Course Syllabus

About the course:

This course centers around some of the key texts that have helped shape and define the social sciences, particularly sociology and its subfields. “Contemporary theory” is an enormously broad umbrella, covering an amount of material that is impossible to read in a lifetime—never mind a five-week summer course. As such, this course aims for a reasonable sample and a balanced foundation in the major theoretical strains of the 20th and 21st centuries. The course also focuses on honing the crafts of reading and writing theory-driven and -oriented texts.

You will not be required to purchase any texts for the course. All course readings will be posted to Canvas in .pdf format (note: this course is a survey; find the readings that speak to you, and then dive deeper at the library or your local bookseller).

I do insist, however, that you develop a system of marking texts and writing up notes for each text (the reading note assignments are intended to encourage this), and that you bring your texts to class with you. Detailed notes will help you with your longer writing assignments (about which more below). We will frequently turn to the texts themselves during discussion.

Because this is a writing-intensive (DC) course, the majority of your grade will come from written assignments. There will be no exams. There are no discussion sections, but attendance and participation during the scheduled class time are also incredibly important.

This course has a very heavy and difficult reading load. When discussing and writing about theory, the original material is by far the best resource you have. You are expected to arrive to each class with the reading for that day already completed. Keeping up with the reading will be one of the most important steps you can take to ensure that you do well in the course. Please note that some of the readings are recommended, rather than required.

We will discuss some reading strategies on the first day, but please remember that reading, and perhaps especially reading social theory, is both an active process and a skill that develops with practice. There are different ways of reading texts, but please remember to be a generous reader and not to dismiss texts prematurely as too dense or opaque, even when they are difficult at first. Do your best to understand the author’s meaning, and take breaks and reread portions of the text as necessary. Simply giving yourself adequate time to read and process the texts is key, though I know that this is a tall order for a five-week summer course.

For a helpful description of different modes of reading, please see this discussion by Joseph Dumit, a UC Davis anthropologist: “How I Read” (http://dumit.net/how-i-read/).
Grading:

Your grade breakdown for the course will be as follows:

- Reading notes: 10%
- Short essays (2): 30%
- Final paper (including rough draft and peer review): 40%
- Attendance and participation: 20%

Written assignments:

Note: Your three essays will be submitted, graded, and returned via Canvas. As noted below, the rough draft of your final essay will be brought to class as a hard copy. Late assignments will receive a one letter grade deduction for each day between the deadline and submission (up to 50%). Late rough drafts of the final essay will receive no credit.

- You will be required to submit written reading notes. This is not a formal writing assignment and is merely intended to encourage you to keep up with reading and to get in the practice of taking notes as you read. Simply jot down your thoughts and questions as you read and bring them with you to every class (they will be checked). Any format is acceptable, but please include at least two questions. This should be an easy 10% of your final grade.
- During the second and third weeks, you will have 3-4 page (or 750-1000 word) response papers due by 11:59 pm on Friday, August 10 and Friday, August 17. These assignments will be in response to brief prompts that I will post to Canvas one week in advance. Each paper will account for 20% of your course grade.
- You will have a 6-7-page (or 1900-2250 word) final paper due by 11:59 pm on Friday, August 31. The final paper will ask you to apply some of the theory we have learned to a contemporary social issue. A complete rough draft for this paper (hard copy) will be due in class on Thursday, August 23. This rough draft will be reviewed by one of your peers and returned in class on Tuesday, August 28. Both the rough draft and completion of the peer review will be factored into the final paper portion of your grade (40% of total).

Boring-but-important details: All papers (not reading notes) should be double-spaced, in Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins and page numbers and must be submitted as Microsoft Word documents (.doc or .docx). Please title all written assignments (cover pages are not necessary). Use ASA formatting for all assignments (you can find a brief ASA style guide on Canvas). Include a properly formatted sources page/section (titled “References” in ASA) with all written assignments (except reading notes).

Class format:

Since we have the benefit of long stretches of time, a relatively small class size, and a teaching assistant, our class time will be spent primarily in seminar-style discussions, rather than a unidirectional lecture. Each class will be divided into two halves. Because these are difficult
readings, and people bring different interpretations and experiences to the texts, we will spend
the first part of each class engaged in breaking down the assigned texts and engaging in close
readings. During the second part of each class, we will discuss how these texts relate to other
works and how they can be applied. Between the two parts of the class, we will have a break.
This format is tentative and subject to change.

