Sociology 311: Contemporary Sociological Theory  
Fall 2013

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Sociology 310 Prerequisite
Sociology 310 is a required prerequisite for this course. Those students who did not pass 310 from me MUST produce evidence that they have successfully passed 310 with a C- grade or better or else they will not be allowed to take 311. A transcript or other document showing your grade should be shown to me ASAP after class starts.

Course Objectives

Course objectives center on the four primary aims of a BYU Education: a) spiritually strengthening, b) intellectually enlarging, c) character building, and d) lifelong learning and service (Aims of a BYU Education, 1995). Both teacher and students should expect to teach and learn with/by the Spirit throughout the course and while religion will not be discussed constantly in class both teacher and student should teach and study the “subject matter bathed in the light and color of the restored gospel.”Intellectual mastery of essential sociological theory is required and will be the result of both the teacher’s and the students’ “ambitious commitment ... to rigorously study academic subjects in the light of divine truth.” Both course instruction and student independent study should seek to produce students “capable of competing with the best students in their field.” Course materials, discussion, and assignments are also aimed at helping students develop strong academic skills, including sound reasoning abilities (including the ability to discriminate “things that matter most from things of lesser import” and “the ability to engage successfully in logical reasoning, critical analysis, moral discrimination, creative imagination, and independent thought”) and the ability to communicate effectively (including the ability to “articulate honestly and thoughtfully their commitments to Christ and to his Church”). Course instruction will also aim to build strong character and the desire to continue lifelong learning and service (All quotations from Aims of a BYU Education, 1995).

Course Learning Outcomes

- Students will know the basic ideas and arguments that inform contemporary sociological inquiry, especially the philosophical foundations, some basic features of philosophy of social science, and the development of classical theory.
- Students will become conversant with the conceptual and philosophical foundations of the major theoretical perspectives of sociology.
- Students will be able to critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of each theoretical perspective.
Texts


Articles available through BYU Course Electronic Reserve (password: kna311)

Evaluation
Final grades will be based on three exams (100 pts. each), regular reading assessments (100 pts.), a writing-to-learn portfolio (75 pts.) and course participation (40 pts.). Final grade distribution will be based on percentage of total points earned (A= 93%; A- = 90%-92%; B+ = 87% - 89%; etc.)

Exams
Exams will be given in the testing center and will focus on the material covered since the last exam. The final exam will cover material since the last exam and may include several comprehensive essay questions. Exams may consist of multiple-choice, matching, definitions, true-false with justification, short answer, and essay questions. Essay answers will be evaluated in terms of the depth of analysis offered, the comprehensiveness of the answer, and the clarity of understanding shown. Standards will be such that without keeping up with the reading, regular attendance and participation, students will not receive high marks. **Exams cannot be made up unless the student has discussed their situation with me before the exam is given.** Exams will be given as noted in the course outline and any changes will be announced at least two class periods in advance of the exam.

Course Participation
*Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out answers. Learning is not a spectator sport. Students must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.* (Chickering and Gamson, *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*)

Theory is all about ideas. Learning sociological theory requires learning to “think sociologically.” This course aims to help students to learn to think sociologically through reading sociological theory, class and study group discussion on theoretical issues, and writing about ideas. Learning to think requires more than just reading about ideas. It also requires critical questioning and engaging in a dialogue with others about ideas. Dialogue is encouraged through general class participation and through study group participation.

**General Class Participation:** For each meeting I will prepare some lecture material for presentation to the class and will take the lead asking questions to both probe your understanding of the assigned reading and stimulate group discussion. General participation in such discussions
is required and will be a part of your final grade. The most important way for students to participate is through reading the material beforehand, asking questions about it, and being prepared to answer questions about it. Other ways to participate will include providing additional examples of concepts or ideas discussed in class, discussing ways in which the ideas either do or do not make sense to you, challenging/critically examining the presentation of the concepts in your assigned readings, etc. Familiarity with the assigned reading is essential for constructive participation and understanding of the course material.

