

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND INTERDISCIPLINARY SOCIAL SCIENCES
Fall 2023
SOC 101 Social Theory
Instructor Dr. Soo H. Choi
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Classroom Clark Bldg 234
Class Days/Time Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:30 pm-5:45 pm
Office Hours 238B 10:30-11:30 & 3:00- 4:00 Tuesday

Course Description

Many ideas exist. Some claim to be sociologically insightful. Which ones are sociological? What are they really saying? Why do many sociological ideas disagree with each other? How are they relevant for us? This class gives you the appropriate tools to examine the big debates in sociological theory, the contesting perspectives and analysis on modern life offered by early theorists such as Durkheim, Weber, and Marx, Foucault, and the important ways in which these perspectives have been developed and adapted into contemporary theories to address more recent concerns. You will read, in their own words, some of the notable theorists who have shaped professional sociology. Thus, this course offers you the opportunity to hone your skills in reading, analyzing, comparing, and critically evaluating major perspectives related to sociology. That is, you will be asked to develop your skills of critical analysis and self-expression by applying theories appropriately and by presenting clear written arguments about our social surroundings.

Theory must be relevant to real life “social facts” for it to survive, and we will work toward bridging the abstract concepts in our readings with the world around us. By the end of the class, you will likely find that some theories are your favorite; these are often those theories that are also most relevant to your everyday life. This course covers both classical (the “founding fathers”) and contemporary (1960s to present) social theories. We will read and discuss multiple theorists to gain perspective from diverse voices, and we will explore various approaches to understanding the social world. We will read and discuss original (often translated) text, which will provide a brief overview of the most important and well-known thinkers within the discipline. We will cover a wide array of topics, including capitalism, stratification (class/race/gender), criminality, suicide, development of the self, high-tech impact on our lives, bureaucracies, work, deviance, social constructionism, critical race theory, structuralism, globalization, and social control. Social theory is amongst the most challenging and rewarding pursuits within sociology. This is a hard course. This class requires a significant amount of reading and thinking. Despite the challenges this course presents, if you do your work diligently and proactively you will succeed in this class and maybe even grow to love it.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

CLO1: Explain—in a comparative manner—the central theoretical concepts and perspectives in sociology

CLO2: Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of interpretive and critical perspectives and the weaknesses of out-of-date perspectives in sociology

CLO3: Develop individual, research, and social-change activities by using the most appropriate sociological perspective related to a range of concerns and situations

Required Readings and Materials

Social Theory: Continuity and Confrontation (ebook, freely available, PDF files will be uploaded with your instructors' highlighted parts in "files" in canvas)

https://csu-sjsu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991010742289702919&context=L&vid=01CAL_SJO:01CAL_SJO&lang=en&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=any,contains,social%20theory,AND&mode=advanced&pfilter=rtype,exact,books,AND&offset=10

Grading

Your semester grade derives from multiple methods of evaluation and several opportunities for practice, improvement, and learning with meaningful feedback. Evaluation is fair and just, reflecting your effort and learning based on clear directions and criteria. The satisfactory completion of the following requirements determines your overall grade.

30% Weekly quizzes

20% Analytical creativity in your small group research (PowerPoint and Presentation)

30% Two Midterm Exams

20% Final Exam

Grading Criteria/Grade Percentage Description

A plus 98-100% Demonstrates highly exceptional work at a level of distinction exceeding the requirements for an "A" grade.

A 93-97% Demonstrates excellent understanding of the course materials. Embodies a sociologist-in-training who is highly ethical, competent, and professional or equivalent. Consistently contributes in promoting class discussion and the learning of others and deepens learning that is self-initiated.

A minus 90-92% Demonstrates work relatively weaker than the level of distinction needed for a "A" grade yet attained the level greater than a "B plus" grade.

B plus 88-89% Demonstrates work relatively stronger than the level of distinction needed for a "B" grade but not attaining the level required for an "A minus" grade.

B 83-87% Demonstrates good level of understanding of the course materials. Embodies a sociologist-in-training who is ethical, competent, and professional or equivalent. Shows some gaps in argumentation, writing, and completed tasks. Contributes to class discussion, yet in a limited manner.

