



Faculty of Arts  
Department of Sociology  
Sociology Department Home Page: <http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca>

**SOCI333-1**  
**Contemporary Sociological Theory**

**Winter 2019 Tu/Th, Jan 10-Apr 11, 2019, 11:00am-12:15pm Location: MS211**

**Instructor:** Dr. Michael Adorjan  
**Office:** SS952, Social Sciences Tower, 9th floor, main campus  
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**Phone:** 403-220-5982  
**Office Hours:** Office hours by appointment

**Course Description**

This course surveys major developments in sociological theory following the second World War. The major theoretical paradigms we cover are: functionalism, conflict theory, materialism, symbolic interactionism, postmodernism and feminism. Some recurring questions, concepts and issues will be reinforced across the varying theoretical perspectives, including debates centered on freedom and structure, meaning and interpretation, discourse and reality, and self and society.

**Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this course students will be expected to:

- Demonstrate a strong grasp of contemporary developments in sociological theory since World War 2
- Critically reflect upon both strengths and weaknesses of these theories
- Apply knowledge of theories to news events, popular culture and daily life
- Develop a sociological imagination regarding one's position in society, connecting personal experiences with the theoretical and thematic concepts developed in the course

**Methods of Evaluation**

- |                        |     |                            |
|------------------------|-----|----------------------------|
| • Midterm              | 30% | Tues Feb 26 <sup>th</sup>  |
| • Reflection 1         | 20% | Fri Feb 15 <sup>th</sup>   |
| • Reflection 2         | 20% | Fri Mar 29 <sup>th</sup>   |
| • Final take-home exam | 30% | Thurs Apr 18 <sup>th</sup> |

### Late Submission Penalties

Applying for all course work, late assignments will be docked 10% per day for a maximum of 3 days, after which the assigned grade will be F. If personal family or medical reasons apply, please contact the instructor as soon as possible. The late penalty of 10% per day does not apply to the final take-home exam, which will be graded 0 (F) if received late.

### Assessment Components

|              |     |                           |
|--------------|-----|---------------------------|
| Midterm exam | 30% | Tues Feb 26 <sup>th</sup> |
|--------------|-----|---------------------------|

One mid-term examination will be held in class on **Tuesday Feb 26<sup>th</sup>**, following the reading week break. The full class time will be available. The first exam will likely cover all material (i.e., readings and lecture discussions) from functionalism through conflict theory (Hobbes, Parsons, Merton and Mills), though the finalized content will be announced closer to the midterm date. The midterm will be a written examination, not multiple choice.

|              |     |                          |
|--------------|-----|--------------------------|
| Reflection 1 | 20% | Fri Feb 15 <sup>th</sup> |
| Reflection 2 | 20% | Fri Mar 29 <sup>th</sup> |

Critical reflection writing in sociology is different from a 'regular' essay in several ways (adapted from MacDonald, 2011):

- Links experience to knowledge (especially, for this course, theoretical knowledge)
- Engages both reason and emotion
- Situates individual experiences within a broader social and cultural context
- Helps to understand and challenge one's values, beliefs and biases, in order to determine their impact on our ideas and actions
- Question unexamined assumptions related to personal identity and knowledge of society
- Helps to imagine alternative ways to think and act

Unlike traditional academic essays, critical reflective writing:

- Makes use of the first person
- Considers the self an object of inquiry
- Incorporates experiences as a form of evidence
- BUT STILL uses formal English and follows proper referencing and citation guidelines

The critical reflection you will write is geared to be a structured piece of sociological analysis, rather than other varieties of reflective writing such as simply a journal or self-assessment. You will be evaluated on your level of engagement and knowledge with theory *through* your reflection upon theory. You will be required to choose ONE theoretical *paradigm* covered in the course (and focus further on a particular *version* of that theory – see below), though you are welcome to address more than one theory and/or theorist within a theoretical paradigm (though be careful given the space requirements needed to demonstrate your knowledge of theory as well as your reflection on that theory).

