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Please use the e-mail function in D2L to contact me!

IMPORTANT!!!
I EXPECT STUDENTS TO READ THE SYLLABUS IN ITS ENTIRETY!

Syllabus
SOC 3300-W01, CRN# 80635
Foundations of Social Theory
Online Course
Kennesaw State University
Fall 2014

This course provides an introduction to social theory by discussing the main ideas of 19th century influential social thinkers in historical context and by explaining how these are relevant to contemporary social realities. The first two parts of the course covers the major ideas of classic social thinkers such as Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber exploring how they viewed society's grand transition from the agricultural stage to the industrial-modern times. The latter part of the course presents the main sociological perspectives of the 20th century and how they relate to the ideas of the founding fathers of Sociology. Fundamental questions in this course include: "How is society possible?" and "What are the consequences of social organization for individuals and groups?" The readings may include language and ideas that you might find challenging at times. However, keep in mind that the critical thinking skills you will develop by accepting this challenge will serve you well not only in college or your future career but also in understanding and successfully managing life itself.

Required Text:

📖 Randall Collins, Michael Makowski. *The Discovery of Society, 8th edition*. McGraw Hill.

📖 Other articles/hand-outs listed will be available online, in D2L.

📖 OPTIONAL: William R. Catton, Jr. *Bottleneck: Humanity's Impending Impasse*

Course Objectives:

- Examine the development of main ideas in social theory.
- Summarize the importance of studying and understanding social theory.
- Critically examine and interpret the original writings of major social theorists.

* The best way to reach me is via the e-mail function in D2L.

- Analyze contemporary social phenomena using social theory.
- Identify at least eight classical and contemporary leading social theorists and a prominent theory of each.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

This is an exclusively online course and therefore it will be conducted entirely through D2L. You will begin by logging in here:

<https://kennesaw.view.usg.edu/>

Students are expected to have the necessary computer background to work in this format, and are advised to seek additional technical assistance from computer services if needed [See resource links in Welcome Module]. Students will be expected to read each assigned chapter and/or hand-out carefully, and then review any lecture notes the instructor posts online for the chapter in question, as review material. The reading schedule is not “written in stone” but we will advance largely according to the schedule specified at the end of the syllabus.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Readings. Your main readings will come from Randall Collins’s book which has relatively dense, intellectually demanding chapters. Other hands-outs, often excerpts from a theorist’s original works may be uploaded in D2L as PDF files for some chapters - so make sure you check under Content to cover all readings for the week. Because these are not necessarily easy, light reads, I recommend you do not rush through them and take your time instead with every line. When reading the assigned chapters and material, per schedule below, ask yourself:

- What are the main issue(s), main conclusion(s), and reason(s) for these conclusions?
- What was the social, political, and cultural climate of the time? What are the historical links/connections?
- What do I know about the author? Are there any fallacies in the author’s reasoning?
- How strong is the evidence? Any significant gaps?
- Are there any other reasonable conclusions? What should I ask the instructor or the discussion leaders¹ on the board?

1. General Board Participation (15%). For each weekly topic students will be expected to make at least 1 substantive dialogue contribution to ongoing discussions that will occur on discussion boards.

¹ This is one of the course requirements, as explained below.

The topics will be grouped together into 3 modules of several chapters each. After Module 1 and after Module 3 there will be an exam, a Midterm and a Final. [See schedule on the last two pages]. Questions will be multiple-choice. The **D2L-based e-mail** and the **Announcements** tool will be our forms of communication. I will often post under Announcements with important updates and general comments, so please make sure you always check the announcement page.

How it works:

1. *Introduce yourselves.* The first participation will be Student Introductions, the Discussion Thread for which will be found in Start Here/Welcome Module. Instructions will be found at the top of the Discussion Thread, and this will take the place of the typical in-class go-around introductions. Also, please make sure you add a picture to your profile. I will be delighted to have a chance to attach a face to the name! ☺

2. *Participation on discussion boards.* Students are required to participate in the discussion threads for each chapter as we proceed through the syllabus, **with the very minimum of one post per chapter, and more strongly encouraged**. This is the best way for you to ask questions, make comments, clarify notions, and demonstrate that you have read, understood and taken interest in the chapters. The discussions will be multi-directional: *student-student* (agree/disagree, add, clarify, ask related question, critique) *student-content* (share understanding of readings, ask questions, critique, add) *student-instructor* (answer/ask questions, critique, agree, etc) and *instructor-student* (general key posts, reply to specific posts, etc). From past experience, more than 1000 postings will likely be made by students during our term, and the instructor will reply to about 10% of the total postings, often engaging a whole thread at one time.