**Study Group Participation:** Participation in a study group is required and 5 pts. for each section of the course will be assigned for active participation in a study group. Active participation in a study group requires meeting and discussing course material for at least one hour each meeting. Active participation also means meeting at least twice each exam period, coming to each meeting having read the material, and preparing handouts to assist other members of the study group. Handouts may consist of summary answers to questions from the study guide, outlines of chapters, definitions and examples of key concepts in a chapter, matching lists of authors and book titles, etc. I encourage cooperative work and dividing up responsibilities amongst the members of the group. Evaluation of study group participation will be made after each exam period with each individual reporting what they and other members of their group did.

**Reading Theory and Reading Assessment**

Doing well in a theory course requires that students do the assigned reading before coming to class. Typically there is a lot of reading assigned in theory courses. Learning how to read well is important in becoming a competent sociologist but it is absolutely critical in becoming proficient in sociological theory. Although some readings may be more challenging than others, all of the readings have been selected because of their capacity to facilitate student learning and understanding independent of class discussion. With proper effort each student should be able to access the assigned readings and come to class prepared to ask questions and discuss the ideas presented. All of the readings, however, require active, engaged reading rather than passive reading. For best results, I recommend that you **NOT** plan on reading in front of the television, reading while listening to your favorite music, reading late at night when you are tired, reading in a comfortable chair that will easily put you to sleep, or just reading with a highlighter and passively marking sentences as you go. Instead, read at a desk, read with a pen that you can write in the margins and write notes with, or read at a computer in which you can enter your reading notes. Reading theory is often difficult and demanding work but it is also the most important work of the course. You must learn to do it well!

For some of the more difficult readings, a study guide has been prepared to assist students in their attempts to understand the assigned reading. Be sure to make a copy of the study guide and use it as you work your way through the reading material. The study guides will also help prepare you for the reading assessments.

To encourage completion of assigned readings prior to class there will be a reading assessment or reading quiz for each assigned reading that students will be required to complete prior to attending class. The reading assessment will be posted on Blackboard several days before class and will be required to be completed at least 15 minutes prior to the beginning of each class period. The reading assessment will be open book and will typically consist of
multiple-choice questions. The questions will be designed such that only those students who have read the assigned material will be able to do well on the quiz. Although the quiz is open book, students are expected to complete the quiz individually without the assistance of other students. All of the reading assessments for the course are worth 100 pts. or 1/5 of the total course grade. To compute the points earned we will take the percentage of reading assessment points earned and translate it into points toward the final grade (i.e., if you earn 89% of the reading quiz points then you will get 89 points toward your final grade).

**Writing-to-Learn Portfolio**

Learning to think sociologically also requires writing about sociological ideas. In order to facilitate learning sociological ideas and ways of thinking each student will be required to construct a portfolio of informal writing about the ideas discussed in the course. For each week of the semester students will be required to write at least one entry of at least two pages (double-spaced) minimum. I encourage you to write with a computer but entries may be handwritten (if legible) as well. These writing assignments are aimed to assist students to learn the course material and to think critically about it. Therefore, all entries must be written specifically for this course. No material previously written for another course may be used as a portfolio entry. Most entries will require students to decide what and how they want to write. However, periodically throughout the course I may provide directed writing assignments to be added to the portfolio.

Evaluation: Formal evaluation will take place during the class period prior to an exam. Portfolios will be turned in and each student will read, evaluate and give suggestions for improvement on two portfolios. Evaluating two portfolios is required to earn full credit. The portfolio will be worth 25 pts. for each section of the course.

Criteria for Evaluation: 1) Consistency of writing (One entry each week=A); 2) Total length of entries (2 pages per week=A); and 3) Quality of entries.

