



***Syllabus***

**SOC 436 (Section 01E):  
Fall, 2014**

***Introduction to Sociological Theory***

***Web-Assisted Course***

**Classes Meet on Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2 to 3:15 PM, in BA 338 at Commerce & Room 118 on A&M-Commerce campus in Rockwall**

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Professor**

**Office Location: Ferguson Social Sciences Bldg., Room 230**

**Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 9 to noon and 1 to 2 PM at either Commerce or Rockwall, or by appointment through e-mail.**

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**COURSE INFORMATION**

**I. Materials – Textbook, Readings, Supplementary Readings:**

**Required Textbook: The Discovery of Society by Randall Collins & M. Makowsky, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition, McGraw Hill, 2010.**

**Supplementary Readings: You will be provided copies of handouts posted on-line and a list of recommended readings at various times as needed for accomplishing the course objectives.**

## **II. Course Description:**

**Welcome to the SOC 436 class! While we will be meeting face-to-face every week on scheduled times, this course is web-assisted and your work on-line shall supplement work in our class. I am confident that we will have a productive semester in learning basics in the sociological theory.**

### **Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes**

**This course is focused on enabling you to think critically and conceptually. It is a general survey course on the sociological theory at an introductory level. Through textbook readings and on-line materials, we will pursue the following **course objectives**.**

- **Understand what theory is or is not, and what roles theory plays. Identify different types of theory (e. g. metaphysical, analytical, normative, and scientific). Critically estimate scope and limits of science and scientific thinking.**
- **Conceptualize meaning and scope of the sociological perspective. How is this perspective different from those of the other social sciences?**
- **Explore a history of sociological ideas and theories.**
- **Develop a comparative understanding of the conflict theory, functionalism, interactionism, and exchange theory. Within contexts of these theoretical perspectives, identify the major contributions of various sociologists, particularly Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Talcott Parsons, G.H. Mead, and George Homans.**
- **Get an overview of the contemporary theory and the future trends in sociological theory.**

**The **learning outcome assessment** for the goals stated above will be based on essays exams, weekly discussions, and an assignment to insure:**

- 1. That students have adequately learned a history and the major types of sociological theories;**

- 2. That students fully understand the contributions made by classical theorists in developing ideas that led to the growth of sociological theories;**
- 3. That students have developed critical as well as conceptual thinking grasping various sociological theories explaining phenomena such as socialization, social control, freedom, inequalities, social deviance, and social change;**
- 4. That students have a grasp of the sociological perspective, along with the role of research in developing that perspective as well as theories in sociology; and**
- 5. That students have conceptualized the application of the sociological theory in solving problems or addressing social issues and demonstrate an understanding of the emerging trends in the contemporary sociological theory.**

### **Topical Outline**

#### **PART 1: THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

**The Sociological Perspective: “An Invitation to Sociology” and the “Sociological Imagination”**

**Relationship between Theory & Research in Sociology**

**Pre-Sociological Social Thought**

**Origin of Sociology**

**Relationship of Sociology with Other Social Sciences**

#### **PART 2: THEORY**

- 1. Why Study Theory?**
- 2. Application of Social Theory to Everyday Issues**
- 3. Background to Sociological Theory**

**What Theory Is and Is Not**

## **Types of Theory**

### **Meaning, Levels (Grand Theory & Theory of the Middle Range) and Types of Theory (Analytical, Normative, Metaphysical, and Scientific Theories)**

- ❖ **Analytical Theory (Math, statistics)**
- ❖ **Normative Theory (jurisprudence, morality, traditions, folkways)**
- ❖ **Metaphysical Theory**
  1. **Based on imagination, grand theory**
  2. **Faith rather than facts (proof)**
- ❖ **Scientific Theory—tested through research--empirical**

### **Relationship between Theory & Research**

## **PART 3: MAJOR THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OR PARADIGMS**

### **CONFLICT THEORY**

- ❖ **Darwin –Read Chapter 5**
- ❖ **Marx –Read Chapter 2**
- ❖ **Freud –Read Chapter 8**
- ❖ **Nietzsche, Hitler, Mannheim, Mills, Veblen –Read Chapters 4, 13**

### **FUNCTIONALISM**

- ❖ **Comte –Read Chapter 1**
- ❖ **Durkheim –Read Chapter 6**
- ❖ **Parsons –Read Chapter 12**

### **EXCHANGE THEORY**

- ❖ **Utilitarianism – Read handout**
- ❖ **Behaviorism –Read handout**
- ❖ **Homans –Read handout**

### **SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM**

- ❖ **Weber –Read Chapter 7**
- ❖ **Cooley & Mead –Read Chapter 9**
- ❖ **Goffman –Read Chapter 14**

