

CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORY

Sociology 105B

Winter 2019

Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:20-4:55pm

Classroom Unit 2

Professor Lindsey Dillon

lidillon@ucsc.edu

Office Hours: Tues 10-11:30 and Wed 12:30-2pm

Rachel Carson College 324

Signup sheet on faculty website, or at [this link](#)

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 have prominent scholars theorized and debated the nature of power and social control? And how might we find affinity and form communities across social differences? Our 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 the intersections of capitalism, race, nation, gender, sexuality, and how these relations are challenged, reworked, or reproduced through cultural politics and social struggle. Throughout the course we compare and contrast the ways these theorists understand the workings of power, the relationship between feelings and politics, and theories of social change.

Note: SOCY 105A (Classical Social Theory) is a prerequisite for this course.

In this class we will:

- **Approach social theory as a living, ongoing conversation.** You are not here to memorize ideas passively. We expect you to read actively, and continually ask how course concepts can help us understand, analyze, and take action as political beings in the present moment.
- **Compare and contrast** concepts and ideas from different theorists.
- **Apply theoretical concepts** from our course reader to contemporary events.
- **Develop critical reading and writing skills.**
- **Apply those skills** to an end-of-term, theoretical paper.

SECTION DATES AND TIMES

Mon 12:00-1:05pm Oakes Acad 222 (Aki)
Mon 1:20-2:25pm Oakes Acad 222 (Aki)
Wed 10:40-11:45am RCC Acad 250 (Delio)
Wed 12:00-1:05pm RCC Acad 250 (Delio)
Wed 5:20-6:25pm Oakes Acad 222 (Ankit)
Wed 6:40-7:45pm Oakes Acad 222 (Ankit)
Fri 8:00-9:05am RCC Acad 252 (Dennis)
Fri 9:20-10:25am RCC Acad 252 (Dennis)

REQUIRED TEXTS

Our readings are compiled in a single Course Reader, available for purchase at the Literary Guillotine, 204 Locust Street, Santa Cruz, phone: 831-457-1195.

Two copies of the Course Reader will also be available at McHenry Library, for 2-hour loans.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Weekly Assignments (20%)
Section Attendance (10%)
Lecture Attendance (10%)
Essay #1 (10%)
Essay #2 (20%)
Final paper (30%)

EXTENSIONS

All extensions should be negotiated with your TA. In general, extensions are permitted when they are worked out far in advance (two weeks or more). Extensions are *not* permitted when they are asked for the night prior to the assignment's due date.



ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I take plagiarism very seriously. We will discuss plagiarism in class together. Please also become acquainted with UCSC policies on plagiarism, beginning with the UCSC Library's website, "[What is plagiarism?](#)" UCSC maintains an Academic Misconduct Policy for Undergraduates. If a student has plagiarized in their work, I am required to report them to their College Provost, according to this procedure:

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

ASSIGNMENT	DUE DATE
Weekly Assignment #1	Sunday, January 13, by 12pm (midnight)
Weekly Assignment #2	Sunday, January 20, by 12pm
Essay #1	Sunday, January 27, by 12pm
Weekly Assignment #3	Sunday, February 3, by 12pm
Weekly Assignment #4	Sunday, February 10, by 12pm
Essay #2	Sunday, February 17, by 12pm
Weekly Assignment #5	Sunday, February 24, by 12pm
Weekly Assignment #6	Sunday, March 3, by 12pm
Final Draft of Paper	Sunday March 17, by 12pm



ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly Assignments: Weekly assignments encourage you to critically engage with course readings, and to come prepared to discussion section. Handouts for each weekly assignment are posted on Canvas. Please complete these on your computer (unless you've made other arrangements with your TA) and upload the assignment to Canvas by Sunday at 12pm (midnight).

Section Attendance: Important learning and comprehension happens in discussion section! You can test out your thoughts on the week's topics and concepts, and learn from other students and your TA. This class values your attendance and participation in section. You can miss one section, without penalty. Afterwards, points are deducted as follows:

9-10 sections: A
8 sections: B
7 sections: C+
6 sections: C
5 sections: D
4 sections (minus 5) or below: F

Lecture Attendance: Lecture is designed to explain, unpack, and reflect on that week's readings, and is an essential component of the class! We will also use lecture time to develop critical reading and writing skills.

We take attendance in every lecture. You can miss two lectures, without penalty. Afterwards, points are deducted as follows:

20 lectures: A plus (yay!)
18-19 lectures: A
17 lectures: A minus
16 lectures: B plus
15 lectures: B
14 lectures: B minus
13 lectures: C plus
12 lecture: C
11 lectures: C minus
10 lectures: D plus
9 lectures: D
8 lectures: D minus
7 lectures and below: F

Midterm Essays: Essay prompts and grading rubrics will be handed out and discussed in lecture, at least two weeks before the due date.