B minus 80-82% Demonstrates work relatively weaker than the level of distinction needed for a "B" grade yet attained the level greater than a "C plus" grade.

C plus 78-79% Demonstrates work relatively stronger than the level of distinction needed for a "C" grade but not attaining the level required for an "B minus" grade.

C 73-77% Demonstrates an acceptable yet uneven level of understanding of the course materials. Embodies a sociologist-in-training who is satisfactorily ethical, competent, and professional or equivalent. Shows major gaps in argumentation, writing, and completed tasks. Contributes to class discussion minimally.

C minus 70-72% Demonstrates work relatively weaker than the level of distinction needed for a "C" grade yet attained the level greater than a "D plus" grade.

D plus 68-69% Demonstrates work relatively stronger than the level of distinction needed for a "D" grade but not attaining the level required for an "C minus" grade.

D 63-67% Demonstrates poor but passing understanding of the course materials. Embodies a sociologist-in-training who is not quite ethical, competent, and professional or equivalent. Shows highly significant gaps in writing, assignments, and participation.

D minus 60-62 Demonstrates work relatively weaker than the level of distinction needed for a “D” grade yet attained the level greater than a “F” grade.

F 59 & below Demonstrates serious deficiency in competing assigned tasks (including participation) at the appropriate level and unacceptable understanding of the course materials. Shows very limited effort to learn the material and succeed academically and professionally.

Request for an Incomplete Grade

To receive an incomplete for the course, you must inform the instructor in person seven-days before the last day of instruction. A grade of incomplete will only be considered for those who are:

Passing the course with a C or better,

Present a legitimate, non-academic reason to the instructor, and

Have only one major assignment left to finish.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Per University Policy S16-9, relevant information to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for the recording of the class, etc. is available on the Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs’ Syllabus Information web page. Make sure to review these university policies. Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the semester for instruction, preparation/studying, or course-related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica.

Credit Hour Policy per Federal Guidelines

San Jose State University classes are designed such that in order to be successful, students are expected to spend a minimum of forty five hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities. Students are expected to spend at least two hours outside of class for every one hour of in-person class time. Because this is a three-unit course, you can expect to spend a minimum of 6 hours per week completing course-related assignments in addition to attending all the in-person class meetings. Assignments include reading the assigned readings, accessing supplementary material through Canvas, taking examinations, quizzes, homework, and writing papers. More details about student workload can be found in University Policy S12-3 at <http://www.edu.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>. For this course, you will be required to take 2 exams, write two papers, and a final exam.

University Policies on Academic Integrity

Students should know that the University’s Academic Integrity Policy is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf. Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University’s integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The website for Student Conduct and Ethical Development is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html.

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person’s ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your

assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors.

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, etc. Information on add/drops are available at <http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-298.html> . Information about late drop is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/> . Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the AEC (Accessible Education Center) to establish a record of their disability.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library. A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include digital and VHS camcorders, VHS and Beta video players, 16 mm, slide, overhead, DVD, CD, and audiotape players, sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

SJSU Peer Connections

The Learning Assistance Resource Center (LARC) and the Peer Mentor Program have merged to become Peer Connections. Peer Connections is the new campus-wide resource for mentoring and tutoring. Our staff is here to inspire students to develop their potential as independent learners while they learn to successfully navigate through their university experience. Students are encouraged to take advantage of our services which include course-content based tutoring, enhanced study and time management skills, more effective critical thinking strategies, decision making and problem-solving abilities, and campus resource referrals.

In addition to offering small group, individual, and drop-in tutoring for a number of undergraduate courses, consultation with mentors is available on a drop-in or by appointment basis. Workshops are offered on a wide variety of topics including preparing for the Writing Skills Test (WST), improving your learning and memory, alleviating procrastination, surviving your first semester at SJSU, and other related topics. A computer lab and study space are also available for student use in Room 600 of Student Services Center (SSC).

