SOCIOLOGY 2271b: Foundations of Sociological Theory
Dr Scott Schaffer
Winter 2021

Course Meetings: Thurs 1030am to 1230pm ET
Tutorials: As scheduled by student

Short Course Description: A comprehensive survey of the founding theories and theorists (among others, Marx, Weber and Durkheim) of sociology, and of the social and historical contexts out of which their theories grew. Students will be introduced to the principal philosophical and epistemological questions concerning the nature of sociological knowledge. 2 lecture hours, 1 tutorial hour, 0.5 course.

Antirequisites: Sociology 2240E.

Prerequisites: Sociology 2270a/b.

COURSE MEETING DETAILS

There are a number of elements to this course, some of which can be done at your leisure, and some of which ought to be done at the scheduled lecture and tutorial times:

— There will be key conceptual lectures delivered asynchronously in the week prior to a class session. This is also when the readings for the course need to be completed, as well as any quizzes in the REVEL platform. You can view these mini-lectures at any time before the start of our scheduled session. These will lay out the big ideas we’ll be working with in any given week.

— During the scheduled lecture time (Thurs 1030am to 1230pm ET), we will have a synchronous meeting that will take the form of a question-and-answer session (with lecture as needed). For those who are unable to attend or access the lecture sessions live, they will be recorded and posted on the OWL site for this course. These sessions will provide you with the opportunity to dig deeper into the “big ideas,” ask questions about the readings, and gain insights into how it is that you can succeed as a university student and as a human being — among other things...

— Tutorials (which is the really important part where you get the hands-on help in learning how to deal with sociological theory) will be delivered synchronously at the time you signed up for. These will also be recorded and posted on the OWL site for students who are unable to attend or access the tutorial sessions live.

You should expect to spend somewhere between eight and ten hours per week on this course, including class meetings and reviewing recorded sessions.

REQUIRED TEXTS

There is one required text for this course:

— Kivisto, Social Theory: Roots and Branches, 6th edition. This should be purchased through the Perusall tool on the OWL platform, where we will engage it in a collaborative reading process. (If you are continuing on from SOC 2270a in Fall 2020, it is the same text.)
There will also be a number of readings made available through the OWL site. I also distribute readings that are “sociology in the world”-related via my Twitter account, which will be linked in the OWL site. They are all required and are all fair game for the examinations.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

All examinations in this course will be take-home short-answer and short-essay exams that will be submitted through the OWL site.

Assignments for the tutorials will be presented by your TA in the first class session and will likely involve some writing.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage of Course Mark</th>
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<tr>
<td>February exam</td>
<td>10% of course mark</td>
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<tr>
<td>March exam</td>
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<td>Final exam</td>
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<td>Tutorials</td>
<td>20% of course mark (⅓ at each exam)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative course readings</td>
<td>20% of course mark (⅓ at each exam)</td>
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<td>Discretionary engagement adjustment</td>
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A SHORT PRELUDE ON THE APPROACH

To my mind, sociology isn’t a field of study where you can easily memorize facts and regurgitate them. Rather, sociology represents a particular way of thinking about the world — a set of habits of mind — that will enable you to analyze a situation in the world and understand the sociologically relevant elements of that situation.

Taking a course in social theory like this one is a key component of developing those habits of mind. By understanding the ways in which key thinkers in the history of sociology have gone about working to understand the changes around them — the questions they asked, the frameworks they developed to understand them, and the ethical questions they raised about those societal changes — you will be improve your ability to understand the vast number of societal changes happening around us today.

That means, of course, that this isn’t a simple cram and recall course. It’s not about “what did this thinker say?”, so much as it is about “how did this thinker come up with this way of thinking?”. It will take work to figure these things out as they’re not given in the texts we’ll read as if they were in an undergraduate textbook. But if you take the time to read and think carefully about these works, I can assure you that you’ll find great value in the course.

It will be tough. But don’t worry: it’s my job to teach you how to think in these ways, and I take that incredibly seriously, and still we’ll manage to have fun with it.