Syllabus
Sociology 436
Sociological Theory
Fall, 2012
Texas A&M University-Commerce

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Supplemental Readings: during the course you will be provided copies of handouts and recommended readings to help accomplish the course objectives and student learning outcomes.

COURSE OVERVIEW AND GOALS:

This course is intended to expose the undergraduate sociology student to a general understanding of sociological theory. As such, it is a general survey course, yet it requires a certain level of being able to think critically and conceptually. Theory is, by its very nature, highly abstract, and you may find this course is more intense and requires more study time than some other courses you may have taken. As it is a senior level course, a degree of “sociological sophistication” is expected that you should have gained by this stage in your academic career as a developing sociologist. Above all, sociological theory helps us both understand and predict social phenomena, and thus is critical for understanding social change, social structure, socialization, freedom, inequality, social deviance, social control, family dynamics, and other key social phenomena.

Specific Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes include:

- Realizing the basics of “pre-sociology” social thought that formed the underpinnings for classical sociological theory;
- Understanding the “sociological perspective” and how theory interacts with research methods and analysis to further knowledge in the field of sociology;
- Developing an understanding of what “theory” is, and is not, and how theories relate to overarching perspectives (i.e. conflict perspective, functionalist perspective, interactionism, exchange perspective, Marxist perspective) within the discipline of sociology;
- Understanding how history, prior social thought, and even personal factors influenced the development of classical sociological theory;
• Identifying the major contributions of various social thinkers and sociologists such as August Comte, Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Vilfredo Pareto, Talcott Parsons, George H. Mead, and George C. Homans; and,
• Gaining an overview of contemporary theory, and theorists, and the future trends in sociological theory.

COURSE FORMAT:

This course, by its very nature, is a study-intensive course. By this I mean that the student cannot sit in class, absorb the material, cram before exams, and expect to do well in this course. The nature of the course will be sequential and developmental, in that a minimal degree of understanding of the primary concepts is required before progressing in this course. The student must also read the material to be covered in class prior to the day of the class presentation to obtain maximum benefit from the course. Please keep up with assigned readings, as it will be very easy to fall behind if you do not. You may need to read over each assignment several times before you develop a good understanding of the content, and class discussion will usually help develop this understanding. Good note-taking will also be a definite asset. BE SURE TO BRING YOUR TEXT TO EACH CLASS SESSION.

Please feel free to ask questions or make comments at any time. Also, be prepared to answer questions about or discuss your assignments at any time. The format will be largely class discussion, and class participation will be essential for the success of this course.

If you need help in this course, please contact me, either before or after class, or call me at home, or my day-time office or cell number. The University has resources to help you, and I will help you in any way that I can. If you begin to feel overwhelmed at any point, please let me know. Do not just stop attending class or withdraw without talking with me about alternatives.

Please try not to miss class sessions, as you can fall behind very quickly in this class – if you know you are going to miss a session, please get with me as soon as possible.

EXAMS:

There will be two scheduled exams, a mid-term take-home, and an in-class final exam. Each exam will be worth one-third of the final grade in this course. There will be a review period before the final exam. Make-up exams will be given only for University-excused absences. There will be no individual extra credit work in this course.

SHORT PAPERS/ESSAYS:

There will be several short (2-3 pages) assignments throughout the course. A separate instruction sheet for completing these essays, as well as a grading rubric, will be distributed when the first paper topic is assigned. Each assignment will be graded (60-100 points); the mean score of these assignments will be computed, and will be one-third of your final course grade. Also be prepared to discuss your responses on each paper with the class on the date they are due.
COURSE GRADE

Your grade in this course will be determined by the percentage of total possible points you can earn.

Mid-term Exam = 1/3 of course grade. (Total 100 possible points)
Final Exam = 1/3 of course grade. (Total 100 possible points)
Assignments = 1/3 of course grade. (Total 100 possible points)

300 total points possible

A = 90-100% (270-300 points)
B = 80-89% (240-269 points)
C = 70-79% (210-239 points)
D = 60-69% (180-209 points)
F = 59% or below (179 points or below)

ATTENDANCE:

Come to class! We will be covering a large amount of information in some class sessions and you can fall behind very quickly. If you must miss a class session, please let me know, if at all possible. Classes will begin promptly at the scheduled time – please be on time as late arrivals are disrupting to everyone.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS:

As noted, please bring your textbook to class every time we meet. This course is very text dependent, and class discussions/lectures will reiterate the material in the text. I will call on you for discussion of the text in class and draw your attention to specific portions of chapters. Please feel free to express your ideas on topics, and also allow others to express views that may differ from yours.

Please be attentive in the classroom. Cell phones should be turned off in class – NO TEXTING IN CLASS IS ALLOWED. I do allow you to use laptops for notes in class, or to search topics we are discussing on the internet. HOWEVER, you will not like my response if you are caught playing games, surfing the web, listening to music, facebooking, etc. in class!

“All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conductive to a positive learning environment.” (Student’s Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct)

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURE AND POLICIES

Academic Honesty/Cheating and Plagiarism

Academic honesty is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must work to provide an environment in which each student has the opportunity to be evaluated fairly on the basis of his/her own performance. It should go without saying that every student is expected to his/her own work. Department
policy provides that anyone caught cheating in any form or fashion will receive an “F” for the course and may be subjected to further disciplinary action by the University. All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to both the Department Head, as well as the Dean. Plagiarism (the use of others’ words, phrases, and ideas in your own work without giving credit to the original author) is a form of cheating and not only violates academic ethical standards, but is against the law. Just don’t do it – you will be caught and you will not like the consequences.

POLICIES ON ENROLLMENT, X, DP, DF, AND WITHDRAWAL

Every student has the right to drop the course without penalty until the drop date. Students dropping the course during this period will be assigned a grade of “DP” (drop passing). A grade of DP is GPA neutral, but a grade of DF (drop failing) counts as an F on your transcript. Students should check the University catalog, current semester schedule, website, and other official sources for specific dates, policies, etc. It is your responsibility to see that all University procedures are properly followed.

STUDENTS REQUIRING ASSISTANCE

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library, Room 132
Phone 903.886.5150 or 903.886.5835
Fax 903.468.8148
Email StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu