

## CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY (Fall 2013)

SOCI 302 • Tu/Th 3:30-4:45pm • Section 2 • 3 credit hours

Jeff Kidder

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### INTRODUCTION

In order for sociologists to adequately understand complex social phenomena they must develop theories that help explain how individuals, groups, and organizations act and react in the real world. Through reading summary texts and original source materials this course will provide an overview of contemporary sociological perspectives. During the semester you will complete assignments that summarize, critique, and apply the theories we learn, as well as complete three in-class exams. You will also write a theory paper that compares and contrasts various sociological perspectives. After completing this course you should feel confident in your ability to make practical use of a wide array of sociological theories in everyday life.

### COURSE READINGS

The following are required readings for this class:

- Articles, chapters, and excerpts posted to Blackboard (which *must* be printed and brought to class)
- Allan, Kenneth. 2013. *Contemporary Social and Sociological Theory: Visualizing Social World, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Los Angeles: Sage.

### GRADING

Your grade in this class will be derived from the following:

• Examinations.....	60
-Part I & II.....	20
-Part III.....	20
-Part IV.....	20
• Sociological theory portfolios.....	25
-Part II.....	8
-Theory reading group prep sheets (2 pt x 3).....	6
-Critical thinking assignment.....	2
-Part III.....	8
-Theory reading group prep sheets (2 pt x 3).....	6
-Critical thinking assignment.....	2
-Part IV.....	9
-Theory reading group prep sheet.....	3
-Critical thinking assignments (3 pt x 2).....	6
• Theory paper.....	10
• Participation.....	5
TOTAL POINTS.....	100

*Note: I use a standard 10-point scale and I do not round final grades up*

## COURSE INFORMATION

### *Abbreviations*

Critical thinking assignment (CTA), Sociological theory portfolio (STP), Theory reading group (TRG), Kenneth Allan's *Contemporary Social and Sociological Theory (CSST)*.

### *Email*

I will use your school email account (whatever address is linked to Blackboard) to communicate extra-lecture information about the course (e.g., reading or assignment updates). I will always give at least 12 hours notice (usually much more) for any substantial variation to the syllabus. It is your responsibility to check your school email regularly.

### *Assessment*

Your grade in this course is primarily derived from three examinations, the construction of a sociological theory portfolio, and a theory paper. An assignment rubric and more information on how your grade for this course will be determined (including writing guidelines and expectations) can be found on Blackboard.

### *Group Work*

Your sociological theory portfolio will involve working within a five-person theory reading group. You will only be graded on your own individual work. More information about the sociological theory portfolios can be found on Blackboard.

### *Academic Integrity*

You are responsible for adhering to the university's policy on integrity of scholarship. Academic dishonesty (of any sort) will result in immediate course *failure* and the incident will be formally filed with the Sociology Department and NIU Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct. See Blackboard for more details.

### *Outstanding Papers*

The Sociology Department provides awards for exceptional undergraduate papers. The theory paper in this course has the potential of becoming an award-winning paper. Students may nominate themselves or I may submit outstanding papers on their behalf. Contact the Director of Undergraduate Studies for more information.

### *Nomenclature*

I am a doctor of philosophy in sociology and I hold the rank of assistant professor at Northern Illinois University. The formal method for addressing me is "Dr. Kidder" or "professor Kidder." Alternatively, you are welcome to call me by my first name. However, please do *not* call me "Mr. Kidder" (that is my father's name).

*Note: more information about this course is available on Blackboard:*

Syllabus and grading information > 302 additional course information.pdf

Syllabus and grading information > Sociological theory portfolio information.pdf

Syllabus and grading information > 302 assessment document.pdf

*You will be quizzed on this syllabus and all the additional course information on the second day of class.*

*Note: readings must be completed on the date they are listed. Homework is assigned the day it is listed and must be completed by the following class. Assignment that must be turned in for grading will be denoted by the phrase “Due:” on the date it is due.*

## PART I: PROLOGUE

### *Week One: Introduction and Review*

08/27: Introduction to the course

Homework: keep up with assigned readings

08/29: Thinking like a sociologist

Reading: course syllabus and supporting materials (available on Blackboard);

CSST (p. xiii-xix, chp. 1)

Quiz: course requirements, etc.

