

The University of Calgary
Faculty of Social Sciences
Department of Sociology

Contemporary Sociological Theory
Sociology 333.01
Winter 2008

Instructor: Thomas Lynch, Ph.D.
Class Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.
Room: SB 142

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Class Assistance Office Hours: To Be Determined

Course Objectives

The objectives of this course are to:

- 1) Provide students with an opportunity to learn about four contemporary social theorists: Anthony Giddens, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu and John Kenneth Galbraith. I will be talking about other theorists but only in relation to these four principal theorists and only to either provide or critique or situate the work of our four principal theorists.
- 2) Examine how these authors deal with some major themes: risk, trust, knowledge, war, genocide, equality, poverty and power; and,
- 3) Assess ways in which each theoretical perspective might be used to study Alberta society.

Students will be expected to have read the required readings for each class and participate in any class discussion.

I recognize that the reading load is ambitious but believe that completing the readings is achievable. Each book is quite interesting in its own right. The sooner you can get through all readings the more enjoyable the course will become.

The two theorists I most admire are Bourdieu and Galbraith. The one I have consistently found the most challenging is Foucault. I know that my Foucault choice is not an easy book so do not stress too much about that section of the course. Do your best. I chose it because it is based on his lectures and gives us the opportunity to learn directly how he shaped his thought.

The theorist that I find the most enigmatic is Giddens. Of the four, I have had the most fun with Galbraith. Galbraith can teach us many things among which I include the ability to write well. I admire most of Galbraith's work and consider his book, "The New Industrial State" to be one of the best books ever written.

I am hoping that those of you who have a political science, history or economics background will contribute from each of those perspectives to the classroom discussions.

Required Texts

Students will have the opportunity to develop what C. Wright Mills' termed, "the sociological imagination". I have chosen theorists who share one common characteristic – each is a very public intellectual. The books I want to use are:

Giddens, Anthony, "The Consequences of Modernity" available in the bookstore.

Gutting, Gary, "Foucault: a very short introduction", available in the bookstore.

Foucault, Michel, "Society Must Be Defended" , available in the bookstore.

Reed-Danahy, Deborah, "Locating Bourdieu", available in the bookstore.

Galbraith, J.K., "The Affluent Society", available in the bookstore

Classroom Decorum

I am quite committed to creating a learning space that is interactive and somewhat free-wheeling. I encourage classroom discussion and/or questions. I want students to develop their critical thinking skills based on the readings and course content. For that reason, I try to integrate as much of our shared daily experience into the course as possible and link our private concerns to broader social concerns.

I expect that we will all treat each other with respect. That means doing the readings ahead of time, starting and finishing on time, and listening when other students are talking. I recognize that from time to time some students may wish they were somewhere else on the planet during lecture time. I hope that any one time not all of you will feel that way. I have chosen theorists from which we can all learn a great deal and will do my best to ensure that your time in the classroom will be well spent.

Grading

Letter Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

A+	95-100
A	90-94
A-	85-89
B+	80-84
B	75-79
B-	70-74
C+	67-69
C	63-66
C-	60-62
D+	57-59
D	53-56
D-	50-52
F	0-49

Higher marks will be reserved for papers that are well-written, somewhat original, with no grammar or composition mistakes. I will develop and distribute a marking rubric that I will use to guide my grading of your major paper.

Course Assignments

There will be no examinations in this course.

This course will focus on developing a good understanding of the way in which each theorist goes about conceptualizing the social and learning about their general theoretical interests.

The following writing projects will be assigned.

- 1) Two, 7-10 page writing assignments, on a question assigned in class, each worth 25%, for a total of 50% of your final mark.
- 2) A major essay paper, due Tuesday, April 28, worth 50% of your final mark. This assignment will ask you to use one or more of the principal theorists discussed in class to study an aspect of Alberta society. I will discuss this assignment during the January 31 lecture.

About half of the January 31 class will deal with this major paper. Suggested topics will be distributed and questions about this assignment discussed during this class.

On each assignment some marks will be deducted for spelling errors and poor or blatantly wrong grammar.

Lecture Schedule and Reading Assignments

January 15	Introduction to Class, Discussion of Expectations, Introduction to Giddens, pages 1-54
January 17-22	Giddens Part 2 Giddens, pages 55-150
January 24-29	Giddens Part 3 Giddens, pages 151-178
January 31	Giddens Wrap/Discussion of Major Paper Assignment Writing Assignment One, Due February 12
February 5	Introducing Foucault Gary Guttman's book, and Foucault, pages 273-293
February 7-12	Foucault, pages 1-64
February 14	Foucault, pages 65-114

Spring Break

February 17-23

February 26-28

Foucault, pages 115-186

March 4-6

Foucault, pages 189-272

Writing Assignment Two, Due March 20

March 11

Contrasting Foucault and Giddens and Setting Up Bourdieu

March 13-18

Bourdieu, Part 1

Reed-Danahy, pages 1-98

March 20-25

Bourdieu, Part 2

Reed-Danahy, pages 99-151

March 27

Film

April 1-3

Galbraith, Part 1

Galbraith, pages 1-153

April 11-13

Galbraith, Part Two

Galbraith, pages 154-260

April 18

Contrasting our Four Theorists with regards to Understanding the Social

April 20

Using our Four Theorists to Understand Alberta

FOIP Statement (Mandatory)

"The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act" (FOIPP) disallows the practice of having students receive assignments from a public space, e.g. outside an instructor's office, etc. Term assignments must be returned to students individually, during class or during the instructor's office hours. If a student is unable to pick up an assignment from the instructor, the student may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment."

Please note that no grades will be posted until the end of the course. Grades will be written on your assignments. Always keep an extra copy of any written work you submit to me, as well as keeping your graded assignments when they are returned.

Academic Accommodation

Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, telephone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than 14 days after the first day of class. It is a student's responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.