



**SO 311 Contemporary Social Theory
Winter 2013**

Instructor: Joel Thiessen, Ph.D.

CONTACTING THE INSTRUCTOR

Class Times: TUE/THU 1:00-2:15pm

Location: L2091

Office Hours: TUE/THU 12:00-1:00pm/by appointment

Office: L2105

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REQUIRED TEXT

Delaney, Tim. 2005. *Contemporary Social Theory: Investigation and Application*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

ON RESERVE

Calhoun, Craig, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk, eds. *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. 3rd Edition. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Farganis, James. 2004. *Readings in Social Theory: The Classic Tradition to Post-Modernism*. 4th Edition. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Garner, Roberta, ed. 2000. *Social Theory: Continuity and Confrontation*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press.

Johnson, William A., Jr., et al. 2010. *The Sociology Student Writer's Manual*. 6th Edition. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Lyon, David. 1983. *Sociology and the Human Image*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Building on Classical Social Theory, this course examines the contributions of contemporary social theorists to social theory since about 1940. Among other theories, this course emphasizes development in functionalist, conflict, social interactionist, social exchange, and postmodernist thought.

EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. To understand the major social theories which dominate contemporary sociological thought.
2. To read and analyze original texts in contemporary social theory.
3. To apply contemporary sociological theory to modern day phenomena.
4. To develop critical thinking and writing skills which express your understanding and application of social theory.
5. To grapple with what it means to be a Christian sociologist.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic
<i>January 10</i>	Course Introduction
<i>January 15</i>	Examining Social Theory (Chapter 1)
<i>January 17</i>	Edward Wilson, Sociobiology, and Evolutionary Theory (Chapter 2)
<i>January 22</i>	Functionalism (Chapter 3)
<i>January 24</i>	Conflict Theory (Chapter 4)
<i>January 29</i>	Symbolic Interactionism (Chapter 5)
<i>January 31</i>	<i>*NO CLASS – Community Day</i>
<i>February 5</i>	Social Exchange Theory (Chapter 6)
<i>February 7</i>	Ethnomethodology (Chapter 7)
<i>February 12</i>	Phenomenology (Chapter 8)
<i>February 14</i>	Midterm Exam
<i>February 19</i>	<i>*NO CLASS – READING WEEK</i>
<i>February 21</i>	<i>*NO CLASS – READING WEEK</i>
<i>February 26</i>	Feminist Theory (Chapter 9)
<i>February 28</i>	Critical Theory (Chapter 10)
<i>March 5</i>	<i>*NO CLASS – Professor Speaking Engagement</i>
<i>March 7</i>	<i>*NO CLASS – Professor Out of Town</i>
<i>March 12</i>	Critical Theory (Chapter 10)
<i>March 14</i>	Modern and Postmodern Theory (Chapter 11)
<i>March 19</i>	Modern and Postmodern Theory (Chapter 11)
<i>March 21</i>	George Ritzer (Chapter 12)
<i>March 26</i>	Jonathan Turner (Chapter 13)
<i>March 28</i>	Applying Social Theory to Future Society (Chapter 14)
<i>April 2</i>	Sociology, Christianity, and the Academy (Lyon – p.7-37, 181-196)
<i>April 4</i>	Sociology, Christianity, and the Academy (Lyon – p.7-37, 181-196)
<i>April 9</i>	Final Exam

LEARNING AND CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

In the Behavioural Science Department we believe that learning is an active and interactive process, a joint venture between student and teacher and between student and student (i.e., learning is not just “downloading” information from teacher to student). Therefore, it is expected that professors will come to each class well read and prepared to engage students on the topic at hand, giving students the utmost attention and respect. In turn, it is expected that students will take an active role in the learning process. This includes: (a) regular class attendance, (b) reading course material in advance of class, (c) showing up to class on time, and (d) attentively and proactively being “present” at class (i.e., not on the internet, not texting, not conversing with the person beside you). Committing to this type of "active learning" significantly increases the learning experience for both teacher and student, and reflects the Christian ethos of excellence and respect that lies at the heart of the Ambrose educational experience. Failure to adhere to this will result in the professor either asking the student to leave the classroom for the remainder of the lecture or, in extreme cases (i.e., three or more ‘offenses’), to possibly withdraw from or fail the entire course.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

* Failure to submit all assignments will result in an automatic failing final grade.

