San José State University  
Department of Sociology  
SOCl 201, Sociological Theory, Fall 2017

Instructor: Preston Rudy, Ph.D.  
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Office Hours: Mon 4:30-5 & 8:45-9:15pm, Tues 10:30-11 & 8:45-9:15pm;  
Thur 10:30-11 & by appointment  
Class Days/Time: Tuesdays 6:00 – 8:45pm  
Classroom: DMH 161  
Prerequisites: Graduate standing

“It is much easier to point out the faults and errors in the work of a great mind than to give a distinct and full exposition of its value.” — Schopenhauer, *Criticism of the Kantian Philosophy*

“. . . as a medical doctor I might cure the afflictions of a few, but not those of hundreds of millions engendered by an irrational society. What ails society must be cured first. . . . To be a doctor we have to learn physiology first; likewise, to cure society we have to study social theories first.”

Fei Xiaotong, *From the Soil* 1981

“Do not allow public issues as they are officially formulated, or troubles as they are privately felt, to determine the problem that you take up for study. Above all, do not give up your moral and political autonomy by accepting in somebody else’s terms the illiberal practicality of the bureaucratic ethos or the liberal practicality of the moral scatter. Know that many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues—and in terms of the problems of history-making. Know that the human meaning of public issues must be revealed by relating them to personal troubles—and to the problems of the individual life.

Know that the problems of social science, when adequately formulated, must include both troubles and issues, both biography and history, and the range of their intricate relations. Within that range the life of the individual and the making of societies occur; and within that range the sociological imagination has its chance to make a difference in the quality of human life in our time.”

C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* 1959

Course Description

From Course catalog  
Introduction to the theories and concepts sociologists use in the study of society. The course emphasizes contemporary social theories, grounded in the classical canon of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. Application of theory to contemporary social problems. Content may vary with instructor. Prerequisite: Graduate Standing.
Professor Rudy’s Course

Theory defines our disciplines in the social sciences. Many of the theorists we will read are shared among several disciplines because they help answer questions that are vital to the phenomena that capture the imagination of practitioners in each field. Nevertheless, each discipline coheres around a specific gathering of theorists and their questions. We read a certain selection of theorists because, with their concepts and explanations, we are able to make sense of the information and data about everyday life. Moreover, these explanations are systematic, comprehensive and logical accounts that create insight, critique and sometimes a real utopia against which to evaluate the common sense accounts and the organizational structure of our social life.

We will be exploring the ways social theorists have sought to explain phenomena in our society. The world we inhabit is still marked by the historical transformations of the nineteenth century that gave birth to the modern organization and social forms that shape contemporary society. Therefore, we will examine Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber, whose theoretical explanations have become canonical for today’s sociology. We want to keep track of their legacies for current explanations, and in some cases examine the reinvigoration of their initial statements.

Two thirds of the course will be dedicated to reading theorists who form part of the contemporary theory discussions and address vital issues of existing societies. One major set of issues concerns the emergence of social identities and the participation of more categories of people in social institutions and in these theoretical debates. Most significantly these issues concern gender and ethnicity and race. Additionally we will be reading important statements of theorists such as Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu who have had broad influence on many distinct topical discussions. Lastly we will explore how social theorists have explained the transformations of the last forty years during which time neoliberal principles and practices have emerged.

In addition to the substantive theoretical material of this course, this course is dedicated to teaching you how to apply these explanations to questions and issues of importance to you. As such we are joined together in this course so that the students may become effective public sociologist, sociologists who may make use of social theory to address a variety of audiences. Therefore this course will give students an opportunity to practice oral presentations and the practice academic writing.

The writing work for this course fulfills the Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement. This writing component will consist in learning how to format academic social science paper, for which the ASA Style Guide will serve as the primary guide. You will also be expected to be fully familiar with the directions on the SJSU Library web site regarding formatting, plagiarism, and standard American English usage.

The second portion of the writing component will provide us with templates and a model for writing in academic settings. This does not mean learning how to use a specialized vocabulary so much as it means how to engage in a dialogue by means of written texts. Well-established rhetorical tools are available to facilitate our writing and we will be learning how to use them in our writing. Additionally, we want to develop our ability to read by looking for dialogue where we often have difficulty detecting conversations. This should have the effect of making you a better theorist and enliven the reading of abstract texts.
Required Texts/Readings

Required Books
Several of the Podcasts at The Society Pages will be used http://thesocietypages.org/officehours/

Learning Objectives
The Master’s program has the following objectives that will be addressed by means of the assignments in this course:

1. To evaluate theoretical explanations by using them as explanations of historical and contemporary issues such as race/ethnic relations, inequalities, work and organizations;
2. To critically interpret and evaluate published research, and to engage in theory-driven social research;
3. To communicate effectively, orally and in writing, and by means of diverse technological platforms;
4. To be able to participate in meaningful and thoughtful dialogue and conversation as educated people;
5. To be able to participate in a democratic society as engaged civic actors.

