

CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORY

Sociology 105B
Winter 2018
MWF 10:40-11:45 am
Jack Baskin Auditorium 101

Professor Lindsey Dillon

lidillon@ucsc.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays from 2-5pm
324 Rachel Carson College

Graduate Student Instructors

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“One always begins to grapple with and analyze difficult political situations using one’s experiences and understandings. But one draws upon theories to break into experience, to open up to investigation the problematic nature that such political situations present to us in order to better understand what is going on and how to respond.”

-Stuart Hall, 1988

COURSE INTRODUCTION AND GOALS

How can social theory help us analyze and make sense of a complex world? How can social theory offer tools and guideposts for social justice? How does power work—even on our own sense of self? In what ways are we (differently) complicit in today’s social inequalities? How have prominent scholars theorized and debated the relationships among race, class, gender, and sexuality?

This class pursues these and other questions through a reading list of some of the more influential social theorists of the 20th and 21st centuries. We focus on theories of the subject and power, and examine this dynamic in the process of maintaining and/or challenging capitalist social relations, the state, racial formations, gender identities, and sexuality. Our class traces an arc that begins with German critical theorists of the 1930s and 1940s and culminates in the more contemporary queer theories of Gloria Anzaldúa and José Esteban Muñoz. Along the way we will compare and contrast the ways these thinkers understand the workings of power, the relationship between feelings and politics, and theories of social change.

In this class we will:

- Approach social theory as a living, ongoing process. You are not here to memorize ideas passively. I expect you to be active readers, and continually ask how course concepts can help us understand and take action in the present moment.
- Apply social theory from our course reader to contemporary events.

- Learn critical reading and writing skills.
- Apply those skills to an end-of-term, theoretical paper that analyzing a contemporary social problem.
- Practice giving thoughtful and generous feedback to your peers.

Section Dates and Times

Monday 5:20-6:25pm Soc Sci 167 (James Sirigotis)
 Monday 6:40-7:45pm Soc Sci 167 (James Sirigotis)
 Tuesday 5:20-6:25pm Oakes Acad 222 (Gabriel Mindel)
 Tuesday 6:40-7:45pm Oakes Acad 222 (Gabriel Mindel)
 Wednesday 5:20-6:25pm Oakes Acad 102 (Aida Mukharesh)
 Wednesday 6:40-7:45pm Oakes Acad 102 (Aida Mukharesh)
 Friday 8:00-9:05am PhysSciences 136 (Erica Zurawski)
 Friday 9:20-10:25am PhysSciences 136 (Erica Zurawski)

MSI TUTORING

UCSC offers a wonderful program called Modified Supplemental Instruction (MSI). MSI is an additional opportunity for you to work through difficult course material, which another UCSC student who has already taken the class. This year, we are very lucky to have Tina Milz as 105B's MSI tutor. Please take advantage of this program! Tina will make an announcement at the beginning of the year about tutoring times. Here is a link to the MSI webpage:

<https://lss.ucsc.edu/programs/modified-supplemental-instruction/index.html>

REQUIRED TEXTS

Our readings are in the Course Reader, available for purchase at the Literary Guillotine, 204 Locust Street, phone 831-457-1195.

COURSE EVALUATION

Section attendance and quality of Section Assignments (30%)

Attendance (10%)

Section Assignments (20%)

Midterm Paper (25%)

Final Paper (45%)

First Draft, due Week 8 (15%)

Final Draft, due March 20 (Finals Week) (30%)

ASSIGNMENT	DUE DATE
Section Assignment #1	Week 2, in section and uploaded to Canvas
Section Assignment #2	Week 3, in section and uploaded to Canvas
Section Assignment #3	Week 4, in section and uploaded to Canvas
Midterm Essay	Week 5 (Monday, February 5) in lecture and uploaded to Canvas
Section Assignment #4	Week 6, in section and uploaded to Canvas
Section Assignment #5	Week 7, in section and uploaded to Canvas
First Draft of Final Paper	Week 8, in section and uploaded to Canvas
Section Assignment #6	Week 9, in section and uploaded to Canvas
Section Assignment #7	Week 10, in section and uploaded to Canvas
Final Draft of Paper	March 19, uploaded to Canvas

Our Expectations for the Quality of Your Writing

Clear thinking and good writing reinforce each other. A large part of your grade in this class will depend on how clearly you can communicate your ideas. We expect your section assignments and papers to be well-organized, engaging, thoughtful pieces of writing. For each writing assignment, you should expect to return and re-read parts of selected texts as well as your reading and lecture notes.

