

Course Title	Contemporary Social Theory	Instructor	Dr Cherry Amor YAP
		E-mail	
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 3rd - 4th Year
Active Learning	Category 1: 3, 5, 6 Category 2: 3, 6 Category 3: 1, 2, 3, 5 Category 4: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11 Category 5: 1, 2	Compulsory or Elective	
Course Overview	<p>This course introduces students to the important ideas and frameworks used to analyze culture, identity, power, and inequality in modern societies. Through the work of twelve leading theorists — from Goffman and Bourdieu on how culture and identity are performed and reproduced, to Mills, Butler, and Said on how power, gender, and representation structure social life — students develop the analytical tools to examine both Japanese society and the wider world critically and comparatively.</p> <p>In each class meeting, lectures and discussions will move from theory to practice, providing opportunities to connect key concepts to real-life examples and developing skills to analyze, evaluate and construct original sociological arguments.</p>		
Course Objectives	<p>By the end of this course, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the core ideas of twelve major contemporary social theorists clearly and in their own words;</li> <li>• Compare how different theoretical frameworks interpret the same cultural or social phenomenon;</li> <li>• Identify the strengths and limitations of each theoretical perspective.</li> <li>• Apply two or more theories to analyse a real cultural phenomenon from Japan or global society;</li> <li>• Reflect critically on their own cultural assumptions and position when engaging with social theory.</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 requested to get in touch with the course instructor.</p>		
Course Schedule	No	Contents	Homework
	1	Syllabus Overview & Introductions This introductory meeting explains the course structure, the work expected from each student, and the grading system. The class concludes with an initial discussion on "what is social theory" and why it matters?	Readings for the next class.
	2	Performing the Self: Front Stage & Back Stage Erving Goffman (Dramaturgical Model)	Complete the assigned readings and identify one question or idea you want to explore further in class.
	3	Stigma, Identity & Everyday Interaction Erving Goffman (Stigma, Face-work, Interaction Rituals)	Complete the assigned readings and identify one question or idea you want to explore further in class.
	4	Cultural Capital & How Society Reproduces Itself Pierre Bourdieu (Cultural Capital, Habitus, Field)	Complete the assigned readings and identify one question or idea you want to explore further in class.
5	Culture as a Toolkit: Meaning, Practice & Strategy Ann Swidler	Complete the assigned readings and identify one question or idea you want to	

	(Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies)	explore further in class.
6	Identity, Reflexivity & Modernity Anthony Giddens (Self & Ontological Security, Reflexive Modernity)	Complete the assigned readings and identify one question or idea you want to explore further in class.
7	Module 1 Review Mid-Term Preparation Goffman · Bourdieu · Swidler · Giddens	Studying for the Midterm Exam.
8	MIDTERM EXAM	
9	Power, Inequality & the Social Structure C. Wright Mills (The Power Elite) Immanuel Wallerstein (World-Systems Theory – overview)	Complete the assigned readings and identify one question or idea you want to explore further in class.
10	Representation, Power & the Global 'Other' Edward Said (Orientalism, Cultural Representation)	Complete the assigned readings and identify one question or idea you want to explore further in class.
11	Gender, Feminism & Japanese Society Dorothy E. Smith (Standpoint Theory, Women's Perspective as Radical Critique) Joan Acker (Gendered Organisations – brief overview)	Complete the assigned readings and identify one question or idea you want to explore further in class.
12	Performativity, Gender & Cultural Identity Judith Butler (Performativity, Materializing Sex)	Complete the assigned readings and identify one question or idea you want to explore further in class.
13	Media, Globalisation & Contemporary Society Globalisation perspectives Media and mediatisation	Complete the assigned readings and identify one question or idea you want to explore further in class.
14	Emotion, Rationality & Theorizing as Craft Randall Collins (Interaction Ritual Chains, Emotional Energy) James Coleman (Rational Choice – contrast only)	Complete the assigned readings and identify one question or idea you want to explore further in class.
15	Conclusion Review & Final Dialogue All theorists – cross-cutting themes	Studying for the Final Exam.
	FINAL EXAM	
Grading	<p>Class Participation 30% Assessed on the quality of intellectual contribution to discussions, group tasks, and in-class writing. Students are evaluated on engagement with ideas and use of course concepts — not on the fluency of English expression. Students who prefer not to speak publicly may arrange an alternative format with the instructor.</p> <p>Weekly Activities (In Class/Homework) 20% Short tasks either done in class or as additional assignments.</p> <p>Midterm Exam 25% Covers Module 1 where the first part is designed as multiple choice and true/false questions. The second part is a short essay writing for analytical and critical reasoning assessment.</p> <p>Final Exam 25% Covers Module 2 where the first part is designed as multiple choice and true/false questions. The second part includes longer and multiple essay writing exercises for analytical and critical reasoning assessment.</p>	

Textbooks	Information on primary textbooks will be provided by the instructor on Moodle.
References	<p>A detailed list of references will be provided on Moodle.</p> <p>Online References  Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy — entries on Structuralism, Feminism, Post-colonialism, Critical Theory, Identity  SWAYAM / NPTEL — Social Theory: Concepts and Debates  CrashCourse Sociology — YouTube playlist  World Economic Forum — Global Gender Gap Report 2024.</p> <p>Internet Archive — <a href="http://archive.org">archive.org</a>  Academia.edu — <a href="http://academia.edu">academia.edu</a></p>
NOTES	<p>The use of AI tools like ChatGPT, Google Gemini, or Claude is not entirely prohibited. Students, however, must remember that these are primarily “tools”, as with any kind of tools, they are to be used carefully and in a relevant manner. For instance, it can help you understand new terminologies or concepts, sort out your notes, or check if you interpreted an idea correctly. But, AI can also give out the wrong information. Reading and studying verified references can help solve this. If you must use AI, please discuss it with the course instructor.</p> <p>Students with special needs (including stress and anxiety problems) should talk with the course instructor to discuss arrangements to let them attend the course properly. Confidentiality will be granted to all students.</p>