Final Paper: For your final paper, you will revise, develop, and expand on one of your essays, based on feedback from your TA and/or the professor. The final paper is graded on your analysis and discussion of course material *and* writerly elements such as your thesis statement, the essay's structure, its introduction and conclusion. We will work on developing these essay writing skills in lecture and section. Please also work with me or your TA in developing your final paper topic and outline. We are always available to read drafts in office hours!

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.

Our class is supported by UCSC's Slug Success Small Group Writing Program

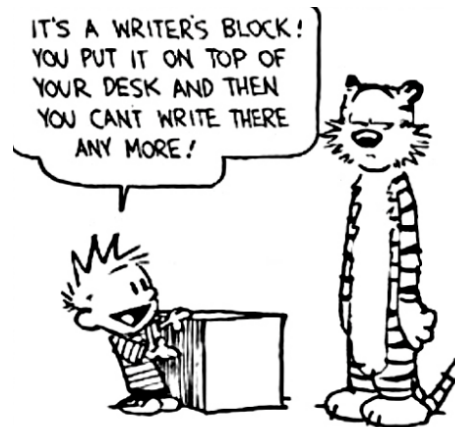
We have a designated peer writing tutor to help you succeed in this class! There will be six designated times during the week that you can meet, in a small group format, with a trained, peer writing tutor. UCSC has determined that students who use this service four times or more see at least a ½ step increase in their grade (e.g. from an A minus to an A). I encourage you to make the Small Group Writing Program a regular part of your weekly study time. We'll provide more detailed information on this program during lecture as well.

Also see the UCSC Writing Program:

<http://writing.ucsc.edu>

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, so please take care of these things prior to class). Your TAs will have their own syllabus and expectations for section.



I ask that you do not use your computer for notes, unless you check in with me first, with a compelling reason. Otherwise, please use a spiral notebook for notes, and leave your computer in your backpack or at home. I also encourage you to bring the course reader to lecture.

Texting during class is not allowed. I can't stress this enough. If you continually use your cell phone or any connected device for non-class related activities, I will ask that you speak to me after class, as a warning. If it persists, your lecture participation grade will be affected. Texting is distracting to other students—you are diminishing other people's learning experience. Be respectful of your classroom community.

LECTURE WEBCAST

Every lecture is recorded (with slides) by UCSC Webcast services. You can access our course webcast at:

<https://webcast.ucsc.edu/>

User name: socy-105b-1

Password: Gramsci

ACCOMMODATIONS

UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your [Academic Access Letter](#) from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me privately during my office hours or by appointment, **as soon as possible in the academic quarter, preferably within 1 week. I also encourage you to discuss with me ways we can ensure your full participation in this course.** I encourage all students who may benefit to learn about the DRC and the UCSC accommodation process. You can visit the DRC website at drc.ucsc.edu. You can make an appointment and meet in-person with a DRC staff member. The phone number is [831-459-2089](tel:831-459-2089), or email drc@ucsc.edu.

STUDENT SERVICES AT UC SANTA CRUZ

Counseling

College is a tough time for everyone. If you're having a difficult quarter, I encourage you to reach out to the campus Counseling & Psychological Services office. They offer a range of counseling services. See: <https://caps.ucsc.edu/>.

Basic Needs

College is expensive and many students at UC Santa Cruz struggle to meet their basic needs. If you ever find yourself in this situation, contact Slug Support and visit these webpages (Basic Needs homepage:

<https://basicneeds.ucsc.edu/> and Campus Resources:

<https://basicneeds.ucsc.edu/campus-resources%20/index.html>).

You can also visit the Cowell Coffee Shop: For the People

(<https://basicneeds.ucsc.edu/about/cowellcoffeeshop.html>), a non-transactional café and choice based food pantry.



Image from People's Grocery, in Oakland, CA

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 them 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 and energy than reading 10 pages in a novel, so budget your time accordingly.

After you have read (and re-read parts of) the text, **make a summary or map of the argument. Summarize the main point and how the author got to that point.** 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 depict and describe theoretical maneuvers. **Experiment with visual ways of depicting theory!**

Please visit Michelle Murphy's "[Hints on How to Read Theory](http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~mmurphy/NEW262/how%20to%20read.htm)" 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/) (<http://dumit.net/how-i-read/>).

Here is passage (from Joe Dumit) 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: Beginnings

Tuesday, January 8: Welcome!
Introductions, syllabus, course expectations,
and other important information.

Thursday, January 10:
hooks, bell. "Theory as Liberatory
Practice." *Yale JL & Feminism* 4
(1991): 1-12.