For those interested in developing better writing skills (something we all can work on!), I highly recommend checking out one of the many writing centers on campus.

- UCSC Writing Program: <http://writing.ucsc.edu>
- Westside Writing Center (in Oakes College – serves Kresge, Oakes, Porter, and Rachel Carson students): <http://oakes.ucsc.edu/academics/writing-center/index.html>.
- One-on-one Writing Tutoring (multiple sessions):
<http://lss.ucsc.edu/programs/one-on-one-writing/index.html>
- One-Time, One Hour Writing Appointments:
<http://lss.ucsc.edu/programs/one-on-one-writing/1-hour-appointments.html>

EXTENSIONS

All extensions should be negotiated with your TA. In general, extensions permitted when they are worked out far in advance (a week or two). Extensions are not permitted when they are asked for the night prior to when the assignment is due (with few exceptions for emergencies and other unusual circumstances).

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Please arrive on time to lecture and sections, and expect to stay in class the entire time (leaving to use the restroom or get water can be distracting for the time we have together to learn – so please take care of these things prior to class). Your TAs will have their own syllabus and expectations for section.

Texting or using your cell phone for anything other than emergency calls during class is not allowed. I can't stress this enough. **You may use your computer to take notes, but please do not use it for other purposes.** If we find you using your cell phone or computer for anything other than taking notes, it will affect your participation grade. If it persists I will request that you take hand-written notes.

Please consider a few things. First – everyone behind you can see your computer screen. When you engaging in non-class related activities it is distracting to them – effectively you diminish their learning experience. Be respectful of your classroom community!

And respect yourself! **The New York Times reported that the average person spends about 50 minutes on Facebook** (that's just Facebook) a day:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/06/business/facebook-bends-the-rules-of-audienceengagement-to-its-advantage.html>)

That's a whole lot of your waking hours! Now factor in all the time you spend on email, texting, and other online uses. You are likely already online a great deal – give yourself a break and turn off your Wifi when you come into class (and keep it off!). I think you will find that you learn more, and also enjoy class so much more, if you aren't distracted.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I take plagiarism very seriously. We will discuss plagiarism in class together. Please also become acquainted with the UCSC policies on plagiarism, beginning with the UCSC Library's website, "What is plagiarism?"

<http://library.ucsc.edu/help/research/what-is-plagiarism>

UCSC maintains an Academic Misconduct Policy for Undergraduates. If a student has plagiarized, I am required to report them using this procedure:

https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_misconduct

ACCOMODATIONS

If you have accommodations through the Disability Resource Center (<http://drc.ucsc.edu>) I ask that you come to office hours to give me your accommodation letter – only because I appreciate the face-to-face conversation about how we can make the class experience a positive one.

ON READING THEORY

Reading theory is not like reading a novel or a typical research article. **One needs to learn how to read theory, and especially to practice reading theory.** Here are some helpful hints on reading theory, drawn from two thinkers I greatly admire (Michelle Murphy and Joe Dumit):

First, **be patient with yourself** and go into a reading with the understanding that there will be concepts and ideas you won't (yet) understand. **Always take notes as you read**, and bring difficult passages and questions to lecture, section, and office hours. Please make the time to avail of office hours with me and with your TAs, it will be worth it!

Before you reading the text closely, skim through it first: look at the sub-section titles, keep your eye out for important passages (e.g. when an author writes, "The point I am trying to make is..."). Have a sense of the basic structure of the text, the author's tone of voice, style of argumentation, and the general set of questions and key terms they are working through. (At the same time, do not expect to only skim any of these texts – they all require a slow, close read as well).

