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Office hours: Mondays 1-4; Tuesdays 4-7; and by appointment

**SYA 4120**  
**Contemporary Social Theory**  
**Monday 7:10 – 10 p**  
**GS 111**  
**Fall 2011**  
**3 credits**

In this course, we will study a broad range of sociological perspectives and social theorists that have been influential in shaping contemporary social analysis. In the first half of the course, you will learn about the major theoretical perspectives that developed in the middle of the twentieth century in the U.S., including structural functionalism, critical theory, exchange theory, symbolic interactionism, and phenomenology and ethnomethodology. In the second half of the course, you will learn about an array of critical theoretical perspectives that emerged in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: feminist social theory, poststructural and postmodern theories, contemporary theories of modernity, and theories of globalization. The primary objectives of the course are to become conversant around core issues in contemporary social thought, to develop an appreciation of the value of social theory for making sense of contemporary societies and the social changes that have shaped contemporary life, and to develop the ability to formulate theoretical problems and to consider their significance for understanding human experience in contemporary societies.

**Course Objectives**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate core issues addressed by contemporary sociological theorists.
- Read primary texts in social theory with a high level of understanding.
- Move back and forth between abstract concepts and concrete experiences.
- Name key social theorists in sociology's history and explain the main contributions of each.
- Compare and contrast the assumptions of different social theorists and theoretical perspectives.
- Write about an experience, event, or topic of contemporary relevance, using ideas of any of the theorists we study in this course to help illuminate the experience, event, or topic.

## Reading

There is one required text for this course:

Scott Appelrouth and Laura Desfor Edles, *Sociological Theory in the Contemporary Era: Text and Readings*, 2007

All assigned reading should be completed prior to the class session for which it is assigned. Study guides are available on Blackboard to accompany most of the assigned reading. Although completion of these is not required, completion of them prior to the relevant class session will contribute greatly to your understanding and likely will result in better preparation for exams.

## Quizzes

Daily reading quizzes will be available on Blackboard and must be completed prior to each class session. Quizzes may be taken repeatedly until students get a satisfactory score (up until the beginning of the class session for which they are assigned); only the score of the last attempt will count.

## Evaluation

Your grade in this course will be based on your performance on three online exams and weekly quizzes. Exams will consist of multiple choice, short-answer, and essay questions; each will count for 25% of your grade. The daily quizzes will count for the other 25% of your grade.

## Grade Scale

A	93-100	A-	90-92	B+	87-89	B	83-86
B-	80-82	C+	76-80	C	70-75	D	60-69
F	0-59						

## *Reading Schedule (subject to change)*

Aug 20: Introduction

Aug 27: Structural Functionalism – Parsons (21-55); Merton (56-69)

Sept 10: Critical Theory (71-93); Horkheimer and Adorno (94-107); Marcuse (107-117)

Sept 17: Exchange Theory – Homans (119-136); Blau (137-156)

Sept 24: Catch-up and/or review for exam; **Exam #1 Online**

Oct 1: Symbolic interactionism (157-177)

Oct 8: Dramaturgy (177-228)

Oct 15: Emotion management – Hochschild (229-257)

Oct 22: Phenomenology – Schutz, Berger and Luckmann (259-294); Ethnomethodology – Garfinkel (295-311)

Oct 29: Catch-up and/or review; **Exam #2 Online**

Nov 5: Feminist theory (314-377)

Nov 12: Poststructural and Postmodern theories: Foucault (379-411); Baudrillard, Lyotard (411-444)

Nov 19: Contemporary Theoretical Syntheses: Bourdieu, Habermas, and Giddens

Nov 26: The Global Society: Wallerstein, Sklair, Said

Dec 3: Catch-up and/or review; Exam #3 Online

## **University Policies**

### **Student Behavior**

Students should familiarize themselves with the rules regarding misconduct outlined in the FAU Student Code of Conduct. Please consult the following website for further information:

[http://www.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/4.007\\_Student\\_Code\\_of\\_Conduct.pdf](http://www.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/4.007_Student_Code_of_Conduct.pdf)

### **University Code of Academic Integrity**

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards. These violations interfere with the University's ability to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is destructive of the University community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties will be associated with academic dishonesty.

### **Cheating and Plagiarism**

Cheating is defined as the attempt, successful or not, to give or obtain and/or information by illicit means in meeting any academic requirements

Plagiarism is defined as the use, without proper acknowledgment, of the ideas, phrases, sentences, or larger units of discourse from another writer or speaker.

Students are expected to know and abide by the policy as stated in the university Code of Academic Integrity. Failure to do so will result may result in penalties as severe as an F for the course and further disciplinary action maybe pursued. For more information, contact: [http://wise.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/4.001\\_Code\\_of\\_Academic\\_Integrity.pdf](http://wise.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/4.001_Code_of_Academic_Integrity.pdf)

### **Students with Disabilities**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students who require special accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) located in Boca Raton - SU 133 (561-297-3880), in Davie - MOD I (954-236-1222), in Jupiter - SR 117 (561-799-8585), or at the Treasure Coast - CO 128 (772-873-3305) and follow all OSD procedures. For further information, go to [www.osd.fau.edu](http://www.osd.fau.edu).

Students who have registered with OSD should present the appropriate paperwork to me during the first week of class.

