“You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time.”
– Dr. Angela Y. Davis

“The function of sociology, as of every science, is to reveal that which is hidden.” – Pierre Bourdieu

“You cannot remain neutral on a white supremacist high speed train in which the driver has fallen asleep.” – Dr. A. Breeze Harper

COURSE OVERVIEW
This course is an introduction to contemporary theory. We will cover theorists from the 20th and early 21st centuries, drawing connections to classical theory and the roots of the discipline. Our goals in this course are threefold: (1) to understand the arguments the theorists make, (2) to place their works in sociopolitical and historical context, and (3) to see how these arguments relate to current issues and events in our society. As such, each week we will have writings from theorists on a theme or themes in sociology. We will also bring in writings from other disciplines and literature, to deepen our ability to make connections and engage in interdisciplinary thinking. This approach will also enable us to see the problematic aspects of sociology’s roots that continue to influence the discipline, so that we can better identify the ways that theories provide tools for imagining a more just, equitable, and sustainable society.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
Students who successfully complete this course should:
• Be familiar with 20th and 21st century theorists
• Draw connections with classical theorists
• Know how to critically read and assess original sources of theoretical content
• Make relevant the theories by applying them to our society and empirical evidence

READINGS
We will be reading original texts, posted to D2L before class. Please bring in printed copies. For a different reference point, there are theorists summarized by Kenneth Allan in The Social Lens: An Invitation to Social and Sociological Theory. You do not need a copy of this text.

COURSE POLICIES
In order to ensure a fair academic environment, please note that no exceptions will be made regarding the course guidelines as well as the methods of student evaluation. University rules on academic misconduct will be strictly enforced. If you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism or other forms
of academic dishonesty please consult the student handbook. Papers may be subject to online anti-plagiarism review.

**Electronic devices:** Laptops and smartphones should not be used in class. The use of these devices distracts from the learning experience, and studies suggest that handwriting our notes helps improve retention and processing of new material. If your success in this class is dependent upon your use of a laptop, please see me to make other arrangements.

**Classroom climate:** As scholars at Portland State, the free and open exchange of ideas in classrooms is expected and considered necessary for learning. Students are free to express either agreement or disagreement without fear of consequences. This does not mean of course, that the instructor or other students may not challenge your views or disagree with them, but it does mean that you will experience no consequence for disagreeing with anyone—especially the instructor. Additionally, class discussions can easily be environments that are unfair to some students. Thus, we must all be sensitive in our participation by not talking too much or too loudly. This does not mean that people cannot disagree or have emotions connected to their words. What this does mean is that we all need to listen and respond in a way that is appreciative and respectful no matter how strongly we might agree or disagree. The goal is to create a psychologically safe space in which everyone feels that they can participate.

This class makes every effort to make this subject come alive, especially through drawing upon a range of interesting and related reading. We will work together to merge theory and practice and to engage in meaningful dialogue. While some of the topics we will be discussing have the potential to disrupt or upset our personal comfort zones, it is my hope that we will practice engagement when this happens so that we can thoughtfully consider these issues in a supportive environment.

Do not hesitate to communicate directly to me your thoughts or concerns throughout the term.

**Student Evaluation:** Students are expected to actively participate in classes. This course will be arranged in such a way as to maximize class participation. Success in this class will be dependent on your preparation and attendance in class, during which you will be expected to demonstrate you have read and thought about the assigned text for the day. We will do mid-semester check-ins.

**Late Assignments:** Late penalties will apply to all late assignments. You will lose 5 points for each day your assignment is late.

Plagiarism, whether it be from your fellow student’s work or professional publications, in any form for the research paper and exams will result in an automatic F for that assignment and appropriate institutional action will be taken.

**Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities:** PSU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. My goal is to create a learning environment that is equitable, useable, inclusive, and welcoming. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503-725-4150, drc@pdx.edu, [https://www.pdx.edu/drc](https://www.pdx.edu/drc). If you already have accommodations,
If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received a faculty notification letter and discuss your accommodations.

- Students who need accommodations for tests and quizzes are expected to schedule their tests to overlap with the time the class is taking the test.
- Please be aware that the accessible tables or chairs in the room should remain available for students who find that standard classroom seating is not useable.
- For information about emergency preparedness, please go to the Fire and Life Safety webpage (https://www.pdx.edu/environmental-health-safety/fire-and-life-safety) for information.