Homework: keep up with assigned readings

## PART II: INDIVIDUALS AND SITUATIONS

### *Week Two: Symbolic Interaction*

09/03: Herbert Blumer

Reading: Allan CSST (chp. 3)

Homework: complete TRG prep sheet

09/05: Violence from the symbolic interactionist’s perspective

Due: TRG (see additional course materials on Blackboard)

Reading: Athens *Violent Criminal Acts and Actors* (excerpts)

Homework: keep up with assigned readings

### *Week Three: Dramaturgy*

09/10: Erving Goffman

Reading: Allan CSST (chp. 4)

Homework: complete TRG prep sheet

09/12: Dramaturgy and morticians

Due: TRG

Reading: Thompson “Handling the Stigma of Handling the Dead”

Homework: keep up with assigned readings

### *Week Four: Ethnomethodology*

09/17: Harold Garfinkel

Reading: Allan CSST (chp. 5)

Homework: listen to *Fresh Air* interview with Sacha Baron Cohen (link on Blackboard)

09/19: Ethnomethodology and Sacha Baron Cohen

Homework: complete CTA; keep up with assigned readings

### *Week Five: Social Exchange Theories*

09/24: George Homans, Peter Blau, and Randall Collins

Due: CTA

Reading: Allan CSST (chp. 6)

Homework: complete TRG prep sheet

09/26: Interaction rituals and the Internet

Due: TRG

Reading: Collins “The Sociological Eye”

Homework: keep up with assigned readings; print entire STP for part II

*Week Six: Finishing Micro-Sociological Theories*

10/01: Review for exam

Due: STP part II

Homework: study for exam

10/03: Exam (part I & II)

Homework: keep up with assigned readings

**PART III: SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS**

*Week Seven: Structures of Racial and Gender Inequality*

10/08: William Julius Wilson and Janet Saltzman Chafetz

Reading: Allan *CSST* (chp. 7)

Homework: complete TRG prep sheet

10/10: Structures of male domination

Due: TRG

Reading: Tavis “The Mismeasure of Woman”

Homework: keep up with assigned readings

*Week Eight: Constructivist Structuralism*

10/15: Pierre Bourdieu

Reading: Allan *CSST* (chp. 8)

10/17: *People Like Us*

Homework: complete CTA; keep up with assigned readings

*Week Nine: World-Systems Theory*

10/22: Immanuel Wallerstein

Due: CTA

Reading: Allan *CSST* (chp. 10)

Homework: complete TRG prep sheet

10/24: Globalized inequality

Due: TRG

Reading: Davis “Planet of Slums”

Homework: keep up with assigned readings

*Week Ten: The Network Society*

10/29: Manuel Castells

Reading: Allan *CSST* (chp. 11)

Homework: complete TRG prep sheet

10/31: The public realm in the networked society

Due: TRG

Reading: Sennett “Capitalism and the City”

Homework: keep up with assigned readings; print entire STP for part III

*Week Eleven: Finishing Structures and Social Systems*

11/05: Review for exam and theory paper (option one)

Due: STP part III

Homework: study for exam

11/07: Exam (part III)

Homework: keep up with assigned readings; if selecting option one, complete theory paper (see Blackboard for more details)

## PART IV: MODERNITY—POSSIBILITIES AND PROBLEMS

### *Week Twelve: Critical Theory*

11/12: Jürgen Habermas

Due: theory paper (option one)

Reading: Allan *CSST* (chp. 12)

Homework: keep up with assigned readings

11/14: Incivility in civil society

Readings: political incivility articles; Leibovich “Being Glenn Beck”

Homework: complete CTA; keep up with assigned readings

### *Week Thirteen: Cultural Neofunctionalism*

11/19: Jeffrey C. Alexander

Due: CTA

Reading: Allan *CSST* (chp. 13)

Homework: complete TRG prep sheet

11/21: Performing politics

Due: TRG

Reading: Alexander *The Performance of Politics* (excerpts)

Homework: keep up with assigned readings

### *Week Fourteen: Reflexive Modernity*

11/26: Anthony Giddens

Reading: Allan *CSST* (chp. 14)

Homework: keep up with assigned readings

11/28: Thanksgiving Break (no class)

Homework: watch reflexive project of the self videos (linked on Blackboard), read body regime and life politics articles

### *Week Fifteen: Finishing Modernity*

12/03: Review for exam

Due: CTA

Homework: print entire STP for part IV

12/05: Exam (part IV)

Due: STP part IV

Homework: if selecting option two, complete theory paper (see Blackboard for more details)

### *Week Sixteen: Finals Week*

\* Theory paper (option two) is due no later than the end of the officially scheduled exam time (see Blackboard for more details)