INSTRUCTOR: Dr. William Little

Course Description and Objectives

In this course we examine modern social theory by introducing some of the sociological paradigms that emerged in the post Second World War period including logical positivism, structural functionalism, rational choice theory, symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, structuralism, critical theory, feminism, genealogy and postmodernism. The consolidation of sociology as a “multi-paradigmatic discipline” dates to this period and is a product of the increasingly apparent difficulties of founding a single, comprehensive “science” of society. The divisions in sociological theory can be traced to their origins in the division of modern thought into three types of knowledge: positivist, hermeneutic and critical. We will use these divisions to organize the readings in the course.

Skills Development

The work of the course will focus on introducing the theoretical concepts necessary to understand contemporary debates in the discipline. We will also be focusing on developing the skills of the sociological theorist, especially the skills of writing clearly and coherently, of constructing analytical arguments, of reading texts closely, of thinking analytically and rigorously, of deriving social concepts from primary sources, of expressing ideas in debate and discussion with others, and of elaborating one’s own theoretical reflections.

Required Textbook

Supplementary readings will be made available via CourseSpaces.

* A more detailed course outline will be distributed to students during the first week of classes.