## **E. APPLICATION OF THEORIES**

## **A. OVERVIEW OF THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AS A STUDY GUIDE**

### **1. CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE**

- **Instinct for Survival**
- **Vested, survival, conflicting type of interest.**
- **Tendencies towards individualism**
- **Private interests start emerging**
- **Background occupation important.**
- **Formal Organization will start to appear**
- **Development of power and leadership, inequality and individualism**
- **Start of socialization, social control and domination**
- **Reality orientation**
- **Individualistic**
- **Freedom - Not distributed equally.**
- **Inequality**
- **Power - cultural hegemony (exploitation by one people of another.)**
- **Very negative, very critical**

### **2. STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

- **Cooperation, we are in this together, Division of labor.**
- **Integrity of the whole group over the individual, Individual not important, Holistic outlook, for whole group, totality of the whole, important, what makes the whole group. It will develop its own identity.**
- **We all need to make it together. Holistic approach, will be asked to participate, each individual needs to make a contribution to the whole. System Theory.**
- **All parts connected, all integrated, one part contributes to the others, Holistic totality of the whole.**
- **How the system prevails.**
- **All parts must function, conflict must be controlled through the systems approach.**
- **Must maintain system standing norms, rules, this is the goal.**
- **Some inequality is functional**

### **3. EXCHANGE THEORY**

- **Individual needs in combination with group needs**
- **Who can help survive, very pragmatic, realistic, give and take**

- **Collective needs, needs of both the group and the individual.**
- **Reciprocity is exchange.**
- **Mutual of needs - pragmatic and rational, approach rational people, cost benefit.**

### **EXCHANGE THEORY SUMMARIZED**

- **Individualism**
- **Pragmatic**
- **Rationalism**
- **How institutions fit into organization**

## **4. SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM**

- **How to understand each other.**
- **People looking at each other.**
- **Perception becomes issue.**
- **How message is conveyed, social or psychological.**
- **The meaning of the message, not how sent or how received.**
- **No one will be happy with all things.**
- **How we experience reality (e.g., prejudice how people perceive prejudice).**
- **How we see things from what perspective-- social – psychological.**
- **Mental processes, not a focus on physical processes.**
- **People deal with things differently, no right or wrong.**
- **Very scientific approach, point of view of the individual very general.**
- **People experience things differently, individual perceptions, different interoperation of issues or totality.**
- **Approach both individual and collectively.**

### **III. Student Responsibilities**

**Your responsibilities in completing this course are stated below.**

- 1. You must regularly read the syllabus and all announcements posted on line at the home page of this course (or sent to you through the MyLeo e-mails) very carefully and follow all instructions about course objectives, grading procedures, and other guidelines given therein. This is an important course in our curriculum for the sociology majors and for other students taking it as an elective, particularly in counseling, psychology, other social sciences and social work. Let us be serious in achieving its goals. I expect that you have already completed the Introduction to Sociology course at A&M-**

**Commerce or elsewhere before taking SOC 436. Talk to me if you have any question about that expectation.**

- 2. Your **study guide** (in terms each week's learning objectives and guidance for succeeding in fulfilling the requirements) will be given **in classes on Tuesdays & Thursdays afternoons**. It is important that you carefully work on your study guide as provided in classes.**
- 3. It is important that you log into the course regularly as a supplement to our classes. It is necessary that you plan your work on the course on a regular basis to succeed in making the highest grade.**
- 4. In addition to asking questions in our weekly classes, you can post your questions and concerns about the course and its requirements at **VIRTUAL OFFICE** in the Home Page of this course. The virtual office will serve our learning needs of being in touch with not only me but with also with all persons in the class whenever you have questions or comments about the course. I will post my response to your questions. That way all other students become aware of what course and its issues are being discussed in the Virtual Office.**
- 5. Weekly classes will be structured around the following:**
  - ❖ You will be expected to attend all classes on time. (For attendance policy, see the Undergraduate Catalog of Texas A&M University-Commerce.) Attendance in this class is particularly important in this course because of the following reasons:**
    - A. Reading textbook in the sociological theory course may not be as easy as in certain other courses. I will go over various theories and theorists carefully in my weekly classes. I will require that you take notes in classes (on a notebook, not the lap tops as they will not be allowed in my classes in the best interest of face-to-face discussions).**
    - B. I will guide you for effective reading of the textbook.**
    - C. All of my exams in the course will consist of short essay questions. There will be no emphasis in this course to memorize any contents from the literature. Instead, I will emphasize conceptual and theoretical thinking which can only be appreciated than memorizing specific facts. Also, I will address**

