SOCI 309
Contemporary Social Theorizing

Instructor: Dr. Steve Garlick

Course Description:
Social theorizing involves ways of trying both to explain the world we live in, and to think beyond the given towards a different world. It is a creative activity that is concerned with generating new ideas and with the taking up of perspectives that allow us to ask, and to try to answer, questions concerning some of the most crucial issues in our lives.

This course builds on classical social theorizing (SOCI 210) and mainly focuses on important theorists and concepts that emerged during the latter part of the twentieth century. We will trace the influence of classical theorists on the work of those who came after them, as well as examining innovations specific to contemporary social theory. We will consider how different social theories emerged as responses to specific historical conditions. This is not, however, a course on the history of social theory; rather, we will be concerned with the contemporary relevance of the theories covered, and with how they can assist us in developing our own capacities to theorize.

Course Objectives:
Our objectives this term are: (1) to gain a broad understanding of the trajectory of social theory over the latter half of the twentieth century; (2) to become familiar with important concepts (e.g., power, ideology, gender, postcolonialism, globalization) and debates (e.g., social structure vs. individual agency, modernity vs. postmodernity, the relation of language to social life) that inform social theory today; and (3) to gain experience in theorizing (i.e., creating and using theoretical concepts to produce new insights into contemporary social phenomena). All of the coursework that students will undertake is designed to develop their abilities to theorize for themselves.

Course Pre-requisites:
SOCI 210 – Classical Social Theorizing

Recommended Textbook:

---

1 This outline is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. A detailed course outline will be made available in August before the first day of class. Only that outline is to be considered official.