Be careful that in your selection of a particular paradigm (i.e. area) and its application you pay heed to the differences among theorists within that paradigm and select a particular version of the theory that you find most amenable. So for example if feminism is your chosen paradigm avoid

discussing 'feminism' generally and be mindful of the (wide) differences between, for instance, 2nd wave feminist theories vs. later 'intersectional' approaches. In other words, you should refer to the *theorist* whose theory is most salient for your reflection. You are free to select any theory from the beginning to end of the course.

\*\*\*Please note: For the first reflection, it is recommended that you choose a theory that has been covered in the course up to that point. For the second reflection, you are required to select a *different theoretical paradigm* other than the first reflection. So say you select Blumer for the theorist in your first reflection, you are not permitted to select Goffman since they are both, broadly, in the symbolic interactionist paradigm.

### Required Tasks

For either the first or second reflection, you are required to focus on EITHER:

1 – A contemporary news event OR popular culture phenomena (e.g., movie, television series, online video, etc.)

There is flexibility regarding what counts as 'contemporary' events, though within the last couple of years is preferred, and you are encouraged to seek feedback on what you wish to write about early on. News events can be local to Calgary, national or international.

OR

2 – A particular personal OR professional experience [the details of what you reveal in your reflection will remain confidentially kept between you and Dr. Adorjan]

You are then tasked to address all of the following related to *either* #1 *or* #2:

- *Describe* the central tenets and assumptions of the theoretical paradigm you've selected
- *Succinctly summarize* the topics selected/personal experiences [include links to news clips or online videos where possible]
- *Justify* why you selected the theory in relation to the topics discussed, and reveal the connections between them
- Unpack in more detail *both the strengths and weaknesses* of your chosen theory in explaining and understanding the topics discussed
- Despite the weaknesses you identify, justify *why the theory is still useful*

To remain focused, you are recommended to select only a single news/pop culture item or personal or professional experience. Secondary sources are *not* required, though direct reference to the textbook is expected (i.e., not just citing class discussions and lecture notes). Secondary sources are also recommended as they may help to analyze and apply nuances of your chosen theory not illuminated through the general textbook. Proper referencing for all sources is required, including the textbook, or references to lectures. For lecture notes, in the end references as:

Adorjan, Michael. 2019. [Lecture title]. Soci333: Contemporary Sociological Theory.

And in the body of the paper as: (Adorjan, 2019)

## Formatting and Style

All reflections *must use proper referencing*, including in-text citations and bibliographic references to original sources as well as required course readings.

Reflections must be no more than **5 pages**, double spaced using the default size and margins with Word, with 1" margins on all sides. The page limit does NOT include space for references, which are REQUIRED. For font, please use either Cambria or Calibri Light, and format references using APA style. There is no minimum length requirement: it is up to the student's discretion related to covering the required components outlined above. All reflections must be **submitted to the course's D2L site** (a dropbox folder will be set up) in Microsoft Word format (either .doc or .docx, NOT .pdf – this allows me to save comments and facilitates faster and more complete feedback.

## Assessment of reflections

Drawing basic theoretical connections is necessary but not sufficient for a good grade. You will be assessed both based on your ability to critically engage with theory as well as your level of application and 'sociological imagination'.

Final take-home exam                      30%                      date

The final take-home examination will be made available on D2L on the final date of class, Thursday April 11th. The exam will be due in one week, and must be submitted in Microsoft Word .doc or .docx format to the D2L dropbox set up for the final exam. The exam MUST be received no later than 11:50pm on Thursday April 18th. There will not be late penalties applied: exams submitted past the due date will receive an F grade. Further details will be provided closer to the end of the course.

## Grading Scale

Letter grades will be assigned and submitted to the registrar based on the following scale:

| Grade | Percent range | Grade Point Value | Description                              |
|-------|---------------|-------------------|--|
| A+    | 96 – 100%     | 4.0               | Outstanding performance                  |
| A     | 90 – 95.99%   | 4.0               | Excellent-superior performance           |
| A-    | 85 – 89.99%   | 3.7               |  |
| B+    | 80 – 84.99%   | 3.3               |  |
| B     | 75 – 79.99%   | 3.0               | Good – clearly above average performance |
| B-    | 70 – 74.99%   | 2.7               |  |
| C+    | 67 – 69.99%   | 2.3               |  |
| C     | 63 – 66.99%   | 2.0               | Satisfactory - basic understanding       |
| C-    | 59 – 62.99%   | 1.7               |  |
| D+    | 55 – 58.99%   | 1.3               |  |
| D     | 50 – 54.99%   | 1.0               | Minimal pass - marginal performance      |
| F     | <50%          | 0                 | unsatisfactory performance               |

The grades for a course component may be scaled to maintain equity among sections and to conform to departmental norms.

