

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Department of Sociology
Sociology 731
Contemporary Sociological Theory
Winter 2010

Instructor: Dr. A.W. Frank

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Office hours: Tuesday, Thursday, 11-12:30, or by appointment

Course hours: Monday, 1-3:50

Sociology Department web page: <http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca>

Course objectives:

The course considers three theorists in depth: Foucault, Bourdieu, and Latour. During the final couple of weeks we will discuss Bakhtin in less detail. Our particular interests are how the dominant theorists of the late 20th century revised and completed the agenda of the mid-century theorists, and what remains for theory to accomplish—what is its mission in 21st century sociology?

The readings also give us the basis for discussing two practical academic career issues: scholarly publication and goals of ‘science’, which are central issues in Bourdieu’s lectures that became his last book, and teaching, which is the substantive focus of Shields’s book on Bakhtin.

Required Texts:

- Michel Foucault, *Power, Essential Works of Foucault, vol. 3*. James D. Faubion, editor (The New Press)
- Pierre Bourdieu, *Science of Science and Reflexivity* (Chicago)
- Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford)
- Carolyn M. Shields, *Bakhtin* (Peter Lang)

Course Requirements:

Final grades will be based on three components:

- One *or* two book reviews (800 words, handout will be provided) of a book by or about Foucault or Bourdieu, or a book substantially influenced by either theorist. The Foucault reviews are due after Reading Week, February 22, and the Bourdieu reviews are due March 1. Each review counts 25% of the final mark.
- If you choose to do one book review, then a second paper, same length, making the case for the importance of a contemporary theorist not included in the course; this could take the form of a book review. Topics should be approved.

- Final essay: Official due date, April 27.
 - Length: 8-10 pp.; 12 pages is the absolute limit if your topic requires it.
 - Topics to be approved; submit a one-page prospectus no later than April 5.
Possible topics include:
 - Latour advances a major critique of how sociology has treated “the social”. Apply this critique to another theorist, theory group, or methodological stance.
 - How does Latour synthesize influences of both Foucault and Bourdieu?
 - How might learning something about Bakhtin change how you are influenced by Foucault, Bourdieu, and/or Latour (write on any or all three)?

All essays should be typed or printed, double-spaced, in 12-point font, with pages numbered and stapled together. The student’s name and ID# should appear in the upper corner of the first page. Please do not put papers in covers.

Seminar participation will not receive a specific grade, but participation will be the basis of deciding grades that fall between two marks, and excellence in participation can be rewarded.

Rewrites: Students can resubmit a revised version of written work that receives “B” or lower.

Keep a copy: As in every course, my friendly advice is to keep a printed copy of all work you submit. At some point you should have printed at least one draft to edit on paper; keep that too. Students who might want a letter of recommendation should keep copies of their written term work (again, good advice in all courses).

Lecture schedule and readings:

January 11 – Introduction: mid-century sociology & its problems

January 18 – Foucault: Gordon’s introduction, “Truth and Judicial Forms”

- In all seminars, students should be prepared to discuss: (a) one of idea from that day’s reading that is most useful in your sociological practice, and why; (b) one question or perhaps something in the reading you find questionable.

January 25 – Foucault: “Politics of Health in the 18th Century,” “Birth of Social Medicine,” “Lives of Infamous Men,” “Concept of the ‘Dangerous Individual,’” and “Governmentality”

February 1 – Foucault: “*Omnes et Singulatim*,” “The Subject and Power,” “The Risks of Security,” “The Political Technology of Individuals,” “Useless to Revolt?” “So Is It Important to Think?” and “Confronting Governments: Human Right”

February 8 – Bourdieu, Introduction, chapters 1 & 2

February 15 – Reading Week, no classes or office hours

February 22 – Bourdieu, chapter 3 and “Sketch”

March 1 – Latour, pp. 1-62

March 8 – Latour, pp. 63-120

March 15 – Latour, pp. 121-190

March 22 – Latour, pp. 191-262

March 29 – Shields, *Bakhtin*, chapters 1-3

April 5 – Shields, chapters 4-5

April 12 – review and concluding comments. Each student should bring to class at least two suggestions, as specific as possible, for how sociology should be influenced by Bakhtin (or why it should not). Each student should also be prepared to offer at least one forecast of what a course on contemporary theory would include in 2020.

Mandatory University Addenda:

Exam Policies: You must provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to take an exam. All requests for deferral of an examination due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the physical or emotional problem rather than after recovery. Deferred exams may be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. If you have missed an exam for a legitimate reason, you will be able to write a “make up” exam as close to the original exam as possible. The date and location will be at the convenience of the Sociology Department. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferred exam. Deferred exams will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

Ethics Research: 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 Departmental 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: cheating is regarded as a serious academic offense. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar, which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other

academic misconduct.

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside an instructor's office or the Department main office. 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 her/his assignment s/he may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

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.

Handing in Papers Outside of Class, Return of Final Papers, and Release of Final Grades

1. When students are unable to submit papers at class, they should make arrangements to hand in their papers directly to the instructor or teaching assistant rather than at the Sociology Department main office.
2. Final papers will not be returned through the Sociology Department main office. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, (i.e., outside an instructor's office, the department office, etc.). Students who want their final papers returned by mail must attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the paper. Otherwise final papers will only be available for pick-up during the instructor's office hours at the end of this term or the beginning of the next term.
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology department. They are only available online.