Due on Sunday: Weekly assignment #1

Week 2: Race, Class, and Nation

Tuesday, January 15:
W.E.B. Du Bois. 1935 "The Black Worker"
and "The White Worker" in *Black
Reconstruction in America: An Essay
Toward a History of the Part Which
Black Folk Played in the Attempt to
Reconstruct Democracy in America,
1860-1880*. Oxford University Press,
pp. 3-31.
Robinson, Cedric. 2000. Selections from
*Black Marxism: The Making of the
Black Radical Tradition*. UNC Press,
pp. 199-205.

Thursday, January 17:
W.E.B. Du Bois. "Back to Slavery" in *Black
Reconstruction*, pp. 670-710.
News analysis: "Trump and G.O.P.
Candidates Escalate Race and Fear as
Election Ploys," *New York Times*
(October 22, 2018).

Due on Sunday: Weekly assignment #2

Week 3: The Culture Industry

Tuesday, January 22:
Horkheimer, Max and Theodore Adorno.
1944. "The Culture Industry as Mass
Deception." In *Dialectic of the
Enlightenment*, Stanford University
Press, pp. 94-136.
Adorno, Theodore. 1991. "Free Time." In
*The Culture Industry: Selected Essays
on Mass Culture*. London and New
York: Routledge, pp. 187-197.

Thursday, January 24:
Essay: "Watch the Throne: Let Them Eat
Cake," *Grantland* (August 24, 2011)

Due on Sunday: Essay #1

Week 4: On Hegemony and Revolution

Tuesday, January 29:
Gramsci, Antonio. Selections from "State
and Civil Society." In *The Prison
Notebooks*, pp. 229-245.
Jones, Steve. 2006. Selections from *Antonio
Gramsci (Routledge Critical Thinkers)*
London and New York: Routledge, pp.
27-34.
Optional: Hoare, Quintin (editor of
Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*)
"Introduction to State and Civil
Society," pp. 206-209.

Thursday, January 31:
Gramsci, Antonio. Selections from "State
and Civil Society." In *The Prison
Notebooks*, pp. 257-65.

Essay: Lipsitz, George. "The Struggle For Hegemony." *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (1988): 146-150.

Due on Sunday: Weekly assignment #3

Week 5: Racial Formations

Tuesday, February 5:

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. 1994. "Racial Formation." In *Racial Formation in the United States*. London: Routledge, pp. 103-136.

Lowe, Lisa. "The Power of Culture." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 1, no. 1 (1998): 5-29.

Thursday, February 7:

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

News analysis: "Why Many Native Americans Are Angry with Elizabeth Warren" *New York Times* (October 17, 2018).

Due on Sunday: Weekly assignment #4

Week 6: Sex and Gender

Tuesday, February 12:

Butler, Judith. 2004. "Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexuality." In *Undoing Gender*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 57-74.

Thursday, February 14:

Podcast: Radiolab, "Dutee" (July 21, 2018)
https://www.listennotes.com/podcasts/radiolab/dutee-tVPU_SRFw45/

Due on Sunday: Essay #2

Week 7: Situated Knowledges

Tuesday, February 19:

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

Thursday, February 21:

"The Combahee River Collective Statement" and "Introduction" in *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*, edited and introduced by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor. Chicago: Haymarket Books, pp. 1-27.

Due on Sunday: Weekly assignment #5

Week 8: Social Reproduction and the Value of Work

Tuesday, February 26:

Federici, Sylvia. 2012. "Wages Against Housework" in *Revolution Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*. PM Press, pp. 15-22.

Davis, Angela. 1983. "The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework: A Working-Class Perspective." In

Women, Race & Class (New York: Vintage eBooks), pp. 128-139.

Thursday, February 28:

Federici, Sylvia. "The Crisis of Elder Care" in *Revolution Point Zero*, pp. 115-125.

Hochschild, Arlie. 2006. "The Nanny Chain." In *The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class and Gender* (first edition). Edited by David Gusky and Szonja Szelenyi, pp. 357-360.

YouTube Video: Ai-Jen Poo, TIME 100: The Most Influential People in the World, 2012,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAcOcAlhyuQ> (7 min)

YouTube Video: Lilly Irani, "The Labor that Makes AI Magic" (AI Now Symposium, NYU University, 2016)

<https://ainowinstitute.org/symposia/videos/the-labor-that-makes-ai-magic.html> (7 min)

Due on Sunday: Weekly assignment #6

Week 9: Rethinking the 'Human'

Tuesday, March 5:

Frantz Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness" in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Grove Press, 2008 [1952], pp. 109-140.

Thursday, March 7:

Re-read "The Fact of Blackness", with handout (turn in during lecture)

Week 10: Parting Thoughts

Tuesday, March 12 and Thursday, March 14

Gordon, Avery. 2015. "Theory and Justice." In *Keeping good time: Reflections on Knowledge, Power and People*. Routledge, pp. 99-105.

*****Final paper due Sunday, March 17, 2019 at 12pm*****

Have a great Spring Break ☺

