

# SOCI 309 <sup>1</sup>

## Contemporary Social Theorizing

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### Course Description

Social theories are the frames that previous thinkers have given us to put around our experiences of things, others, and events in the social world. Just like a frame can change the feeling and tone of the picture inside it, their ideas can change our experience and thoughts about the world. In fact, we'll be studying some theories that have, in one way or another, changed the world, both in the academy and beyond. Building upon SOC 210 (Classical Social Theory), this course will look at more recent developments in social theory over the last century, which have often been about the human subject—or 'social self.'

Compared with the classical theories of Comte, Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, which often focused on society's large-scale social structures, institutions, and classes, many of the innovations in social theory the last 100 years were focused on a more sophisticated understanding of the tension between structure and agency. From social existentialism and psychoanalysis, to the Frankfurt school, structuralism and post-structuralism, feminism and post-colonial theories, and even on to more recent issues in post-humanist circles, questions about constraining context and human freedom are prevalent. This will be our guiding thread as we move through the various traditions of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century social thought.

### Course Outcomes/Objectives:

This course will not simply be about learning about the ideas of previous social theorists. As the title of the course suggests, there will be an emphasis placed upon the student's ability to theorize *for themselves*. In other words, the goal is for the student to demonstrate an understanding for applying and critiquing concepts in unique contexts—either real-world or imaginary (i.e., films, books, etc.). This will be an important factor in the final papers, which will require students to apply and develop (critique or extend) a concept, while analyzing a contemporary social issue or a piece of media.

### Course Pre/Co-requisites:

SOC 210 (Classical Social Theorizing)

### Topics May Include:

Existentialism & Phenomenology

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<sup>1</sup> Especially due to the circumstances surrounding the pandemic next spring, this online outline is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. Detailed course outlines will be made available for all registered students on the first day of class. Only those outlines are to be considered official.

Psychoanalysis  
Frankfurt School  
Structuralism  
Post-Structuralism  
Feminism  
Post-colonialism  
Post-humanism

### **Course Readings:**

This course will not use a textbook. Selected readings of primary sources (articles and book chapters) will be provided on Coursespaces.

### **Course Delivery:**

At this time, due to uncertainty about Covid-19 protocols and restrictions in the Spring of 2021, it is unknown whether this course will be delivered online or in-person. However, unless the university fully opens before the start of the spring term, I suggest anticipating that this course will be delivered online and *asynchronously*.