SOCY 105B: CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORY
University of California, Santa Cruz, Summer 2023 (Session 2)
MW 1-4:40pm, Physical Sciences Building 140
Professor: Koda Sokol (they/he), isokol@ucsc.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays 10am-12pm, or by appointment (Zoom link)

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Social theory is a powerful tool for helping us make sense of a complex world, craft transgressive solidarities, and engage in collective political action. In this class, we will start by reflecting on how each of us moves through the world with our own set of theoretical frameworks that make meaning of our personal experiences. From there, we will learn how to read the works of prominent twentieth and twenty-first century theorists carefully and reparatively, while also acknowledging their limits. We will discuss the ways in which theory can help us historicize, demystify, and denaturalize concepts that we often take for granted: race, gender, identity, capitalism, and power, for example. We will consider how the writings of different theorists were shaped by their own contexts, as well as the extent to which their insights can subsequently be “stretched” (Fanon, 1961) to other settings. Building on the foundations of SOCY105A, this class will delve into questions about knowledge production, the nature of power, the categories of identity, and the possibilities for revolutionary change.

Course goals are as follows:
- Engage actively and critically with the works of key twentieth and twenty-first theorists by reading their works closely and considering how they help us make sense of the world
- Compare and contrast different theoretical approaches to understanding social phenomena
- Debate the limits of different theoretical approaches
- Apply insights from theorists we have studied in this class to current events and cultural objects
- Use theoretical concepts and frameworks in your own writing

REQUIRED TEXTS
All required texts and media will be made available on the course’s Canvas site.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS
- Reading, attendance, and active participation in seminar discussion
  Attendance is mandatory and extremely important for succeeding in class, so it will make up a large portion of your grade. This is doubly so considering we only meet for 5 weeks in the summer and because there are no sections where you can catch up on material you may have missed. You are expected to read the texts due by each class date and be prepared to participate by offering commentary, raising questions, and engaging with one
another. You are expected to bring the class’s readings and a note-taking device (paper or
digital) to class. If you are unable to come to class for whatever reason, please try to let
the professor know at least one week in advance so that we can arrange the best way to
accommodate your absence.

- **Reading responses (weekly)**
  You will submit a total of five short (~250 words) reading commentaries in response to
the week’s assigned readings. Specific instructions and prompts for each assignment are
posted to Canvas Discussions. Without precluding the possibility of critique or
disagreement, you are encouraged to read the texts generously and reparatively, engaging
with them on the basis of what they say and the contexts in which they were written. Post
your responses to Canvas under “Discussions” by 1pm before Wednesday’s class. We
will be reading each other’s responses during class as a way to launch discussion.

- **Final paper**
  You will write a 5-7-page final paper that explicitly uses at least three readings to make
an analytical argument about one cultural object (visual art, movie, album/song, TV
show/episode, book, music video, ad campaign, etc.). You may analyze any cultural
objects offered in the syllabus, or select your own. You should explore how the chosen
theorists would approach the cultural object similarly and/or differently, as well as offer
your own personal perspective. Complete final papers will include the following:
  - A clear thesis statement/argument (stated in the introduction)
  - Use of concepts and terms from class to help explain the argument
  - At least four pieces of evidence (direct quotes, paraphrasing, and/or summarizing)
    from appropriate course readings with proper citation and full explanations of the
    evidence meaning and relevance
  - A works cited page
  Prior to submitting the final paper, you will submit a final paper outline identifying the
chosen cultural object and readings. The outline should contain a well-crafted thesis
statement and preview how the readings will be used to analyze the cultural object in
relation to class themes.

- **Late work**
  You are expected to do your best to turn work in on time to avoid falling behind in the
course. At the same time, if there is a problem meeting a deadline, I expect you to let me
know as soon as possible. Work turned in late without any communication will be subject
to a late penalty. You may not turn in the final paper late.

- **Final grade calculation**
  Attendance and participation: 25%
  Weekly assignments: 25%
  Final paper proposal + bibliography: 15%
  Final paper: 35%
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
Plagiarism is a serious academic violation. Plagiarism means using the intellectual material of another person or source as your own—this includes paraphrasing someone else’s ideas without a citation, or even using artificial intelligence like ChatGPT to complete assignments intended to be written by you. Any assignment that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not been previously submitted for credit in another course. Students must properly cite sources of all work that is not their own. Visit the UCSC Sociology Department’s Academic Integrity page for helpful tips and clarifications. Students should be aware that penalties for plagiarism are outlined in The Navigator and the UCSC Student Policies and Regulations Handbook. When in doubt, ask.

ACCESSIBILITY
UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC). Feel free to contact me directly to discuss ways we can ensure your full participation in the course. I encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu.

TITLE IX
Title IX prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy at the Campus Advocacy Resources & Education (CARE) Office by calling (831) 502-2273. In addition, Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) can provide confidential counseling support, (831) 459-2628. You can also report gender discrimination directly to the University’s Title IX Office, (831) 459-2462. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD, (831) 459-2231 ext. 1. For emergencies call 911. Please note that I am required to report any incidences of sexual harassment or sexual violence to the Title IX office of the University. If you decide to talk to me, I will do my best to help you and will keep what you say private, only talking to Title IX and my supervisor to ensure that you receive the support that you need.

________________________________________

SEMINAR OUTLINE

What is theory good for?
Session 1: Introducing Theory
Session 2: The Production of Knowledge

- Cultural Object: *Pleasure Gardens* (artwork by Tourmaline)

Optional/Additional:

**How does power make and shape us?**

Session 3: Subjects and Power


Optional/Additional:
- Susan Stryker. 2014. “Biopolitics.”

Session 4: Theorizing Sex and Gender

- Cultural Object: *Becoming an Image* (artwork by Cassils)

**How does race organize and affect our lives?**

Session 5: Theorizing Race and Racism


Optional/Additional:
- Franz Fanon. 1952. “Chapter 5.” In *Black Skin, White Masks*.

Session 6: Racial Capitalism

- Cultural Object: *Parasite* (movie)

**How does identity shape cultural politics?**

Session 7: Cultural Politics
● Stuart Hall. 1981. “Notes on Deconstructing the Popular.”
● Herman Gray. 2013. “Subject(ed) to Recognition.”
● Cultural Object: *Rush* (music video by Troye Sivan)

Optional/Additional:
● Stuart Hall. 1993. “What is this ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture?”

**Session 8: Identity Politics**


Optional/Additional:

*Why does affect matter?*

**Session 9: Feeling Theory, Theorizing Feeling**


**Session 10: Conclusion**

● Reserved for any student-recommended readings and/or final paper presentations