Course Schedule and Reading

8/22 Introduction

8/24 Evolution of Social Theories (1) Beginning of creative thoughts on society and individuals, The Enlightenment, Science v. Blind Faith, Rene Descartes, John Locke, Adam Smith, and August Comte
Reading: Evolution of Social Theories PDF File, The first half

8/29, 31 Evolution of Social Theories (2) Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung

Reading: Evolution of Social Theories PDF Files, The second half

9/5,7 Marxism (1) The Birth of Marxism, The social/economic context of England, the major thoughts of Karl Marx on capitalism, social inequality, and social revolution, the meaning of "alienation" and "commodification"

Reading: Marxism PDF file, the first 1/4

9/12, 14 Marxism (2) Comparing/Contrasting Hegel and Marx, Idealism v. Materialism, Comparing/Contrasting Marx and Engels

Reading: Marxism PDF file, the second 2/4

9/19, 21 Marxism (3) Adam Smith and Karl Marx, Their understandings of "free market," Marx's understanding of the Proletariat, Technology, Fordism

Reading: Marxism PDF file, the third 3/4

9/26, 28 Marxism (4) Marx's thoughts of social revolution, Ethnographic examples of China, Russia, Cuba, and North Korea

Reading: Marxism PDF file, the fourth 4/4

Midterm Exam 1 on 9/28

10/3, 5 Emile Durkheim (1) Societal Causes of human behaviors, Durkheim's Functionalism, The importance of statistics, Sociology as a science, Collective consciousness and survival, Cases of less collective consciousness

Reading: Durkheim PDF file, the first half

10/10, 12 Emile Durkheim (2) Emile Durkheim's thoughts on suicide in various societal contexts, Religion and Suicide Loosened collectivity, Social cohesion & suicide, communal spirit in voluntary organization, Societal transformation and its effect on human psychology, Other reasons for suicide Seppuku in traditional Japanese Society, Capitalism and unlimited craving

Reading: Durkheim PDF file, the second half

10/17, 19 Weber (1), The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, the birth of capitalism in the context of religious transformation, Catholic's Predestination, Weber's definition of authority, legitimate power, and bureaucracy

Reading: Weber PDF file, The first quarter

10/24, 26 Weber (2) Class & Caste System, The role and meaning of pariah in social unequal society, McDonaldization, Assembly line work, Standardization

Reading: Weber PDF file, The second quarter

10/31, 11/2 Weber (3) "Instrumental rationality" Technology and "Reason," Failed Enlightenment became totalitarianism, Faking the reality of American society, Escapism in a class/race rigid society

Reading: Weber PDF file, The third quarter

11/7, 9 Weber (4) A Backlash from the social elite class (Bourgeoisie) in the 1930's, The Frankfurt's school's anti-positivism/pessimism, The "Critical Theory" of the Frankfurt School, Walter Benjamin's idea on the deeply embedded Bourgeoisie culture, The Democratization potential of media Proletariat class's compromise, A complicated issue of socialists/proletariats' administration of a new state, The most problematic assumption of the Frankfurt School

Reading: Weber PDF file, The Fourth quarter

Midterm Exam 2 on 11/9

11/14, 16 Reconstructed Marxism, The Frankfurt School, Media & Culture

Reading: Reconstructed Marxism PDF file, the First half; Media and Culture PDF file

11/21 Gramsci (1) Gramsci's notion of "hegemony", admiring the abuser/colonizer, Gramsci's expectation of intelligence and grace from the proletariat class and socialist party

Gramsci (2) Gramsci's case of three nations: Russia, England, the USA, Alliance between the capitalist and the proletariat class in the U.S., Class conflicts between landed elite and Bourgeoisie (industrial capitalists), The problems of the Frankfurt School

Reading: Reconstructed Marxism PDF file, the Second half

11/28, 30

Michel Foucault (1) The "Panopticon," Categorization involves the exercise of power, Comte, Durkheim and Foucault's view on social control

Michel Foucault (2) Pastoral power" (Church power), Foucault's view on Sex and power, Science, a new tool to control people, Psychiatry and psychology as a tool for surveillance and power, Self-Surveillance, Limiting Yourself/Suppressing Yourself

Reading: Foucault PDF file

12/5,7 Race and Ethnicity in the U.S. in a sociological framework, Franz Fanon, Edward Said, etc on race and ethnicity issues

Reading: Race and Ethnicity PDF File

12/8 Final Exam