

**Sociology 3001-001**

**Classical Social Theory**

**Spring 2010**

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I consider this course one of the most important you will take during your sociology undergraduate career. Sociological theory serves as the ideational foundation for all sociological investigation: past, present, future, and across all areas of substantive interest. As sociologists, theories provide us the necessary interpretive schema's by which to make sense of the empirical world.

Social theory encourages us to look beyond individual psychology and unique events to the predictable, broad patterns and regular occurrences of social life that influence individual destinies. It frames our understanding and conceptualization of human nature, human behavior, and human organization. Social theory enables us to see. It is an unusual form of vision.

What is society? What are its constituent parts and how are they related? How is the individual and society linked? How do societies retain their unity and continuity while undergoing change? What is the cause of social change? Why and how do vast social, political, and economic inequalities endure? In what ways do class, gender, and race intersect? How and where is culture created? To what ends? Such grand questions are the essence of modern sociological theory.

What is so exciting about these types of questions is that they are the very ones we need to grasp and interpret the complex and dynamic features of modern social life. Looking across the social landscape today - economic recession, the process of globalization, computers and mediated communication, spectacle and consumerism, climate disruption, and tremendous economic inequality - it seems most appropriate to pursue our discipline's most fundamental concerns. The many sociological concepts and theories that we will study this semester provide us powerful thinking tools to comprehend these most vital, contemporary concerns.

To the casual observer, theorizing may appear quite divorced from the business of gathering facts about the social world. For the working sociologist, it is theory that tells us what is relevant and problematic about groups of facts. It tells us why certain facts are seen as significant, why certain questions are asked, and why certain solutions are accepted.

This semester we will explore the foundational ideas of several of our discipline's key theorists as well as the contemporary inheritors of these ideas. Our focus will therefore quite broad, spanning classical and contemporary social thought. Most importantly, I hope to encourage you to see the evolution of ideas, questions, and explanations that stand at the center of our discipline.

The textbooks I have chosen for this course were written and designed to facilitate your understanding of a broad range of classical social thought. I think you will find them quite engaging. The authors of these texts have worked hard to make a number of complex ideas as understandable as possible. You must do a little work as well. You will be expected to have

read and assimilated the required readings each week. The reading assignments should be done before the topic is discussed in class.

There are two required texts for this course: These texts are available at the UMC Bookstore and the Bookstore on The Hill.

***Contemporary Social Theory and its Classical Roots*** by G. Ritzer

***Living Theory: The Application of Classical Social Theory to Contemporary Life*** by C. Hurst

### **Exams and Grading:**

There will be five exams for this course. Exam dates are: 2/2; 3/2; 4/1; 4/22 and a cumulative final exam; date TBA. Each of the five (5) exams will account for 20% of your final grade. Each of these exams will require a strong grasp of key concepts and theoretical frameworks, and the capacity to display some of the higher levels of thinking: synthesis, analysis, criticism, and creative application. In determining final grades I do use the "+, -" system." Your attendance and participation is vital, and I take it into account for "borderline" final grades. If you are going to miss an exam, it is vital that you notify me prior to that exam.

**Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities who qualify for academic accommodations must provide me notification from Disability Services and discuss specific needs with me, preferably during the first two weeks of class. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (303-492-8671, Willard Hall, room 322.)

**Classroom Behavior Policy:** Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set re limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities.

**Student Honor Code:** All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and nonacademic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion).

**Policy on Discrimination and Harassment:** The University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships applies to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550.