basis for in-class discussions. A good submission would look something like the following:


“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 was 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, the best submissions will not only focus on the particular quote but also address the content of the readings in a comprehensive manner. You should try to demonstrate the fact that you have read the assigned readings and thought seriously about their content.

The quotes are due 12PM EST on every Sunday. You will be graded pass (2 points) or fail (1 point) on this assignment. Late submissions (submitted within 24 hours of the deadline) will result in the penalty of 0.5 point. Failure to submit will result in 0 point.

3–Theory Brief Group Presentation (20%)

20 points will be given based on group presentation. Within the first few weeks of the term, you will be given a choice to choose among four theorists we are covering in this course, and you will be slotted into groups based on your choice. After reviewing the corpus of each theorist, each group will choose a work that is not covered in the course, and present its content to the entire class, followed by a discussion. You will be evaluated on a) how well you summarize and convey the content of the text of your choice (10 points) and b) how well you lead the classroom discussion (10 points). Everyone in the group will receive same points.

Group members should consult with the instructor before choosing a specific text. The instructor will provide a list of works deemed appropriate for presentation, if necessary. You are encouraged to talk to the instructor about your presentation as you read the work of your choice. You do not have to read the entire book, and you are welcome to read more than one book. The
key is to distill a theoretical point from the text and deliver it effectively while showcasing the
craft of theorizing you learned throughout the course. Put yourself in the shoes of a social theory
teacher: if you are to teach this course, how will you go about it?

5- Exams: Midterm (20%) and Final (20%)

The midterm will cover the first half of the course (Goffman and Bourdieu), while the final will
cover the entirety of the course content. Each exam will be composed of the total of four
questions. The first two questions (“short questions”) will ask you to clarify key concepts in a
descriptive manner and the remaining two (“long questions”) will ask you to reflect
comprehensively on theoretical issues, while drawing on the classroom discussions. Below are
possible exam questions for each category.

Short question: What is cultural capital? Define the concept in a paragraph. Present an example.

Long question: Describe the history and impact of intersectionality as a critical concept. How did
it came about, and what did it achieve? How does it challenge the works of other theorists
(Goffman, Bourdieu, and Foucault) we covered in this course?

Note: I post grades on Canvas to ensure timely feedback and will return more detailed comments
in class. The total points on Canvas are not weighted and should not be used to gauge your
performance.

Grading Scale:
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:
When: Wednesday 10-12
Where: 301D, Blunt Hall
Sign-up: www.wejoinin.com/sunmin.kim@dartmouth.edu (click on “Constructing Social Theory Spring 2020”)

Do sign up before showing up. Contact me if you cannot meet during these times or the slots are full.

Course Policies:

Classroom Etiquette: Contribute. Attend all class meetings. Be on time. Be engaged and thoughtful. Be an informed participant. Read the materials in advance and come prepared to weigh in on them. Above all, do your part to help make this a great learning experience. This means: DO ask questions. DO challenge ideas, and foster debate and dialogue in class. DO contribute helpful resources for learning. DO take me and your fellow students seriously. And, Please, Please DO NOT message with friends, shop, sleep, walk in and out, converse with others, and otherwise disrupt lecture and discussion. It is nearly impossible for me to concentrate on lecturing and guiding discussions, and for others to hear, pay attention, and participate in discussions when students are behaving in disrespectful and/or disruptive ways.

No Screens: use of personal technology (e.g., laptops, tablets, smart phones…) in the classroom is not allowed. Research and anecdotal accounts confirm that this policy increase students’ focus and helps them achieve learning outcomes (https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/business/laptops-not-during-lecture-or-meeting.html?module=inline).

Exceptions are only granted in consultation with the Student Accessibility office (see below).