**Electronics policy:**

Since I am providing you with electronic copies of all course readings, I will permit you to
engage with these readings on your computers in class. However, if you are discovered to be
using your computer for other purposes, I may ask that you refrain from using your computer
and bring printed copies of the readings to class instead. Cell phone use is not permitted during
class, so please place your phones on *silent* mode (not vibrate) during class time. Violations will
affect your participation grade.

**DRC Accommodations:**

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) reduces barriers to inclusion and full participation for
students with disabilities by providing support to individually determine reasonable academic
accommodations. If you have questions or concerns about exam accommodations, or any other
disability-related matter, please contact the DRC office, located in Hahn 125 or at 831-459-2089
or drc@ucsc.edu.

**Title IX:**

The university cherishes the free and open exchange of ideas and enlargement of knowledge. To
maintain this freedom and openness requires objectivity, mutual trust, and confidence; it requires
the absence of coercion, intimidation, or exploitation. The principal responsibility for
maintaining these conditions must rest upon those members of the university community who
exercise most authority and leadership: faculty, managers, and supervisors.

The university has therefore instituted a number of measures designed to protect its community
from sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, and other related prohibited
conduct. Information, advice, referrals, and/or copies of the UC Policy on Sexual Violence and
Sexual Harassment and the UC Santa Cruz Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Reports
of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment are available to all students, faculty, and staff by
contacting Cherie Scricca, Interim Title IX/Sexual Harassment Officer, 105 Kerr Hall, 459-2462,
or cscricca@ucsc.edu.
Academic integrity:

Academic integrity is the cornerstone of a university education. Academic dishonesty diminishes the university as an institution and all members of the university community and tarnishes the value of a UC Santa Cruz degree.

All members of the UC Santa Cruz community have an explicit responsibility to foster an environment of trust, honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. All members of the university community are expected to present as their original work only that which is truly their own. All members of the community are expected to report observed instances of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty to ensure that the integrity of scholarship is valued and preserved at UC Santa Cruz.

In the event a student is found in violation of the UC Santa Cruz Academic Integrity policy, he or she may face both academic sanctions imposed by the instructor of record and disciplinary sanctions imposed either by the provost of his or her college or the Academic Tribunal convened to hear the case. Violations of the Academic Integrity policy can result in dismissal from the university and a permanent notation on a student’s transcript.

For the full policy and disciplinary procedures on academic dishonesty, students and instructors should refer to the Academic Integrity page at the Division of Undergraduate Education: https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_misconduct.

Note: Please familiarize yourself with what qualifies as plagiarism (see https://guides.library.ucsc.edu/citesources/plagiarism). Discovery of plagiarism in submitted assignments will result in an automatic zero for the assignment in question and may result in further disciplinary sanctions.

Reading schedule:

Day 1: Introduction (July 31)


Day 2: Neo-Marxism, Critical Theory, and the Frankfurt School (August 2)


Day 3: Neo-Marxism, Critical Theory, and the Frankfurt School (cont.) (August 7)


Day 4: Structuralism and Structural Functionalism (August 9)


------------------------August 10, 11:59 pm: First short essay due via Canvas------------------------

**Day 5: Symbolic Interactionism (August 14)**


**Recommended:**


**Day 6: Challenging the Mainstream (August 16)**


-----------------------------------August 17, 11:59 pm: Second short essay due via Canvas-----------------------------------

**Day 7: Into Post-Structuralism and Social Constructionism (August 21)**


Recommended:


Day 8: Postcolonial, Race, and Racial Formation Theory (August 23)

Rough draft of final essay due in class


Day 9: Feminist, Gender, Queer, andIntersectional Theory (August 28)

Peer review of final essay due in class


**Recommended:**


**Day 10: Actor-Network Theory, Material-Semiotics, Social Worlds (August 30)**


**Recommended:**


------------------------August 31, 11:59 pm: Final essay due via Canvas------------------------