As you read – **underline, circle words, and take notes. Re-read sections that are confusing, but don't get bogged down on a particular passage – mark it as something to come back to, and keep moving.** The kinds of theories we will explore in this class cannot be memorized with flashcards – the authors often develop their ideas throughout the course of the text, and you need to go through that process with them. You may find yourself reading some of the texts twice.

Keep a running list of key terms and concepts the author is working with. Theorists are very specific with their words. How does the author develop, define, and use these terms, in specific ways?

It is a great idea to periodically pause and skim back through your notes and the passages you've underlined and to rephrase things in your own words. Do this in the margins of your reader or in a separate notebook. Often I need to get up and walk around too. Remember that reading 10 pages of theory will take much more time than reading 10 pages in a novel, so budget your time accordingly.

After you have read (and re-read parts of) the text, as Michelle Murphy suggest, **make a summary or map of the argument. Summarize the main point and how the author got there** What connections does the text make? In your own words, as precisely as possible, write the central argument. It's also helpful for me to draw flow charts to describe theoretical maneuvers. **Experiment with visual ways of depicting theory!**

Please visit Michelle Murphy's "Hints on How to Read Theory" for other wise tips:
<http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~mmurphy/NEW262/how%20to%20read.htm>

I also really like Joe Dumit's short essay, "How I read":
<http://dumit.net/how-i-read/>

Here is passage that is especially important to how I approach theory:

"A generous reading...emphasizes the text's strengths. I am interested in making the best case for most texts, pulling out their strongest arguments, even if this means constructing them from scattered fragments in the text."

Reading critically is not enough—we must also read generously and try to "think with" the author. Even if you don't like a text or you disagree with parts of it, see if you can find something valuable in it

- READING SCHEDULE -

WEEK 1: The Uses of Social Theory

Monday, January 8:

Welcome!

Wednesday, January 10:

Lemert, Charles. "Social Theory: It's Uses and Pleasures." In *Social Theory: The Multicultural, Global, and Classic Readings, 6th edition*. Charles Lemert (ed). Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp. 1-18.

Friday, January 12:

Gordon, Avery. "Theory and Justice." In Gordon, Avery, and Angela Davis. *Keeping good time: Reflections on knowledge, power and people*. Routledge, 2015, pp. 99-105.

Lemert, Charles. "Social Theories and World Conflict: 1919-1945." In *Social Theory: The Multicultural, Global, and Classic Readings, 6th edition*. Charles Lemert (ed). Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp. 149-156.

Week 1 section:

Meet and Greet! Section syllabus and expectations

Exercise: Annotating texts

WEEK 2: The Frankfurt School and the German School of Critical Theory

Monday, January 15 is a holiday ☺

Monday sections should upload Section Assignment #1 to Canvas by Tuesday at 5pm

Wednesday, January 17:

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations* pp. 217-242.

Friday, January 19:

Horkheimer, Max and Theodore Adorno. "The Culture Industry as Mass Deception" in *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, pp. 94-136.

Adorno, Theodore. "Free Time" in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* London and New York: Routledge, pp. 187-197.

Week 2 section:

Section Assignment #1 due

Exercise: Defining and distinguishing the author's key theoretical categories

WEEK 3: Antonio Gramsci: *The Prison Notebooks*

Monday, January 22:

“State and Civil Society,” pp. 229-245, 257-65

Wednesday, January 24:

“The Formation of the Intellectuals” pp. 3-14

Friday, January 26:

“Common Sense and Good Sense,” pp. 321-342

Week 3 section:

Section Assignment #2 due

Exercise: Writing Summaries

WEEK 4: Structuralism and Marxist Structuralism

Monday, January 29:

Lemert, Charles. “The Golden Moment: 1945-1963.” In *Social Theory: The Multicultural, Global, and Classic Readings, 6th edition*. Charles Lemert (ed). Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp. 215-227.

