

Course Title	Contemporary Social Theory LAS 3011	Instructor	Dr BOLZONAR Fabio
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Class Style	Lecture	Office Hours	To be determined Or by appointment (please send an email to request an appointment)
Track		Mode of Instruction	Solo
Credits	2	Allocated Year	Spring 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 4 <sup>th</sup> year
Active Learning	Category 2: 3 Category 3: 2, 3, 4 Category 4: 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10	Compulsory or Elective	
Course Overview	<p>This course is designed for those students who wish to develop their knowledge of sociology and enhance their understanding of the social transformations of contemporary societies. The course is composed of two modules. The first module has a theoretical focus as it explains the crucial tenets of some of the major contemporary social theories (e.g., functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and rational choice). The second module unpacks some of the principal debates in contemporary social theory and pays attention to several substantive issues (e.g., social control, multiculturalism, gender and sexuality, and the public sphere) that have attracted the attention of social theorists. The course instructor presents theoretical and empirical works, reviews social research methods and, through an active learning approach, encourages class discussions to stimulate students to think critically about social issues in contemporary societies.</p>		
Course Objectives	<p>The intended learning outcomes of this course are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehending some of the major developments and debates in contemporary social theory;</li> <li>• Understanding the linkages between classical sociological theories and contemporary social theory;</li> <li>• Starting to develop a personal and critical methodological approach for interpreting current social problems;</li> <li>• Enhancing the ability to explain accurately and concisely complex theoretical arguments in English;</li> <li>• Interpreting social reality through the analytical lens provided by contemporary social theory;</li> <li>• Strengthening the ability to think analytically and critically.</li> </ul>		
Prerequisite	<p>The course is open to any student who has taken the course Introduction to Sociology or an equivalent course. Those students who do not have the required background knowledge of sociology and are interested in attending the classes are invited to contact the course instructor.</p>		
Course Schedule	No	Contents	Homework
	1	<p><b>Introduction to the Course</b> <i>What Is Social Theory?</i></p> <p>This lecture is an introduction to the course. While the first part of the lecture describes the course syllabus, the second part explains what contemporary social theory is and why we should care about it if we wish to understand our societies.</p>	Reading for the next class.
	2	<p><b>Module 1: Theoretical Perspectives</b> <i>A Functional Analysis of Action</i></p>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.

3	<i>Ervin Goffman and Symbolic Interactionism (first part)</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
4	<i>Ervin Goffman and Symbolic Interactionism (second part)</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
5	<i>James Coleman and the Rational Choice Theory</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
6	<i>Review</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class
7	<i>Mid-term Exam</i>	Studying for the exam.
8	<b>Module 2: Issues and Debates</b> <i>Social Control and Deviance (first part)</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
9	<i>Social Control and Deviance (second part)</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
10	<i>(Re-)thinking Gender and Sexuality (first part)</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
11	<i>(Re-)thinking Gender and Sexuality (second part)</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
12	<i>The Reproduction of Inequality and Global Inequalities</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
13	<i>The Media</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
14	<i>Globalization</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
15	<b>Conclusion</b> <i>Review and Wrap Up</i> It also summarizes and reviews what we have learnt from 'thinking sociologically' in this course. Students will also have the opportunity to raise further questions about the class material and the course instructor will provide some advice for the final assignment.	Debate and course overview.
	<i>Final Exam</i>	Studying for the final exam.

Grading	<p>Class Participation: 30 %</p> <p>Students are expected to engage in discussions. Participation will be evaluated on the basis of the contribution to collective learning. If a student does not feel comfortable speaking in class, she/he is encouraged to contact the course instructor to arrange an alternative way to participate in discussions. The course instructor would do his best to accommodate students' requests. Student presentations will be counted as extra participation.</p> <p>Midterm exam: 30%</p> <p>There will be a midterm exam related to the course material discussed in Module 1. This exam will be composed of several multiple choice and true/false quizzes and one open questions. Grades will be based on the understanding of the course material and the answers given by each student.</p> <p>Final exam: 40%</p> <p>There will be a final exam related to the course material discussed in Module 2. This exam will be composed of several multiple choice and true/false quizzes and three open questions. Grades will be based on the understanding of the course material and the answers given by each student.</p>
Textbooks	<p>A detailed list of readings will be provided by the instructor on Moodle.</p>
References	<p>A detailed list of references will be provided on Moodle.</p> <p><b>PODCASTS ON CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORY</b></p> <p>BBC – Thinking Allowed, <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qy05">https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qy05</a></p> <p>Sage – Sociology Podcast Series, <a href="https://journals.sagepub.com/page/soc/podcasts">https://journals.sagepub.com/page/soc/podcasts</a></p> <p>The Sociological Reviews Podcasts, <a href="https://thesociologicalreview.org/podcasts/">https://thesociologicalreview.org/podcasts/</a></p> <p><b>MASS MEDIA AND NEWSPAPERS</b></p> <p><i>BBC</i> (Society and Culture), <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01hp4k7">https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01hp4k7</a></p> <p><i>The Financial Times</i> (Japanese Society), <a href="https://www.ft.com/japanese-society">https://www.ft.com/japanese-society</a></p> <p><i>The Guardian</i> (Society), <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/society">https://www.theguardian.com/society</a></p> <p><i>The Japan Times</i> (Society), <a href="https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/japan/society/">https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/japan/society/</a></p> <p><i>The New York Times</i> (Society), <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/topic/subject/society">https://www.nytimes.com/topic/subject/society</a></p> <p><i>El País</i> (Society), <a href="https://english.elpais.com/society/">https://english.elpais.com/society/</a></p>
NOTES	<p>During the course each student will be required to write short reflections (max 150 words) which are due two days before each class at the latest. If a student does not submit the short reflection their grade will be reduced by 10%.</p> <p>Students with disabilities or special needs (including stress and anxiety problems) should talk to the course instructor as soon as possible to discuss likely arrangements to let them attend the course properly. Confidentiality will be granted to all students.</p> <p>Artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini) for learning purposes should be used cautiously. Even though AI tools can explain complex concepts, organize workload efficiently, and enhance writing skills, they can also provide inaccurate information, lead to unintended plagiarism, and undermine the enhancement of critical thinking. If students wish to use AI tools, they are strongly encouraged to discuss this topic with the course instructor.</p>