The due date for the mandatory first post on the chapter of the week will be the end of the week in question (Friday midnight). At all times, we will attempt to stick to the readings schedule specified on the last page of this syllabus.

The instructor will often post in RETROSPECTIVE. This is to allow all students to finish their posts for the week and to provide summary replies/responses in accordance to the needs of the class.

3. *Instructor's posts (as well as Discussion Board Leaders' posts - as explained further below) are mandatory reading.* While I allow for the possibility that you may skip some other posts, Instructor's and Discussion Leaders' posts are **mandatory** reading each time. This is how the instructor will guide and facilitate student learning. This is similar to lecturing, clarifying concepts or moderating discussions in live, face-to-face classes. It is the nature of an online class that students end up a bit more "on their own" than it might be the case for a traditional, face-to-face class. This is my way of ensuring that students are not left with unaddressed issues or misunderstood, disconnected, erroneous or disorganized knowledge.

4. *Content of posts.* The instructor is more interested in the *content and substance* of your comments, than their length. In fact, long postings should generally be avoided, as it is expected that everyone in the class will read all the postings as they develop into a large group conversation.

Basic grammar should be taken into account; spell checking and proof reading are mandatory. If needed, consult the Writing Center [see: Links Page in Welcome Module] for assistance with writing. The instructor will qualitatively evaluate students' posts throughout the semester based on the degree to which posts reflect a thorough and accurate understanding of the issues discussed. The instructor will evaluate your discussion postings for:

- consistency of engagement
- depth of analysis (superficial posts with simplistic arguments will be graded less).
- logic
- evidence that the student has a grasp of the theories studied
- engagement with chapter concepts
- engagement with other students in the discussions!!

Regarding the latter criterion, students should write at least one post in reply to the thread started by the "Board Leaders" of the week (details further below, under the "Real World" Discussion Leader requirement). If you only post one time on a board, make sure it is in response to one of the Leaders' threads! When your time comes to act as a Discussion Leader you will definitely want your colleagues to engage, so do the same for them. Make sure your reply brings further substance to the conversation and is not reduced to something along the lines of "*I agree with Jenny, she makes a good point*". That kind of post will HARDLY count. You will need to explain why you agree with Jenny and add more arguments in support of what she said.

Finally, DO NOT give boring titles to your posts and do not simply summarize what the book said. Avoid titles like "Ch 2" or a mere summary, as nobody will be interested in reading what you have to say, let alone posting a reply. Choose some attention-grabbing titles that will prove you are trying to make an interesting point related to the readings and will entice colleagues into the conversation.

6. *Sociological, NOT psychological, perspective!!*

Students are required to address issues from *a sociological perspective*; mere talk about personal feelings, experiences or random anecdotes, without placing such example in societal context or linking them to sociological themes/ theories, will not be good enough for a maximum score on participation

7. *Statistics.* At the end of the course, the instructor will get statistics for how many postings each student read, how many posts were made, and how many hours the student spent on the site. These statistics combined with the general content of your post will be used to determine an overall "Board Participation" grade.

8. *Impact on final grade.* A total of **15%** of your grade will be determined by the online course participation as a partial measure of individual work on the readings.

9. *Board interaction guidelines.*

Critical thinking is highly advisable. Questions are encouraged. Polite disagreements are fine. However:

- *Respect is a basic necessity in all online interactions.* When critiquing a theory, point of view, etc., the arguments must be sound, well-reasoned, logical (or based on evidence) and respectful. **DO** differentiate between critiquing an idea (which is not only fine, but also advisable) and ad-hominem attacks! The latter means attacking the person who expressed a point of view you tend to disagree with.
- *Language and tone are important.* According to KSU Computer Usage Policy and Guidelines [www.kennesaw.edu/infosec] you may not employ lewd or threatening language in any electronic communication. This would violate the bounds of good taste as well as laws and regulations. Please see the Etiquette Statement in the Welcome Module for a more detailed discussion.

2. “Real World” Discussion Board Leaders (15%)

Each student will get a chance to act as a Discussion Board Leader one time during this class. Students will be assigned to a “Discussion Leaders” group no later than the time when the Drop/Add period ends. Watch for an updated Syllabus in D2L over the next week!