Wednesday, January 31:

Barthes, Roland. *Elements of Semiology*. Trans. Lavers and Smith. New York: Hill and Wang, 1983 [1964], pp. 9-12, 35-48.

Friday, February 2:

Althusser, Louis. “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Toward an Investigation.” Excerpt from Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Keller. *Media and Cultural Studies Keyworks*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006, pp. 79-87.

Week 4 section:

Section Assignment #3 due

Exercise: Close interpretation of key passages

WEEK 5: The Birmingham School of British Cultural Studies

Monday, February 5:

***Midterm Essay Due at the beginning of lecture

Wednesday, February 7:

Hall, Stuart. "Race, culture, and communications: Looking backward and forward at cultural studies." *Rethinking Marxism* 5, no. 1 (1992): 10-18.

--- "Ideology and Ideological Struggle" In *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*. Duke University Press, pp. 127-154.

Friday, February 9:

Hall, Stuart. "What is this 'Black' in Black Popular Culture." *Social Justice*, Vol. 20 No. 1/2: 104-114.

Week 5 section:

No section assignment this week

Exercise: Picking a paper topic, using social theory to analyze social problems

WEEK 6: Rethinking Racism, and the Politics of Difference

Monday, February 12:

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. "Rethinking racism: Toward a structural interpretation." *American Sociological Review* (1997): 465-480.

Wednesday, February 14:

Lowe, Lisa. 1996. "Immigration, Citizenship, Racialization: Asian American Critique." In *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press. pp. 1-36.

Friday, February 16:

Smith, Andrea. 2012. "Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy." In HoSang, LaBennett, and Pulido (eds), *Racial Formations in the Twenty-First Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 66-90.

Week 6 section:

Section Assignment #4 due

Additional: Bring a brief description of your paper topic, and preliminary theoretical analysis

WEEK 7: Michel Foucault: The Subject and Power

Monday, February 19 is a holiday ☺

Monday sections should upload Section Assignment #5 to Canvas by Tuesday at 5pm

Over the weekend (Feb 17-18), please read: Foucault, Michel. "The subject and power." *Critical inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982): 777-795.

Wednesday, February 21:

Selections from *Discipline and Punish* in *The Foucault Reader*, pp. 170-238.

“What Does the Panopticon Mean in the Age of Digital Surveillance?” *The Guardian* (July 23, 2015) <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/jul/23/panopticon-digital-surveillance-jeremy-bentham>

Friday, February 23:

“Right of Death and Power over Life” in *The Foucault Reader*, pp. 260-273.

Week 7 section:

Section Assignment #5 due

Exercise: Constructing a Thesis Statement

WEEK 8: Judith Butler: Undoing Gender

Monday, February 26:

Butler, Judith. “Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory.” *Theatre journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519-531.

“Think Gender is Performative? You have Judith Butler to thank for that,” *The Cut* (July 2016) <https://www.thecut.com/2016/06/judith-butler-c-v-r.html>

Wednesday, February 28:

Butler, Judith. “Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexuality” in *Undoing Gender*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 57-74

Friday, March 2:

Catch up on the reading day ☺

Week 8 section:

***Bring a hard copy of the first draft of your paper to section for peer-review

Exercise: Two-rounds of peer review

WEEK 9: Standpoint Theory and Intersectionality

Monday, March 5:

Smith, Dorothy E. “Women's perspective as a radical critique of sociology.” *Sociological inquiry* 44, no. 1 (1974): 7-13.

Wednesday, March 7:

Collins, Patricia Hill. “Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought.” *Social Problems* 33, no. 6 (1986): 14-32.

Friday, March 9:

Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics." *U. Chi. Legal F.* (1989): 139-167.

Week 9 section:

Section Assignment #6 due

WEEK 10: Queering Theory

Monday, March 13:

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. pp. 37-73; 87-113

Wednesday, March 15:

Muñoz, Jose Esteban. Introduction: Performing Disidentifications in *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, pp. 2-34

Friday, March 16:

Synthesis and review

Week 10 section:

Section Assignment #7 due

*****Final paper due on Monday, March 19, uploaded to Canvas**