**Title IX Reporting Obligations:** As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment for my students and for the campus as a whole. We expect a culture of professionalism and mutual respect in our department and class. You may report any incident of discrimination or discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment, to either the Office of Equity and Compliance or the Office of the Dean of Student Life. Please be aware that as a faculty member, I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment or sexual violence to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you may contact one of the following resources:

- Women’s Resource Center (503-725-5672)
- Queer Resource Center (503-725-9742)
- Center for Student Health and Counseling (SHAC): 1880 SW 6th Ave, (503) 725-2800
- Student Legal Services: 1825 SW Broadway, (SMSU) M343, (503) 725-4556

This Sexual Misconduct Website provides a complete of those confidential employees and off campus resources. For more information about Title IX please complete the required student module Creating a Safe Campus in your D2L.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Your grade will be based on three components:

- **Participation:** 15%. Because we have a limited number of class sessions, it is important you come to class prepared each session, ready to discuss and pose questions about the readings and with your peers. As part of participation, you will engage in peer review of the writing exercises (see below). If you have to miss class, please email me to see about the possibility to complete make-up work. Your completion of midterm feedback will also count towards this part of your grade.

- **Weekly Reactions:** 25%. By Sunday noon before each class, you will be expected to submit a reaction to the readings. Each reaction should be submitted via google forms, and will typically include the following (some weeks may vary; read instructions on form to confirm):
  - Gut reaction: how did you feel reading the text/excerpts?
  - Burning questions: what questions come up for you in the readings? Write at least 1 discussion question for each theorist/text
Your thoughts: jot down 200-300 words in reaction to your questions, and/or relating the texts for the week to each other

- Weekly Essays: 60%. Following each class, you will receive a prompt that will require you to reflect more deeply on the readings and class discussion and, in most weeks, apply what you have learned (typically 800-1000 words, 2 pages single-spaced submit in PDF). These essays should be uploaded by **Friday 21:00**. By week 3, be prepared to share these essays with peers as well.

- Format deductions. Coordinating paperwork for students requires efficiency, to maximize the amount of time I am teaching/giving feedback versus formatting/printing. For this reason, I ask that you submit your reactions and essays in the formats specified above.

Final letter grades for this course will be determined on the following scale:

- 93-100 = A
- 90-92 = A-
- 87-89 = B+
- 83-86 = B
- 80-82 = B-
- 77-79 = C+
- 73-76 = C
- 70-72 = C-
- 67-69 = D+
- 63-66 = D
- 60-62 = D-
- 59 > = F

**READINGS**

We read original sources here, primarily by contemporary theorists along with a few classical texts and non-sociologists. Rather than identify a single theme per day, we will have several through the course that connect readings across weeks. As you go through each reading, I encourage you to use wikipedia and google to learn a bit about the context in which it was written. Many readings are excerpts from longer works and many of these are freely available online or via the Portland State library. Note that if you have trouble with some texts, be sure to pay attention to the instructions for the week and/or email me, as we will not give equal weight to everything on this list.
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<th>Week</th>
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| **Week 1** 8 Jan. | (1) Patricia Hill Collins. 1986. Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of black feminist thought.  
(3) Eduardo Galeano. 1998. Upside down, the looking-glass school.  
(4) Georg Simmel. 1908. Soziologie, the stranger.  
| **Week 2** 15 Jan. | [MLK Day, university closed]  
(1) Harriet Martineau. 1844. Power of ideas in the sick-room.  
(2) Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. 2017. The racial problem of American sociology. + follow 3 citations  
\[\text{in lieu of class, watch: Dr. Harper https://youtu.be/rPWTRh4nng0}\] |
(3) Robert Merton. 1936. The unanticipated consequences of purposive social action. |
(2) Betty Friedan. 1963. The feminine mystique, problem that has no name.  
(3) Anna J. Cooper. 1892. A voice from the South, The higher education of women.  
(2) Jürgen Habermas. 2006. Political communication in media society: Does democracy still enjoy an epistemic dimension?  
(2) Bruno Latour. 1991. We have never been modern, Redistribution.  
| **Week 8** 26 Feb. | (1) Patricia Hill Collins. 1990. Black feminist thought, Black feminist epistemology.  
(4) Application of theory to research. |
(2) Pierre Bourdieu. 1994. Social space and symbolic space, structures, habitus, practices. |
| **Week 10** 12 Mar. | Student selections. |