Reading Discussions	21%
Theorist Assignments (3 x 13%)	39%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	<u>20%</u>
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

1) Reading Discussions (21%) – due 11:00am on the day of class

For each reading, students will prepare three thought provoking questions or topics for class discussion, to be submitted via email no later than 11:00am on the day of class. Students should come to class prepared to discuss their reflections on those questions/topics (e.g., Do you agree or disagree with the theory and/or why? How might you change the theory? Is this theory helpful for thinking about contemporary society and why or why not?). For each class where thought provoking questions/topics are not provided or where critical engagement with the readings are lacking, a deduction of 2% (from the total possible 21%) will take place.

2) Midterm Exam (20%) – February 14

Students will answer 2 of 3 short answer questions, and 2 of 4 essay questions based on all readings, lectures, and class discussions to this point in the course.

3) Theorist Assignments (3 x 13%) – February 4, March 11, April 1 @ 11:55pm on Moodle

On three occasions during the semester, students will read one original chapter/article by a single social theorist and address the following in 4 pages (excluding title page and bibliography): (1) Biographical sketch of the social theorist. (2) What social context did they write in? For example, what was going on in the world at the time of their writing? Were they writing in response to particular social conditions of their time period? (3) Summary of the reading. (4) How do the readings fit within the overall context of the sociological theory it represents? (5) Select two different and recent news articles (2013) and use this theorist's work to help make sense of those news stories.

The first assignment is due on February 4 and the theorist must be selected from within those discussed between chapters 2-4. The second assignment is due on March 11 and the theorist must be selected from within those discussed between chapters 5-8. The third assignment is due on April 1 and the theorist must be selected from within those discussed between chapters 9-11. Each assignment is worth 13%. Late assignments will lose 10% per day.

4) Final Exam (20%) – April 9

Students will answer 2 of 3 short answer questions, and 2 of 4 essay questions based on all readings, lectures, and class discussions since the midterm exam.

GRADING ASSIGNMENTS

The available letter grades and percentages for course grades are as follows. A detailed chart of what constitutes an 'A,' 'B,' or 'C,' etc. is also included at the end of the syllabus:

A	96% and above	(GPA – 4.0)	C	63 - 67%	(GPA – 2.0)
A	91 - 95%	(GPA – 4.0)	C-	60 - 62%	(GPA – 1.7)
A-	86 - 90%	(GPA – 3.7)	D+	56 - 59%	(GPA – 1.3)
B+	82 - 85%	(GPA – 3.3)	D	50 - 55%	(GPA – 1.0)
B	75 - 81%	(GPA – 3.0)	F	Below 50%	
B-	72 - 74%	(GPA – 2.7)			
C+	68 - 71%	(GPA – 2.3)			

	Theory, Method, Data: Correctly employs paradigms, theories, concepts, and empirical research. Both breadth and depth of resources are relied upon, demonstrating an integrated understanding of the area of study.	Analysis and Application: Student is able to extend past summarizing research/theory, and clearly analyze and apply the research/theory (e.g., implications and consequences)	Logical and Coherent Argument: Logical and coherent argument that flows from beginning to end.	Grammar and Spelling: Writing is clear and effective communicating central ideas	Formatting: Use of appropriate writing style (i.e., APA, ASA) and other formatting particulars (i.e., page length, font size, margins)	Oral Presentations: Material is clearly, confidently, and creatively communicated. Both breadth and depth of resources are relied upon, demonstrating an integrated understanding of the area of study.
A 86-100	Consistently achieved – paradigms, theories, concepts, and empirical research are summarized and used accurately and in relevant ways	The majority of assignment demonstrates a balance in summarizing and describing theory/research and analysis and application	Clearly states central thesis and purpose of paper Each sentence/paragraph logically leads to the next Carefully selected details which support general statements and central thesis	Few to no spelling, grammar, or other writing errors. Words, sentences, and paragraphs flow smoothly	Consistently achieved	Communicates effectively main theme, thesis, or primary focus of presentation. Establishes order to ideas and points out relationships between them. Number and quality of main points are sufficient Presentation of ideas develops to a logical conclusion and/or summary Strong presentation style, demonstrated through non-verbal communication, body language,

						voice, and eye contact.
B 72-85	Mostly achieved - paradigms, theories, concepts, and empirical research are summarized and used fairly accurately.	Some idea of how chosen topic bears on the development of sociological/psychological thought (i.e., some analysis and application beyond merely summarizing existing theory/research)	Clear central thesis Appropriate details/synthesis most of the time. Sentences/paragraph generally flow logically together	Some spelling, grammar, and writing errors Some awkward transitions between words, sentences, and paragraphs	Mostly achieved	Communicates to some degree the main theme, thesis, or primary focus of presentation. Ideas follow a general logical flow with presenter providing some synthesis between points Number and quality of main points are sufficient Logical conclusion and/or summary provided that develops from the presenters points Moderate presentation style, demonstrated through non-verbal communication, body language, voice, and eye contact
C 60-71	Inconsistently achieved - paradigms, theories, concepts, and empirical research are often summarized or used	Little to no connection made to the development of paradigmatic thought in terms of analyzing or applying the theory/research	Adequately limited central thesis Details/synthesis may be repetitious or absent altogether. Sentences/paragraphs rarely, if ever, flow logically together	Several spelling, grammar, and writing errors Several awkward transitions between words,	Inconsistently achieved	Unclear presentation of main theme, thesis or focus of presentation Little order to ideas and relationships between points not clarified

