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 summarizes, 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)

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: Tavris “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)