

SOCI 309 ¹

Course Title: Contemporary Social Theorizing

Instructor: Tucker D. Farris

tfarris@uvic.ca

Course Description:

This course provides students an opportunity to build on previous concepts covered in SOCI 210 and propels the exploration of social thought into the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In keeping with this trajectory, it serves as a place for students to learn the subtle art of social theorizing, or theoretical thinking. This process is a deeply personal, abstract, and creative exercise in expanding the horizons of our understanding of that which makes us human—our experience of social reality. What will emerge in this class is a chance to trace the roots of modern social theory through its origins in classical sociological thought, and to map its current and future directions. Simultaneously, students will engage the theoretical guideposts of our discipline through their own unique and creative explorations in the practice of theorizing.

This course will not be deeply focused on the history of theory, nor will it be entirely focused on ensuring students have memorized all aspects of a specific set of ‘key’ theoretical texts. Rather, it will be a journey through the theories that comprise modern sociology, with keen focus being placed on interpretation, and on the development of one’s own process of theorizing the phenomena that make up the social world of contemporary society.

Course Objectives:

Students are expected to be able to engage critically with primary texts in contemporary social theory and demonstrate a general knowledge of topics covered. Students should emerge from this course with a more grounded understanding of both the evolution of theory from its roots in classical sociology and philosophy, and a working knowledge of contemporary application of theoretical concepts in sociological research. Further, students may expect a course that focuses on the process of developing a theoretical mindset, and ‘how’ to engage the social world as a theorist. Coursework will specifically be dedicated to fostering this practice of theoretical thought, and allow students a place to create, experiment, and develop original ideas that provide new understandings and new paths to uncover in the continued study of social life.

Course Pre-requisites:

SOCI 210-Classical Social Theorizing

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.

*These two thinkers will definitely feature in our course.

Topics May Include:

Theorists that may be covered: C. Wright Mills, Michel Foucault*, Pierre Bourdieu*, Erving Goffman, Herbert Blumer, G. William Domhoff, Raewyn Connell, Agnes Heller, Donna Haraway, Judith Butler, Dorothy Smith, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Viola Cordova, and Glen Coulthard (Potentially in conjunction with Axel Honneth). Additional cursory review of concepts from classical thinkers will be included as contextualising elements.

Topics that may be covered: Cultural/Social/Economic/Symbolic Capital; Power; Poststructuralism; Postmodernism; Feminism; Indigenous Knowledge; Contemporary Conflict Theory & “The New Left” school; Symbolic Interactionism (individual and collective social interaction, symbolic meaning, individual components of social interaction, and the self and society); Symbolic Violence; Evolutions of Marxist Thought; Neoliberalism; Globalization; Further topics TBD.

Required Resources May Include:

All course readings will be provided as digital files through Brightspaces for download. No textbook purchases will be required. Students will engage almost exclusively with primary sources and original texts.

Students will also need a computer with internet access, and sufficient audio/visual equipment in order to engage fully with the course.

If the need for further materials is required; students will be duly notified.

Mode of Delivery:

This course is scheduled for Mondays and Thursdays from 1:00-2:15PM (PST). On Mondays, a pre-recorded video lecture will be uploaded to the course website. This lecture will cover a contextualization/summary of the theorist being covered, and the material of the week. These lectures will be accessible asynchronously. Thursday classes will be held live via Zoom and will be focused on discussions of that week’s readings and students’ own theoretical interpretations/directions with that material. These discussions will most likely consist of an introductory session with the entire class where questions/comments/reactions to the readings may be voiced, and where several guiding questions will be presented. Following this, the class will split into breakout groups to discuss the questions in-depth with their groups with the instructor rotating to each group in turn. Following group work, the class will reconvene for a final wrap-up of that week’s material.