

Sociology 3001 - 001
Classical Social Theory

Instructor: Dr. Mike Haffey
Class Time: T-R 9:30-10:45am
Class Location: Hellums 199
Fall 2006

Office Hrs.: T-R 12:30pm-2pm
Office Location: 11A Ketchum Hall
Office phone #: 303.492.8838
e-mail; mhaffey@Colorado.edu

I consider this course one of the most important you will take during your sociology undergraduate career. Sociological theory serves as the ideational foundation for all sociological investigation: past, present, future, and across all areas of substantive interest. As sociologists, theories provide us the necessary interpretive schemas by which to make sense of the empirical world.

Social theory encourages us to look beyond individual psychology and unique events to the predictable, broad patterns and regular occurrences of social life that influence individual destinies. It frames our understanding and conceptualization of human nature, human behavior, and human organization. Social theory enables us to see. It is an unusual form of vision.

What is society? What are its constituent parts and how are they related? How is the individual and society linked? How do societies retain their unity and continuity while undergoing change? What is the cause of social change? Why and how do vast social, political, and economic inequalities endure?

What is so exciting about these types of questions is that they are the very ones we need to grasp and interpret the complex and dynamic features of modern social life. Looking across the social landscape today - globalization, computerization, spectacle, consumerism and matters of sustainability - it seems most appropriate to pursue our discipline's most fundamental concerns. Classical social theory and the broad range of contemporary social thought it has given rise to has sought to explain social events, patterns, conditions and interactions of all types, and in so doing, provided fundamental insights into matters of social order and social change.

To the casual observer, theorizing may appear quite divorced from the business of gathering facts about the social world. For the working sociologist, it is theory that tells us what is relevant and problematic about groups of facts. It tells us why certain facts are seen as significant, why certain questions are asked, and why certain solutions are accepted.

We will explore the ideas of our discipline's early theorists, including Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Georg Simmel, W.E.B. DuBois, George Herbert Mead and Talcott Parsons - a century of grand sociological thought that still resonates with and offers insight into contemporary society.

The textbook I have chosen for this course was written and designed to facilitate your understanding of a broad range of classical social thought. I think you will find it quite engaging. The author of this text has worked hard to make a number of complex issues as understandable as possible. You must do a little work as well. You will be expected to have read and assimilated the required readings each week. The reading assignments should be done before the topic is discussed in class. Also, please make it a practice to bring your books to class with you.

The required texts for this course are available exclusively at Left Hand Books.

They are located at 1200 Pearl St. (lower level); 303.443.8252.

* **Classical Sociological Theory** by George Ritzer

* **Illuminating Social Life** ed. Peter Kivisto

Exams and Grading:

There will be three (3) in-class exams for this course (dates TBA) and a cumulative final exam (exam 4) administered during finals week. Each exam will account for 20% of

your final grade. Each of these exams will require a familiarity with key concepts and theories and the capacity to display some of the higher levels of thinking: synthesis, analysis, criticism, and creative application.

You will also be required to write two (2) theory "application" papers. Applying social theory to better understand contemporary social life is at the core of our discipline. Remember, social theory is not a sacred dogma. It's rough and ready stuff; yours for the taking. You will have two rich opportunities to explore, apply, and see just where this stuff