Course Learning Objectives [CLO] and Evaluation of these objectives

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<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>CLO</th>
<th>Participation in classroom discussion</th>
<th>Oral presentations</th>
<th>Short writing assignments</th>
<th>Research paper</th>
<th>Written Exams</th>
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<td>Apply theory to contemporary issues</td>
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<td>Interpret and evaluate theoretical statements</td>
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<td>Practice oral explanation of theory and of contemporary issues</td>
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<td>Practice writing theoretically informed analysis</td>
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<td>Discussion about theory and debate contemporary issues</td>
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<td>Apply and evaluate explanations relevant to current events</td>
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Assignments and Grading Policy

You must complete all written assignments to pass this class. This course satisfies the Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR).

10% for a) participation in oral and written discussion, contributing insights, comments and questions for debate and for b) oral presentations of an article, summarizing the argument and posing questions for discussion by the class as a whole.

20% for three 4-5 page papers (5% each). These papers will consist of discussions of the theory readings in conjunction with the writing exercises in Graff/Birkenstein.

30% for a 12-15 page final paper (3000 words) in which you will develop a theoretical explanation of a contemporary social problem or issue that you feel needs more attention and research.

20% for Midterm take-home exam.
20% for Final in-Class exam.

PARTICIPATION:
For each class, come to class with at least one passage or paragraph from each of the readings that you find meaningful, significant, or important for our understanding of the article. In our discussion, we want to explore what the theories contribute to developing productive and useful insights about the world, and carefully consider their limitations, in light of other theoretical positions.

ORAL PRESENTATIONS:
Prepare a one-page summary of the main concepts, the main points, and some of the important details about the theorist each time you present to the class. The most important questions to answer in your oral presentations are: What is the author trying to explain for us? What is the causal explanation? What are the author’s main concepts? With whom does the author seem to be in dialogue and debate and how does the author distinguish his/her theory?

PAPERS:
For each writing assignment you will receive a prompt addressed to the readings for that week. In addition to being asked in each assignment to use the templates from each successive chapter in Graff & Birkenstein, you must follow the formatting outlined in the ASA Style Guide (see also libguides.sjsu.edu/ASAguide?hs=a for a short version of the Style Guide) and also make use of the SJSU Library LibGuides <libguides.sjsu.edu/writeandcite> on citations and plagiarism. Some weeks we will include writing in class as part of the process of writing these papers.
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<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines</th>
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| 1    | 29 August | **Introduction to the course:**  
What is theory? How to write sociological explanations?  
Read Klinenberg through Chapter 2 to pp. 1-128. |
| 3    | 12 Sept. | Urban politics and the definition of social problems  
Read Klinenberg to the end, pp 129-242  
WRITING: Academic conversations and Classroom discussion  
| 4    | 19 Sept. | **Karl Marx — Capitalism, Classes, Labor, and Alienation**  
Garner and Hancock, Chapter 2 “Marxist Theory”  
Read Introductions, Excerpts from Marx’s writings 40-58  
Read excerpt from Aronowitz & DiFasio and from David Harvey 58-70  
WRITING  
Graff & Birkenstein: Chapter 11 “He Says Contends: Using templates to revise” pp. 139-159 |
| 5    | 26 Sept. | **Legacy of Karl Marx— World Capitalism, and Class struggles**  
WRITING  
| 6    | 3 October | **Emile Durkheim—Solidarity, Crime and Positive Sociology**  
Garner & Hancock, Chapter 3 “The Social Theory of Emile Durkheim”  
Read Introductions, excerpts from Durkheim, pp. 73-90 |
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<th>Week</th>
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<td>WRITING Graff &amp; Birkenstein: Chapter 2 “Her Point is” pp. 30-41.</td>
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| 7    | 10 October | **Emile Durkheim—Civil religion and American Individualism**  
|      |        | WRITING Graff & Birkenstein: Chapter 3 “As He Himself Puts It” pp. 42-51. |
| 8    | 17 October | **Max Weber—Rationality, Authority, and inequality of Capitalism**  
Garner and Hancock, Chapter 4 introductions and excerpts from Weber 101-110  
Selections from Ritzer and Skocpol 110-121  
Weber, selection from “Class, Status, and Party” |
|      |        | WRITING Graff & Birkenstein: Chapter 17 “Analyze This” pp. 221-238. |
| 9    | 24 October | **Legacy of Max Weber—Rationality, Organization,**  
|      |        | WRITING Graff & Birkenstein: Chapter 4 “Yes/No/Okay, But” pp. 55-67. |
| 10   | 31 October | **Midterm Exam Due**  
Discussion of Paper, social research analysis  
Read Howard Becker (1967) “Whose side are we on?” *Social Problems*  
|      |        | WRITING Graff & Birkenstein: Chapter 5 “And Yet” pp. 68-77. |
| 11   | 7 November | **Individual & Society: Mead and DuBois**  
Read Garner & Hancock Chapter 6, introductions, excerpts from Mead and DuBois pp. 175-196 (skim Adler and Adler)  
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<th>Week</th>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>14 Nov.</td>
<td><strong>Race, Racism, and Status Categories</strong></td>
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<td>Read Garner and Hancock:</td>
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<td>Stuart Hall, Chapter 12, read introduction 419-20 and On Race &amp; Ethnicities pp. 423-431</td>
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<td>Chapter 13 on race theories</td>
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<td>Only read Omi &amp; Winant, and David Roediger pp. 453-457, 469-481</td>
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<td>WRITING</td>
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<td>Graff &amp; Birkenstein: Chapter 9 “Ain’t So / Is Not” pp. 121-128.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>21 Nov.</td>
<td><strong>Gender, Women, Social Structure</strong></td>
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<td>Read Garner and Hancock, Chapter 14</td>
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<td>Dorothy Smith, Judith Butler, Angela Davis, Raewyn Connell, and John D’Emilio</td>
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<td>Revised Third Paper Due</td>
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<td>WRITING</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>28 Nov.</td>
<td><strong>Michel Foucault: Discourses, Power, and Panopticon</strong></td>
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<td>Read Garner and Hancock, Chapter 10 on Foucault pp. 365-385</td>
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<td>“The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement” -- Michel Foucault</td>
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<td>WRITING</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>7 Dec.</td>
<td><strong>Pierre Bourdieu: Capital, Habitus and Symbolic power</strong></td>
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<td>Read Garner and Hancock, Chapter 11, introductions and excerpts from Bourdieu pp. 389-415</td>
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<td>WRITING</td>
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<td>Graff &amp; Birkenstein: Chapter 8 “As A Result” pp. 105-120.</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>12 Dec.</td>
<td>NO CLASS – Study Day</td>
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<td>Research Paper Due</td>
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<td>Final</td>
<td>19 Dec.</td>
<td><strong>FINAL EXAM in DMH Computer lab 5:15 – 7:30</strong></td>
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GRADE SCALE:

- A+ for grades ≥ 97 < 100
- A for grades ≥ 93 < 97
- A- for grades ≥ 90 < 93
- B+ for grades ≥ 87 < 90
- B for grades ≥ 83 < 87
- B- for grades ≥ 80 < 83
- C+ for grades ≥ 77 < 80
- C for grades ≥ 73 < 77
- C- for grades ≥ 70 < 77
- D+ for grades ≥ 67 < 70
- D for grades ≥ 63 < 67
- D- for grades ≥ 60 < 63

“A” papers are excellent in nearly all aspects. An “A” grade:
will be given to papers that develop an interesting argument. The argument constitutes a thoughtful answer to a question worth asking. The central argument is stated clearly in the introduction and is well supported with evidence from the readings, lectures and other materials. Examples from readings are relevant and well chosen. The argument draws on course concepts, which are defined, illustrated and explained. Potential counter-arguments or negative cases are discussed and addressed. The paper includes an introduction, which is attention-getting and gives the reader a roadmap of where the paper is going. The paper also includes a conclusion that summarizes the main points of the argument and insightfully discusses the larger implications of the findings, answering the question “Why does it matter?” The paper is well-organized and provides transitional sentences between ideas. The paper contains few, if any, errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar.

“B” papers are solid in most respects. A “B” grade:
will be given to papers that develop an argument appropriate to the requirements of the assignment. The argument constitutes an answer to a question that is somewhat interesting but may not be very significant. The central argument is stated clearly in the introduction. The paper offers evidence from the readings, lectures and other materials, but the evidence is not fully relevant, does not strongly illustrate the main points, or is not well explained. Connections between the evidence and the argument need some clarifying. The argument draws on course concepts, but they aren’t well defined, illustrated or explained. Potential counter-arguments or negative cases are discussed but not successfully addressed. The paper includes an introduction but it either doesn’t grab the attention of the reader or neglects to provide a roadmap of the rest of the paper. The paper also includes a conclusion which summarizes the main points of the argument but neglects to answer the question “Why does it matter?” The paper is organized and provides transitional sentences between ideas. The paper contains some mechanical or grammatical errors but they do not impede understanding.

“C” papers satisfactorily fulfill the assignment. A “C” grade:
will be given to papers that develop an argument that bears little relation to the assignment or to papers that have no clear statement of the argument. Some evidence is offered from the readings and lectures but there is a disconnect between the evidence and the argument. Irrelevant evidence may be included or examples may be left unexplained. The paper inaccurately defines, illustrates or explains course concepts. The paper neglects to discuss or address counter-arguments. The argument may depend on unsupported opinion or personal experience, or assume that the evidence speaks for itself. The paper is missing pieces of either the introduction or conclusion. The paper has some organization but may lack transition between ideas. The paper contains more mechanical or grammatical errors but they do not impede understanding.

“D” papers do not adequately respond to the assignment. A “D” grade:
will be given to papers that do not develop an argument or to papers in which the argument is unrecognizable. Little or no evidence from the readings or lectures is offered; if evidence is provided, it is unconvincing or irrelevant. The paper may include paragraphs that are unnecessary and unrelated to the assignment. The paper neglects to draw on course concepts. The paper is missing either an introduction or conclusion. The paper has random organization and lacks transitions. The mechanical and grammatical errors are severe or frequent enough to impede the reader’s understanding.

An “F” grade:
Will be given to assignments that were not turned in, clearly did not meet the requirements, or had flaws that exceed those allowed for “D” papers in any area.