Format: Each entry must include a title and begin on a new page. Each entry must include the day of week and full date the entry was written. Again, the date indicates the day the entry was completed (not started, not mostly written, but actually finished). Each entry must be a minimum of at least two pages double-spaced, normal 12 point font with normal headings and margins.

Quality of Writing: Quality will be determined based on an assessment of the effort put into the entries, the extent of critical thinking exemplified, originality and creativeness, and basic features of good writing. High marks are reserved for those portfolios showing evidence of thinking. Entries that are nothing more than summaries of class lectures or course readings are not acceptable! You must show your own thinking about the ideas in your writing. Finally, portfolio entries should demonstrate critical thinking about the ideas and not your personal feelings or reaction to course material. Avoid subjectivizing your writing. In other words, your writing should be less about you and more about the ideas. They should be written in such a way that you could imagine someone disagreeing with you. For example, if I write something like, “I really like how Marx characterizes the alienation of modern life.” Then, someone can’t come along and say, “I disagree. I don’t think you like Marx.” If your entry is about you, then it is not demonstrating critical thinking. If, however, you were to say, “I think Marx’s description of alienation in modern life is very insightful because…” and then proceed to give reasons for why
you think Marx is on to something, then someone could disagree with you.

Style: Normally the audience should be another student in the class, but the audience may also be yourself, the instructor, a friend or parent, the general public, etc. Writing style should be informal but not sloppy. This means that you should not spend an inordinate amount of time preparing a perfect essay with a thesis statement, introduction, body and conclusion. The entries are working drafts of your ideas on paper, not finished essays. Your entries should, however, be easily accessible to the reader (generally another student) with a clear presentation of your train of thought. Spelling, grammar, and clarity of writing are important but not as important as they would be for a formal writing assignment. (I recommend sitting down at a computer and just writing without worrying about writing style, format, and so forth. After you’ve finished writing, reread with the idea of assessing how clear your writing has been. Make any necessary changes and move on.)

**Ideas for Writing to Learn Portfolio**

1) Take a key concept or sociological theory and write about how it relates to the gospel. In what ways do the gospel and the sociological ideas relate? Do the gospel and sociology converge into similar ideas? Or are they divergent in key places? What does the gospel have to offer sociologists on this issue? What does sociology have to offer disciples of Christ on this issue?

2) Take issue with some idea in the reading or course discussion. Show understanding of the idea and then show how you disagree.

3) Take an idea or set of ideas presented in the course material and apply it to society, a social institution, your own personal life, or something else. How does this idea help to make sense of the world around us? How does it increase our understanding?

4) Take an idea or set of ideas presented in the course material and apply it to society, a social institution, your own personal life, or something else. What are the implications of this idea for how we live our lives? Does this idea help us know how we should organize our society, social institutions, etc.? What are things we should change to make society better?

5) What should be the role of sociology in the world today? Do you agree with a theorist’s understanding of what sociology should be and what it should do? What will (or should) sociology be like in the 21st century? What will be (or should be) the role of sociologists (social scientists) in the 21st century?

6) Speculate on where you think society (or some aspect of society) is heading. What will it be like in the 21st century? Do the sociological ideas you are learning today help make sense of what life will be like in the near future? Do they help explain why society is changing in the way that it is?

7) Take a key concept and write to a fellow student that is having trouble understanding it. Try to define and explain the concept to them. Provide an example or two that will help to facilitate their understanding of the concept.

8) Describe how the various ideas of the course relate to one another. Connect ideas presented in one part of the course with ideas presented in another part. How are these ideas central to how sociologists understand the world?
9) Write an essay response to a study guide question(s). What are your thoughts on the issue? Do you agree or disagree with the author? Why?

10) Take some current event in the news and discuss how it relates to some feature of the course. How do sociological ideas you are learning in the course shed light on this issue? What do you think?

11) Compare and/or contrast the ideas from the course material with ideas learned in other classes. Do they agree with one another? How are they different? Do the other courses provide examples of the ideas learned in the course material? Do the ideas in this course provide a basis to critique the ideas learned in another course?