Each week, Discussion Board Leaders, usually 2 or 3, **will decide together on a relatively current (five years old at the most) article from a reputable news source and will analyze it on the board by starting a new thread.** They can also provide a link to a video material, whether in the form of a documentary (ideally not too long), news piece, etc. The article/video should address a significant social issue relevant to the theorist/theories of the week. Good source choices can be New York Times, Newsweek, Time Magazine, US News, World Report, etc. In their main post, which will have to take the form of an essay/reflection paper, the discussion board leader will:

- a) Provide a very brief summary of the article (say what it is about in no more than a few lines) and provide a link to it.
- b) Address the spring board question(s) posed by the instructor on the upper part of the board and explain how the article he/she chose is related to the theory(s) of the week and the questions the instructor asked. DL-s can divide those questions among themselves and each will address one/several.
- c) In the thread they start, DL-s must draw some clear links between the ideas/concepts proposed by the theories we study that week and the “real world”

situation highlighted by the article they chose as Discussion Board Leaders. They will explain how the ideas/theories of the week apply to the social issues presented in the article? It is very important that they emphasize how the theories of the week are relevant to the topic of the article.

- d) DL-s may also want to include commentaries about how they think the theorist(s) in question would have reacted to the social phenomena described in the article, had they been alive today.
- e) On the boards, encourage the class to engage in a critical dialogue by formulating an argument and asking questions of your own. By critical dialogue I mean the ability to engage in a conversation in which you might disagree with your colleagues without resorting to attacks. When critiquing a certain point of view, the arguments must be sound, well-reasoned (or based on evidence) and respectful.

Once your colleagues start participating in the thread you started as DL-s, you must make sure you reply to enough posts as needed for a meaningful and intellectually engaging conversation to develop. Answer questions/comments in the posts your class mates will add, making sure the thread evolves into a cohesive dialogue/debate.

The due date for the Discussion Leaders' main post is Wednesday of the week in question!!! This means EARLY - so that the class will have enough time to engage in the discussions you will be starting.

Everybody else's posts will not be due until the end of the week (Friday midnight).

The week during which a student will be designated to act as Discussion Board Leader is NOT negotiable! If your brother's wedding happens to be during that week you will just have to make it work. ☹ This is because it is hard for the instructor to reconcile so many requests for specific weeks.

3. Exams (Midterm 35% and Final 35%).

There will be two take-home exams in this course which students will take in D2L. Exams will be essentially open book and students will be able to take them wherever they can log on to a high-speed computer. However, study, preparation and prior class attendance will be absolutely necessary because the exams are *timed* and the clock starts as soon as you begin, so there will not be time to look up answers. You must be prepared in advance to do well on the tests.

The exams will have approximately 40-50 questions (multiple-choice format) with an allotted time of 75 minutes (the usual class time). The questions asked in exams will primarily cover the major theories covered.

OPTIONAL Extra-Credit (maximum of 4 points added to your Final Grade)

I will offer only one extra-credit opportunity for those of you who will want to excel in this class. The assignment will consist of reading a book titled “**Bottleneck: Humanity’s Impending Impasse**” by **William R. Catton, Jr.**, which is highly relevant to our last topic, The Ecological Perspective. At the end of the semester, you will post on the last Discussion board in D2L a 2-3 page response paper for Catton’s book and you will write Extra-Credit in the title. You will have to demonstrate in your response paper and your class participation that you both read and understood the book and its overall message.

You are strongly advised to start reading this book from the mid part of the semester so you will have enough time to digest it over the next 15 weeks. Realizing that you need extra points to your Final Grade at the last minute and starting to read the book a night before the extra-credit assignment is due will not work in this case. I warn you that this is not an easy, “fluffy”, intuitive read but rather a sociological masterpiece, highly relevant to what is happening to all of us around the globe today!.

Although the entire class will have a small portion of this book as mandatory reading for the week (a PDF file will be uploaded in D2L), this book in its entirety is an **optional** assignment and it will be the only extra-credit opportunity available in this class. It will add a maximum of 4 points to your final grade.

Summary of course requirements

- **Midterm (35%)**
- **Final (35%)**
- **“Real World” Discussion Group (article must be posted in D2L by the Tuesday of the week during which you are assigned to lead the board) 15%.**
- **Board Participation (15%)**
- ***Extra-Credit Paper (max 4 points)***

Final Grade Formula:

FINAL GRADE = 35% x Midterm + 35% x Final + 20% x “Real World” Discussion Group + 10% x Participation + Optional Extra Credit = FINAL GRADE

Grading Scale: 100-90 = A; 89-80 = B; 79-70 = C; 69-60 = D; 59 and below = F

Academic Citizenship and Classroom Behavior

I expect students to take responsibility for their own learning and their own learning environments. I expect students to be prepared to take part in and facilitate class discussion and to support assertions and theories with evidence from reading and research. Most of you already know and adhere to the basic rules of civility below, but for those of you who have managed to get by without following these basic rules to date:

- Profanity, degradation of specific individuals or groups, and a hostile tone of voice are not acceptable. DO differentiate between critiquing an idea, which is not only fine but encouraged, and ad-hominem attacks - which means attacking the person who expressed the point of view you disagree with.
- No writing assignment or post in Vista should contain overly colloquial speech, grammar errors or generally sloppy language. For example, I consider language along the lines of “I have this 4 U” to be a perfectly legitimate reason to subtract points from your Final Grade. In general, I expect students to attempt to speak and write clearly, correctly, cohesively and eloquently (no, this does not mean “being pretentious”) and to behave in a respectful and dignified manner.
- **Academic Honesty Policy.** I expect you to conform to the rules listed in the undergraduate catalog related to the Student Code of Conduct, which includes the University’s policy on academic honesty and more specifically plagiarism and cheating. Please familiarize yourself with this section of the Undergraduate Catalog. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive an “F” on the assignment – no exceptions! It is your responsibility to know and understand what constitutes plagiarism. Check out: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gC2ew6qLa8U> .

The KSU Writing Center - is a free service offered to all KSU students. Experienced, friendly writing assistants work with you on thesis development, organization, research documentation, grammar, mechanics, and more. They help you improve your papers AND teach you strategies to become a better writer on your own. For more information or to make an appointment, visit <http://www.kennesaw.edu/english/WritingCenter>, or stop by Room 242 in the English Building.

Special Accommodations Notice - In accordance with University policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), academic accommodations may be made for any student who notifies the instructor of the need for an accommodation. It is imperative that YOU take the initiative to bring such needs to my attention, as I am not legally permitted to inquire about such particular needs of students.

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE
SOCI 3300 - W01
Fall 2014

W #	Date	Topic	Readings
MODULE 1: CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY: The Founding Fathers			
01	Aug 18wk	Introduction to Course, Syllabus, familiarization with D2L The Sociological Imagination	Introduction Society and Illusion pag. 1-14
02	Aug 25 wk	Saint-Simon and Comte - The Prophets of Paris The Enlightenment <i>Discussion Board Leaders: 1</i>	Chapter 1 Enlightenment Ppt. document in D2L
03	Sep 1 wk	Emile Durkheim: Solidarity <i>Discussion Board Leaders: 2</i>	Chapter 6
04	Sep 8 wk	Karl Marx: Economics and Class Struggle <i>Discussion Board Leaders: 3</i>	Chapter 2
05	Sep 15	Max Weber: The Disenchantment of the World <i>Discussion Board Leaders: 4</i>	Chapter 7
06	Sep 22	Transition to Modernity (Module Review) <i>Discussion Board Leaders:5</i>	PDF file - hand-out
	Sep 26	MID-TERM	
MODULE 2: CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY:			

Expanding the Foundation			
07	Sep 29 wk	<p>The Evolutionary Perspective: Spencer, Darwin and Sociobiology <i>Discussion Board Leaders: 6</i></p>	Chapter 5
08	Oct 6 wk	<p>The Political Perspective: Democracy and Individualism Tocqueville <i>Discussion Board Leaders: 7</i></p>	Chapter 3
9	Oct 13 wk	<p>The Psychological Perspective: Freud <i>Discussion Board Leaders: 8</i></p>	Chapter 8
MODULE 3: 20th CENTURY SOCIOLOGICAL TRADITIONS			
MACRO SOCIOLOGY			
10	Oct 20 wk	<p>STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALIST THEORY: Parsons and The Construction of the Social System: Life is With People! <i>Discussion Board Leaders: 9</i></p>	Chapter 12
11	Oct 27 wk	<p>CONFLICT THEORY: Life is Against People! History after Marx and the divisions across Class, Race and Gender lines <i>People Like Us (documentary online)</i></p> <p>Plus: The Emergence of African American Sociology (DuBois)</p>	Chapter 11

		<i>Discussion Board Leaders: 10</i>	
12	Nov 3 wk	CONFLICT THEORY (continued) Cultural Capital, World-System and Globalization: Pierre Bourdieu and Immanuel Wallernstein <i>Discussion Board Leaders: 11</i>	
MICRO SOCIOLOGY			
13	Nov 10 wk	SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM: Simmel, Cooley and Mead <i>Discussion Board Leaders: 12</i>	Chapter 9
14	Nov 17 wk	THE ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE Extra-Credit Assignment Due (Optional) <i>Discussion Board Leaders: 13</i>	PDF file
	Nov 24-30	Fall Break	
15	Dec 1 wk Dec 4 th	Summarizing Theories / Preparation for Final Extra-credit due (optional)	
15	Dec. 5	FINAL EXAM	
Under no circumstances will Final Exam “Make-Ups” be allowed after Dec 5th.			

THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO BRING ANY MODIFICATIONS TO THIS SYLLABUS AT ANY POINT DURING THE SEMESTER.