Honor Principle: Essays and assignments will be conducted in accord with the principles of academic honor detailed in the Dartmouth Organization, Regulations and Courses. Students should read Dartmouth’s statement on Sources and Citations: http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/sources/

Student Accessibility Needs: Students with disabilities who may need disability-related academic adjustments and services for this course are encouraged to see me privately as early in the term as possible. Students requiring disability-related academic adjustments and services must consult the Student Accessibility Services office (Carson Hall 125, 646-9900, Student.Accessibility.Services@Dartmouth.edu).

Once SAS has authorized services, students must show the originally signed SAS Services and Consent Form and/or a letter on SAS letterhead to me. As a first step, if you have questions about whether you qualify to receive academic adjustments and services, you should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.
Religious Holidays: 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 as soon as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Course Schedule and Assigned Readings:

3/30 Lecture: Introduction to the Course

4/1 Lecture: What is Social Theory?


Part I: Erving Goffman

4/3 Lecture: Goffman I

The Life and Work of Erving Goffman
The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life

4/5 Reading response due by 12PM EST

4/6 Lecture: Goffman II

The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (cont.)

4/8 Lecture: Goffman III

Asylum

4/10 Lecture: Goffman IV

Asylum (cont.)
Stigma

4/12 Reading response due by 12PM EST

4/13 Lecture: Goffman V

Stigma (cont.)
Charlotte Bailey and Imogen Tyler (2019), From Stigma Power to Black Power (available online)

Part II Pierre Bourdieu

4/15 Lecture: Bourdieu I
The Life and Work of Pierre Bourdieu
Video: *Sociology is a Martial Art* (available on Youtube)

4/17 Lecture: Bourdieu II

“Social Space and Symbolic Power”

4/19 Reading response due by 12PM EST

4/20 Lecture: Bourdieu III

*Distinction*

4/22 Lecture: Bourdieu IV

*Distinction* (cont.)

*Bachelor’s Ball*

4/24 Lecture: Bourdieu V

*On State*

4/26 Reading response due by 12PM EST

4/27 Lecture: Bourdieu VI

Shamus Khan (2010), *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul’s School*
Lauren Riviera (2015), *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs*

4/29 Midterm

**Part III Michele Foucault**

5/1 Lecture: Foucault I

The Life and Work of Michele Foucault

5/3 Reading response due by 12PM EST

5/4 Lecture: Foucault II

*Discipline and Punish*

5/6 Lecture: Foucault III
Discipline and Punish (cont.)

5/8 Lecture: Foucault IV

The History of Sexuality

5/10 Reading response due by 12PM EST

5/11 Lecture: Foucault V

“Governmentality”

5/13 Foucault VI Application

James Scott (1998), Seeing Like a State
Nikolas Rose (1999), Powers of Freedom
Margot Canaday (2009), The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America

Part IV Postcolonial and Intersectional Theories

5/15 Lecture: Postcolonial/Intersectional Theory I

Julian Go (2016), Postcolonial Thought and Sociology
Zine Magubane (2004), Bringing the Empire Home

5/17 Reading response due by 12PM EST

5/18 Lecture: Postcolonial/Intersectional Theory II

Patricia Hill Collins (2019), Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory
Jennifer Nash (2011) “‘Home Truths’ on Intersectionality” Yale Journal of Law and Feminism 23

5/20 Lecture: Postcolonial/Intersectional Theory III

Evelyn Nakano Glenn (2002), Unequal Freedom
Carolina Banks Muñoz (2008), Transnational Tortillas: Race, Gender, and Shop-Floor Politics in Mexico and the United States
Video: American Factory (available on Netflix)

5/22 Lecture: Postcolonial/Intersectional Theory IV
Moon-kie Jung (2006), *Reworking Race*
Siobhan Somerville (2010), *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*

5/24 Reading response due by 12PM EST

5/25 Lecture: Postcolonial/Intersectional Theory V


5/27 Student Presentation (I)

5/29 Student Presentation (II)

6/1 Student Presentation (III)

6/3 Wrap-up

6/?? Final Exam