12) Take a topic (such as family, sports, politics, BYU, whatever) and examine how it appears from the perspective of a particular sociological theory. Contrast that with another theoretical perspective. Which do you think is best? Why?

13) Any other ideas you can think of that show some creativity, taking the ideas and issues seriously (although you could also write something that pokes fun at sociology and tries to be humorous), critical thinking, and so forth.

Statement on Academic Honesty, Plagiarism, Sexual Discrimination, and Disabilities

Academic Honesty
BYU students should seek to be totally honest in their dealings with others. They should complete their own work and be evaluated based upon that work. They should avoid academic dishonesty and misconduct in all its forms, including plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, cheating, and other academic misconduct. Students are responsible not only to adhere to the Honor Code requirement to be honest but also to assist other students in fulfilling their commitment to be honest. See complete statement on academic honesty at http://honorcode.byu.edu/content/academic-honesty-details

While all students sign the honor code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in this new age of the internet; as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. Please know that as your professor I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on papers. See http://www.byu.edu/honorcode for specific examples of intentional, inadvertent plagiarism, and fabrication, falsification.

Preventing Sexual Harassment
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU’s policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the University but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.

Students with Disabilities
Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability that may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the UAC. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You may contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB.
Week 1 September 4
Topics: Intro to Course
Assigned Reading:
   Appelrouth, pp. 1-20

Sept. 6
Topics: Sociology: Theory and Method
Assigned Reading:
   Hughes, Chap. 1

Week 2 Sept. 9
Topics: The Positivist Project
Assigned Reading:
   Hughes, Chap. 2, pp. 34-47

Sept. 11
Topics: Exchange Theory; George Homans
Assigned Reading:
   Appelrouth, pp. 414-428

Sept. 13
Topics: Rational Choice Theory
Assigned Reading:
   Appelrouth, pp. 449-450
   Hechter, “A Theory of Group Solidarity” (Electronic Course Reserve: ECR)

Week 3 Sept. 16
Topics: Talcott Parsons & Structural Functionalism
Assigned Reading:
   Appelrouth, pp. 325-338, 352-355

Sept. 18
Topics: Theory, Measurement, Research
Assigned Reading:
   Hughes, pp. 47-69

Sept. 20
Topics: Theory & Variable Analysis
Assigned Reading:
   Hughes, pp. 69-92

Week 4 Sept. 23
Topics: Theory & Constructing Data
Assigned Reading:
   Hughes, Chap. 5

Sept. 25
Topics: Theory & Multivariate Analysis
Assigned Reading:
   Hughes, Chap. 6

Sept. 27
Topics: Positivism & Contemporary Sociology
Assigned Reading:
   Hughes, Chap. 7

Week 5 Sept. 30
Topics: Theory, Method, & Science
Assigned Reading:
   Williams, “Language and Methods of Science” (ECR)

Oct. 2
Topics: Alternatives to Positivism: Critical Theorizing
Assigned Reading:
   Stan Knapp, “Critical Theorizing”
   (Download from BYU Library Catalog: Journal of Family Theory & Review, 1 September, 2009, pp. 133-145)

Oct. 4
Catch-up/Review
PORTFOLIOS DUE (On Learning Suite/Digital Dialog prior to class)
(4 entries due; 8+ total pages)

EXAM # 1 (Testing Center: Oct. 4-7)
**Week 6 Oct. 9**  
**Portfolio Evaluations Due**  
Topics: Pragmatism; George Herbert Mead  
Assigned Reading:  
   Appelrouth, pp. 289-307

**Oct. 11**  
Topics: George Herbert Mead  
Assigned Reading:  
   Appelrouth, pp. 307-321

**Week 7 Oct. 14**  
Topics: Herbert Blumer & Symbolic Interactionism  
Assigned Reading:  
   Scott Harris, “What Can Interactionism Contribute to the Study of Inequality?”  
   Blumer Quotes (Learning Suite)