	inaccurately, or not at all.			sentences, and paragraphs		clearly Number and quality of main points are lacking in sufficiency Weak conclusion and/or summary Presentation style lacking as demonstrated through non- verbal communication, body language, voice, and eye contact
					<i>And so on....</i>	

IMPORTANT NOTES

- Students are advised to retain this syllabus for their records.
- It is the responsibility of all students to become familiar with and adhere to academic policies as stated in the Student Handbook and Academic Calendar. Personal information, that is information about an individual that may be used to identify that individual, may be collected as a requirement as part of taking this class. Any information collected will only be used and disclosed for the purpose for which the collection was intended. For further information contact the Privacy Compliance Officer at privacy@ambrose.edu.
- Course changes, including adding or dropping a course, may be made during the Registration Revision period, as outlined in the Calendar of Events. All course changes must be recorded on a Registration form, available from the Office of the Registrar. Due to circumstances such as class size, prerequisites or academic policy, the submission of a Registration form does not guarantee that a course will be added or removed from a student’s registration. Students may change the designation of any class from credit to audit up to the date specified in the Calendar of Events, although students are not entitled to a tuition adjustment or refund after the Registration Revision period.
- The last day to enter a course without permission and /or voluntary withdrawal from a course without financial penalty (**drop**) – Sunday, September 16, 2012 (Fall semester) or Sunday, January 20, 2013 (winter semester). These courses will not appear on the student’s transcript. Courses should be added or dropped on the student portal by the deadline date.
- Students may change the designation of any class from credit to audit, or drop out of the “audit” up to the “drop” date indicated above. After that date, the original status remains and

the student is responsible for related fees. Please note that this is a **new policy**, that came into effect in the 2010-2011 academic year.

- Withdrawal from courses after the Registration Revision period will not be eligible for tuition refund. The last day to voluntarily withdraw from a course without academic penalty (*withdraw*) – Monday, November 12, 2012 (Fall semester) or Friday, March 22, 2013 (Winter semester). A grade of “W” will appear on the student’s transcript.
- Students wishing to withdraw from a course, but who fail to do so by the applicable date, will receive the grade earned in accordance with the course syllabus. A student obliged to withdraw from a course after the Withdrawal Deadline because of health or other reasons may apply to the Registrar for special consideration.
- Although extensions to coursework in the semester are at the discretion of the instructor, students may not turn in coursework for evaluation after the last day of the scheduled final examination period unless they have received permission for a “Course Extension” from the Registrar’s Office. Requests for course extensions or alternative examination time must be submitted to the Registrar’s Office by the appropriate deadline (as listed in the Academic Calendar <http://www.ambrose.edu/publications/academiccalendar>). Course extensions are only granted for serious issues that arise “due to circumstances beyond the student’s control.”
- Please note that final grades will be available on the student portal. Printed grade sheets are no longer mailed out.
- An appeal for change of grade on any course work must be made to the course instructor within one week of receiving notification of the grade. An appeal for change of final grade must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar in writing within 30 days of receiving notification of the final grade, providing the basis for appeal. A review fee of \$50.00 must accompany the appeal to review final grades. If the appeal is sustained, the fee will be refunded.
- We are committed to fostering personal integrity and will not overlook breaches of integrity such as plagiarism and cheating. Academic dishonesty is taken seriously at Ambrose University College as it undermines our academic standards and affects the integrity of each member of our learning community. Any attempt to obtain credit for academic work through fraudulent, deceptive, or dishonest means is academic dishonesty. Plagiarism involves presenting someone else’s ideas, words, or work as one’s own. Plagiarism is fraud and theft, but plagiarism can also occur by accident when a student fails or forgets to give credit to another person’s ideas or words. Plagiarism and cheating can result in a failing grade for an assignment, for the course, or immediate dismissal from the university college. Students are expected to be familiar with the policies in the current Academic Calendar and the Student Handbook that deal with plagiarism, cheating, and the penalties and procedures for dealing with these matters. All cases of academic dishonesty are reported to the Academic Dean and become part of the student’s permanent record.