## Schedule of Lecture Topics and Required Readings

While every effort will be made to adhere to the following schedule, changes may be required as the term progresses. Any announcements will be posted to D2L 'news' for the course.

The following textbook, available at the bookstore, is required for this course. An additional required reading on feminism will be posted to D2L. Please see the timetable for details.

- **Douglas Mann (2011). *Understanding Society: A Survey of Modern Social Theory (Second Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.**

Alternative textbooks are also recommended to help supplement the main text by Mann. Three suggestions are:

Ruth Wallace and Alison Wolf. (2006). *Contemporary Sociological Theory: Expanding the Classical Tradition* (Sixth Edition). New Jersey: Pearson.

Richard Munch. (1994). *Sociological Theory: Development Since the 1960s* (Third Edition). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

Doyle Johnson (2008). *Contemporary Sociological Theory: An Integrated Multi-Level Approach*. (e-book available)

Anthony Thomson. (2016). *Modern Social Thought: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

- Jan 10 – introductions
- Jan 15-24 – Functionalism

Mann Ch.2:

Hobbes – pg.#24

Parsons – pg.#31-39

Merton – pg.#39-41

- Jan 29-31 – Conflict theory

Mann Ch.2:

Mills – pg.#45-51

- Feb 5-7 – Materialism

Mann Ch.3:

Bourdieu – pg.#85-89

Feb 12-14 – Materialism continued and Midterm review

Feb 18-22 – Reading Week

Feb 26-28 - Midterm

Mar 5-14 – Symbolic Interactionism

Mann Ch.6:

Blumer – pg.#190-196  
Goffman – pg.#196-206

Mar 19-28 – Postmodernism and Foucault

Mann Ch.7:  
Foucault – pg.#237-240; pg.#250-257

Apr 2-4 – Feminism

Three Waves – pg.#322-329  
[Additional readings will be announced]

Apr 9-11 – Feminism continued and course and exam review

## **Policies and Practices**

### **Emergency Evacuations**

In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the assembly point at Social Science, Food Court. Please check these assembly point locations for all of your classes at: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

### **Handing in Papers, Assignments**

1. The main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters. Please speak directly to your instructor.
2. Protection of Privacy: The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) legislation does not allow students to retrieve any course material from public places. Anything that requires handing back will be returned directly during class or office hours. If students are unable to pick up their assignments from the instructor, they provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are only available online.

### **Research Ethics**

Students are advised that any research with human subjects – including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation – must have the approval of the Faculty Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

### **Academic Misconduct**

Please refer to the website listed below for information on University of Calgary policies on Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct:  
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-5.html>

## **Absences and Deferrals**

Students who are absent from class assessments (tests, participation activities, or other assignments) should inform their instructors as soon as possible. Instructors may request that evidence in the form of documentation be provided. For information on possible forms of documentation, including statutory declarations, please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/n-1.html>.

Deferred Final Exam Form: Please note that requests to defer a Registrar scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar's Office. Further information can be found at: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/exams/deferred-exams>

Deferred Term Work Form: Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It's available at: [https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred\\_termwork15\\_0.pdf](https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred_termwork15_0.pdf)

Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

## **Student Representation**

The 2018-19 Students' Union VP Academic is Jessica Revington ([suvpaca@ucalgary.ca](mailto:suvpaca@ucalgary.ca)). For more information, and to contact other elected officials with the Student's Union, please visit this link: <https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/> You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ombuds/contact>

## **Safewalk**

The University of Calgary provides a "safe walk" service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.

## **Academic Accommodation**

The student accommodation policy can be found at: <https://ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy>.

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities [ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy](https://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy).

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

## **Student Resources**

[SU Wellness Centre](#)  
[Campus Mental Health Strategy](#)