**Oct. 16**  
Topics: Theory & Interpretation  
Assigned Reading:  
   Hughes, Chap. 8

**Oct. 18**  
Topics: Theory & Interpretive Research  
Assigned Reading:  
   Hughes, Chap. 9

**Week 8 Oct. 21**  
Topics: Interactionism & The Actor’s Point of View  
Assigned Reading:  
   Hughes, Chap. 10

**Oct. 23**  
Topics: Ethnomethodology, Data Collection, and Analysis  
Assigned Reading:  
   Hughes, Chap. 11

**Oct. 25**  
Topics: Phenomenology  
Assigned Reading:  
   Crotty, Phenomenology, pp. 78-86  
   (ECR)  
   Ihde, “Illusions and Multi-Stable Phenomena” (ECR)

**Week 9 Oct. 28**  
Topics: Existential Phenomenology & Goffman  
Assigned Reading:  
   Stanley Raffel, “If Goffman Had Read Levinas,” pp. 179-192  
   (Download from BYU Library Catalog: *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 2: July 2002, pp. 179-202)

**Oct. 30**  
Topics: Erving Goffman  
Assigned Reading:  
   Appelrouth, pp. 479-492

**Nov. 1**  
Topics: Erving Goffman  
Assigned Reading:  
   Appelrouth, pp. 467-79

**Week 10 Nov. 4**  
Catch-up/Review  
**PORTFOLIOS DUE (On Learning Suite/Digital Dialog prior to class)**  
(4 entries due; 8+ total pages)  
**EXAM # 2 (Testing Center: Nov. 5-8)**
Week 11 Nov. 11
Portfolio Evaluations Due
Topics: Ethical Phenomenology & Emmanuel Levinas
Assigned Reading:
  Kunz, “Alternative Paradigm” (ECR)
  Levinas Quotes (Learning Suite)
  Raffel, pp. 192-201

Nov. 13
Topics: Expertise and the Market
Assigned Reading:
  Bauman, “The Business in Everyday Life” (ECR)

Nov. 15
Topics: Critical Theory
Assigned Reading:
  Appelrouth, pp. 376-393
  Hughes, pp. 279-285

Week 12 Nov. 18
Topics: Critical Theory: Horkheimer & Adorno
Assigned Reading:
  Appelrouth, pp. 393-404

Nov. 20
Topics: Jürgen Habermas
Assigned Reading:
  Giddens on Habermas (ECR)

Nov. 22
Topics: Jürgen Habermas
Assigned Reading:
  Appelrouth, pp. 685-694

Week 13 Nov. 25
Topics: Pierre Bourdieu
Assigned Reading:
  Appelrouth, pp. 652-664

Nov. 26 (Friday Class on Tuesday)
Topics: Pierre Bourdieu
Assigned Reading:
  Appelrouth, pp. 676-684

Nov. 27 & 29
Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 14 Dec. 2
Topics: Poststructuralism; Postmodernism; Michel Foucault
Assigned Reading:
  Appelrouth, pp. 606-621
  Foucault Quotes (Learning Suite)

Dec. 4
Topics: Michel Foucault
Assigned Reading:
  Shumway on Foucault (ECR)

Dec. 6
Topics: Michel Foucault
Assigned Reading:
  Appelrouth, pp. 622-636

Week 15 Dec. 9
Topics: Poststructuralism & Postmodernism
Assigned Reading:
  Hughes, Chap. 13
  Hughes, pp. 325-333

Dec. 11
Topics: Concluding Thoughts
Assigned Reading:
  Hughes, pp. 340-343
  Hughes, Chap. 15

Dec. 12
PORTFOLIOS DUE (On Learning Suite/Digital Dialog by midnight)
(4 entries due; 8+ total pages)

FINAL EXAM (In class)
Friday, Dec. 20: 11:00 - 2:00