**SOCY 2102 Contemporary Sociological Theory**

**Spring 2020**

**Prof. Alex S. Vitale**

M,W: 11:00 AM – 12:40 PM

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Office hours: Mon-Wed 9-10AM, 2-3PM & by Appt.

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**Syllabus**

Each of us carries within us an understanding of how the world works. These understandings are often superficial, unexamined, solipsistic, and even contradictory.

The primary goal of this course is to help students develop a more complicated and conscious understanding of how societies function as entities in themselves and the place of the individual within them.

The second goal of this course is to prepare students to be successful in their senior seminar. In order to do so they will need to have a mastery of a variety of theoretical perspectives of the organization of society.

**Course Objectives**

We will build on the foundations of classical sociological theorists to develop a variety of critical perspectives on the organization of society. Rather than trying to arrive at a singular understanding of society, we will review a variety of theoretical approaches through close readings of original texts. We will deepen our understanding of these conceptual readings by applying them to contemporary problems during in class discussions and in a variety of written assignments.

**Assignments**

Class Participation 10 %: Students are expected to be in class on time and well prepared. This means reading the assignment and participating in classroom discussions. You should be prepared to be called upon to answer questions at any time.

Short comparative essays 60%: There will be four 2 page essays comparing 2 theorists in relationship to a contemporary social problem.

Final essay 30%: On the last day of class students will receive a take-home a final assignment sheet. They will be asked to choose one question from a short list and write a 3-4 page comparative paper to be turned in during the exam period.

**Text**

Kivisto, Peter. 2012. *Social Theory: Roots and Branches.* 5th edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Additional materials will be distributed in class.

**Ground Rules**

If you miss class, contact the instructor by email before the next class to receive any missed assignments, handouts, etc.

Please do not disturb class with cell phones, side conversations, or excessive eating in class.

Plagiarism (writing someone else’s words as your own), sharing your exam or paper with another student, or copying another student’s paper or exam will result in an F in the course. The following is a statement on the University’s policy on Academic Integrity:

The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at this site: http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member MUST report the violation.

If you feel you are not doing as well as you would like in the course you should come and see me in my office or after class. Grades cannot be adjusted after an assignment is completed or once the semester is over.

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services please provide your professor with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with him/her.

**Course Outline**

**Introduction**

1/27     Review of Classical Theorists

1/29 Handout: Zygmunt Bauman, “Modernity and the Holocaust.”

**Functionalism**

2/3 Ch. 33. Robert Merton, “The Unanticipated Consequences of Social Action.”

2/5 Ch. 35. Lewis Coser, “The Functions of Social Conflict.”

**Conflict Theories**

2/10 Ch. 37. C. Wright Mills, “Culture and Politics.”

2/19 Ch. 39. Randall Collins, “The Basics of Conflict Theory.”

**Symbolic Interactionism, Phenomenology, Ethnomethodology**

2/24 Ch. 42. Erving Goffman, “Performances.”

2/26 Ch. 45. Harold Garfinkel, “Studies of the Routine Grounds of Everyday Activities.” **Essay 1 Due**

**Exchange Theory and Rational Choice Theory**

3/2 Ch. 47. James S. Coleman, “Human Capital and Social Capital”.

3/4 Ch. 49. Michael Hechter “The Emergence of Cooperative Social Institutions.”

**Gender and Sexuality Theory**

3/9 Ch. 55. Raewyn Connell, “Femininity and Masculinity.”

3/11 Ch. 83. Steven Seidman, “Queer-ing Sociology, Sociologizing Queer Theory.”

**Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism**

3/16 Ch. 53. Patricia Hill Collins, “Toward and Afrocentric Feminist Epistomology.”

3/18 Ch. 59. Rogers Brubaker, “Ethnicity without Groups.”

3/23 Ch. 56. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, “The Theoretical Status of the Concept of Race.” **Essay 2 Due**

**Critical Theory and the Frankfort School**

3/25 Ch. 62. Herbert Marcuse, “One-Dimensional Man.”

**Contemporary Theories of Modernity**

3/30 Ch. 77. Ulrich Beck, “The Cosmopolitan Condition: Why Methodological Nationalism Fails.”

4/1 Ulrich Beck, “Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity.” (Handout)

4/6 Ch. 66. Norbert Elias, “Shame and Repugnance.”

4/7 Ch. 73. Michel Foucault, “Panopticsm.”

4/20 Ch. 71. Pierre Bourdieu, “The Correspondence between Goods Production and Taste

Production.” **Essay 3 Due**

**Postmodernism**

4/22 Ch. 74. Zygmunt Bauman, “On Living in a Liquid Modern World.”

4/27 Ch. 85. John Urry, “Mobile Sociology.”

4/29 Julian Go, “For a Postcolonial Sociology,” p. 29-50 (Handout)

**World Systems and Globalization**

5/4 Ch. 76. Immanuel Wallerstein, “The Three Instances of Hegemony in the History of the Capitalist World-Economy.”

5/6 David Harvey, “A Brief History of Neoliberalism.” (Handout)

5/11 Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “Globalization and US Prison Growth (Handout). **Essay 4 Due**

**Review**

5/13 Review session

5/19 **Take home essay due**