### **Absences from class**

Students will not be penalized for absences from class for a university-approved reason. If you are absent from class for a university-approved reason, please be sure to provide that documentation to me no later than the next class. University-approved absences will include jury duty, military service, participation in scheduled FAU athletic events, and similar commitment.

You may also be excused from class for religious observances. If you need to miss a class for religious reasons, please inform me in writing in advance of the day of religious observation. Please be sure to tell me the name of the religious observance that required your absence.

If you miss a class, it is your **responsibility** to get notes from one of your fellow students.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Time Commitment**

To be successful in this course, I estimate that you will need to commit at least 8 hours per week.

### **Email Policy**

The preferred method to contact me is through my regular FAU email account: [branaman@fau.edu](mailto:branaman@fau.edu). Except for weekends and holidays, generally I will respond to these messages within 24 hours. Such messages should only be used to communicate personal or confidential matters; otherwise, please use the Questions/Concerns discussion board within the course.

### **Course-related questions**

Post course-related questions to the Questions/Concerns discussion board. Asking course-related questions in this way allows other participants with the same question to benefit from the responses. Also, make sure you review this forum prior to posting a question; it may have already been asked and answered in previous posts. Except for weekends and holidays, questions

will generally be answered within 48 hours. Students who are able to respond to other students' questions are welcome to do so.

### **Announcements**

You are responsible for reading all announcements posted by the instructor. Check the announcements each time you login to Blackboard to be sure you have read all of them since your last login session.

### **Exam Procedures**

Each of the three exams in this course will be given online through Blackboard. Students will be expected to complete these exams no later than Saturday at 11:59 pm following the exam date (i.e., the regular scheduled class period reserved for the exam). The exam will be opened at 7 p.m. on the day of the scheduled exam and will remain open until 11:59 p.m. on the Saturday of the week during which the exam is scheduled. Students are welcome to make use of notes and reading materials while taking exams, but each exam must be completed within 3 hours from when the student first opens the exam. Make sure you have reserved a time and space for yourself to complete the exam without interruption. Multiple attempts on the exam will not be allowed.

### **Quizzes**

There will be one or more reading quizzes each week that must be completed no later than 7 pm on the Monday night of the class session for which they are assigned. Quizzes will become available on Blackboard no later than Wednesday evening prior to the next class session. When there is more than one quiz, this is simply because I wish to break up a lengthier quiz into shorter pieces. All quiz questions will be worth 1 point; at the end of the semester, all of the points you have earned on your quizzes throughout the semester will be totaled and divided by the total number of quiz points to yield an overall percentage score. The overall percentage score on your quizzes will be averaged with the three other percentage scores you will have earned from your midterm exam, your final exam, and your course assignments. All quizzes must be completed on time; because we will go over the answers to quiz questions in class, there will be no opportunity to make up missed quizzes. Quizzes are not time limited, and you will be allowed unlimited attempts until you get a score with which you are satisfied. The score of your last attempt, however, will be your final score regardless of whether you may have earned a higher score on a previous attempt. The only feedback you will get after completing a quiz is a score; to encourage honest engagement with the assigned reading you will need to review the material carefully and figure out on your own which questions you missed. Correct answers will be provided in class and *only* in class. I highly recommend that you attempt each quiz at least one time regardless of your level of preparation. Having access to the quiz for the purpose of studying for your midterm and final exams is dependent on you taking the quiz in the first place. If you fail to complete a quiz but wish to have access to the questions and answers in preparation for exams, it is your responsibility to acquire this information during the class session when we go over the quiz or to elicit the generous cooperation of a classmate in providing you with the questions and/or answers to quizzes.

### **Policies on Late Work, Incompletes, and Technical Difficulties**

Because of the flexible time frame for completion of exams, there should rarely be any reason for a student to miss an exam. If students have a valid documented excuse for being unable to complete the exam during the 6-day period in which it is offered, they will be given the opportunity to make up the exam at the university testing center. Students are warned to complete the exam well in advance of the 11:59 pm Saturday deadline so that they will have the opportunity to resolve any technical difficulties should they arise.

Incompletes in the course will be given only in exceptional circumstances. If circumstances beyond the student's control make it impossible for a student to complete required work by the end of the term, incompletes will be permitted *if* a student has completed more than 50% of the exams and quizzes with an average grade of 'C' or better.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **Information Resource Management (IRM)**

Students who confront computing, network, or other technological difficulties during this course may seek assistance from the University's IRM Department. Visit the IRM site at [www.fau.edu/irtm/index.php](http://www.fau.edu/irtm/index.php) for information and resources; questions not addressed by existing resources on the IRM website can be directed to IRM's online "Helpdesk" at [www.fau.edu/helpdesk/](http://www.fau.edu/helpdesk/). The helpdesk provides an online ticket submission system to help resolve any technological difficulties you may have throughout the course. If unable to login to the FAU website, you may call the helpdesk at (561) 297-3999.

### **The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)**

The University's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) offers resources that students may find helpful in improving their study skills and facilitating academic success. Their website is <http://www.fau.edu/ctl>. I strongly encourage students to visit this website and to make use of its many valuable resources, including especially "Tips for Success and Academic Resources"

<http://www.fau.edu/ctl/TipsForSuccessAndAcademicResourcesStudentResources.php>