**possible essay questions for exams frequently in my classes. If you miss classes, you may not make a good grade in my class.**

- ❖ **Classes will begin promptly at the scheduled time. You are expected to be on time as late arrivals are disrupting to everyone. If you are late by more than two minutes, please do not try to enter classroom. Also, you are not expected to leave the classroom without instructor's prior approval.**

**Since this is a web assisted course, class may not meet on certain days as specified in the calendar given in the course syllabus. YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE TO NOTE ALL DATES AND TIMES THE CLASS WILL MEET AT BOTH COMMERCE & ROCKWALL CAMPUSES. IGNORANCE OF YOUR CALENDAR WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AS A REASON FOR MISSING CLASSES AS SCHEDULED.**

- ❖ **You must bring your textbook to class every time it meets. I will call on you and draw your attention to specific portions of chapters to underline certain sections of a chapter and mark certain things as important. In addition, I will provide you some handouts in classes. I will make sure that you are guided properly in making the best use of various sections of these materials.**
- ❖ **Readings of textbook and other materials must be done when assigned. That is the only way to make the best use of reading materials. I will call on you during class discussions to talk about what you read during the period of a reading assignment.**
- ❖ **You are expected to participate in the class discussions and presentations as well as in scheduled discussions assigned to be completed on line. You are considered to be responsible for making sure that you ask questions and express your opinions and ideas when appropriate. This is especially important in this class, as we will be dealing with quite a few debatable issues. We will indeed get more out of this course if we sincerely make efforts to talk to each other and discuss everything thoroughly.**
- ❖ **I expect you to be attentive in the classroom. Let's not have any distractions (food, drink, chewing gum, a laptop, a nap, cell phones usage, etc.). I will appreciate your cooperation in making our classroom atmosphere conducive to productivity for learning.**



❖ **You must be courteous and not disrupt class discussions.**

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments**

**On the Home Page, your course is organized under 14 weeks providing you info on each topic's overview, objectives, and its study guide. Log in for discussions given under various weeks as indicated in the 'Calendar' given in this syllabus.**

**Grading will be based upon total 350 points accumulated from on-line discussions containing **50 points** & 3 exams' scores, totaling **300 points**.**

**Details on the grading procedures are stated below:**

**You will be able to calculate your grade by knowing your percentage score at any given point during the semester.**

**At the end of the course, an "A" will be equal to 90+% (or 315+ points), a "B" will be equal to 80-89% (or 280 to 314 points), a "C" for 70-79% (or 245 to 279 points) and a "D" for 60-69% (or 210 to 244 points) of the total points accumulated on items stated below.**

**Your final grade will be based on the following procedures given stated under A & B below:**

- A. Closed-Book Exams (a total of 300 points; 100 points for each exam; you must take 3 out of 4 exams including the final; if you take all 4 exams, I will drop the lowest score).**

**Topics for each exam are stated below (they are also mentioned in your calendar given above). Dates for exams are given in your calendar. Additional details will be provided in classes.**

**1<sup>st</sup> Exam**                      **Types of theory; science; sociological perspective; and history of sociology.**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Exam**                      **Conflict theory and functionalism**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Exam**                      **Interactionism and exchange theory**

**Final Exam** will be a comprehensive exam. A list of specific topics will be given in the class. As stated earlier, that **the final is a make-up and optional exam**. However, if you miss any of the first three exams, final is required to pass the course.

All exams will consist of short essays. All exams will be given in classes on scheduled dates. No individually scheduled make-up exams will be given to anyone during the semester.

*Additional instructions for each exam shall be provided in classes.*

## **HOW TO DO WELL IN ESSAY QUESTIONS IN EXAMS & IN BONUS-POINTS DISCUSSIONS:**

I want you to do well in answering essay and discussion questions, when given to you. The essay questions shall help you to express ideas on theories and represent critical thinking on your part on serious questions. I encourage all of you to do your best in essays.

If you lose some points in any essay, reasons for that could include:

- ❖ you may not have answered a question correctly;
- ❖ you may not have answered all parts of each question;
- ❖ you may have been too brief in your answer and might not have elaborated on your answer demonstrating your understanding;
- ❖ you may have included irrelevant materials in your answers;
- ❖ you may have lacked clarity; or
- ❖ you may not have provided examples illustrating your points, where needed.

### **B. Discussions to be Posted by You Online on Selected Dates to be Announced (a total of 50 points allocated):**

**Discussion 1:** Define the “sociological perspective.” How is that perspective different from perspectives of other ‘social sciences’ (for example, psychology & economics)? Give examples to illustrate similarities and differences between perspectives.

**Discussion 2:** Define ‘scientific’ and ‘unscientific’ thinking. What are ‘strengths’ & ‘limitations’ of scientific perspective? Illustrate by giving specific examples.

**Discussion 3:** Select two social theorists and compare/contrast various aspects of their theories/approaches. If you were to prefer one theorist over

another, give your reasons. You may want to point out selected 'strengths' and/or 'weaknesses' in their outlooks/ideas.

**Discussion 4:** Select a contemporary social issue or a social problem and apply any of the major sociological theories and apply that theory in interpreting that issue/problem and then proposing solutions/preventing measures to address its resolution. You will need to select only one sociologist linked to the theory you select and give examples of how that theorist would address the issue/problem you selected.

## COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

### Interaction with Instructor Statement:

In addition to interacting with me and other students in the class, you can also e-mail me whenever you have challenges or questions, particularly those that you don't want to share with your class mates in regular classes. Only use this address: [Raghu\\_Singh@tamuc.edu](mailto:Raghu_Singh@tamuc.edu)

Please specify the following in your e-mail: your full name and the course # you are enrolled in so that I can check your record before responding to your need or question.

My goal is to guide each of you in every possible way to succeed in the learning process in this course. Please remember that your success in the course will also determine my success in teaching it. Develop a positive attitude toward learning basics in minority/ethnic relations. I will do my best in being objective, reasonable, encouraging, and fair. I will reward to the maximum those of you who will do their best in following guidelines given in the syllabus and in my classes.

## COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

- ❖ "All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of **common decency** and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment." (See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct).
- ❖ **A Note on Academic Honesty:** Academic honesty is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic

**community must work to provide an environment in which each student has the opportunity to be evaluated fairly on the basis of his/her own performance. University regulations regarding academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. At a minimum, any student found to be in violation of university rules will receive a failing grade on the exam or assignment involved. ALL instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to both the Department Head as well as the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. These offices may also wish to evaluate the case and decide punishment independent of this professor's actions. I will use the technology to scan your answers and discussions to determine if anyone has copied contents from other students, on-line sources, and from published works. No credit will be given to anyone for giving or taking help toward any form of plagiarism beside punitive action in serious cases. While I trust my students, precautions are needed to protect those who genuinely work on the course.**

**As an example of academic honesty and professionalism, I will trust you but a few students who are unethical spoil reputation of all of us. It is my experience that students who cheat do not succeed in doing well in school and in developing meaningful careers.**

❖ **Special Needs: ADA Statement**

**The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:**

**Office of Student Disability Resources and Services**

**Texas A&M University-Commerce**

**Gee Library 132**

**Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835**

**Fax (903) 468-8148**

**[StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu)**

**[Student Disability Resources & Services](#)**

**CALENDAR CONTAINING DATES FOR YOUR DISCUSSIONS  
AND EXAMS**

**Week 1: Monday, 8/24 to Sunday, 8/31: TOPICS WILL BE THE ORIGIN OF SOCIOLOGY & CONCEPT OF THEORY IN SOCIOLOGY .** Read handout on Peter Berger, *Invitation to Sociology*, Chapter 1 provided in Docshare; and your textbook by Collins & M's Preface and Introduction. Work on Discussion 1.

**Week 2: Monday, 9/1 to Sunday, 9/7: TOPICS WILL BE MAJOR TYPES OF THEORY & ROLE OF SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVE IN SOCIOLOGY.** Read handout on types of theory provided in Docshare online. Work on Discussion 2.

**Week 3: Monday, 9/8 to Sunday, 9/14: TOPIC WILL BE INTER-RELATION BETWEEN THEORY & RESEARCH IN SOCIOLOGY.** Read handout on Robert Merton in Docshare online, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Chapters IV and V. Work on Discussion 3.

**Week 4: Monday, 9/15 to Sunday, 9/21: TOPIC WILL BE AN OVERVIEW OF CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGY.** No Discussion online this week.

(\*Take EXAM 1, covering Part I & II online on Monday, 9/22; grade available in your class on 9/23.)

**Week 5: Monday, 9/22 to Sunday, 9/28: TOPIC WILL BE A PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND, (including Hegel, Darwin & Freud) TO THE CONFLICT THEORY.** Work on Discussion 4.

**Week 6: Monday, 9/29 to Sunday, 10/5: TOPICS WILL BE KARL MARX AND OTHER CONFLICT THEORISTS.** Read Chapter 2 & 4 in your textbook by C&M; and handout in Docshare. **NO CLASSES IN COMMERCE & ROCKWALL THIS WEEK.**

**Week 7: Monday, 10/6 to Sunday, 10/12: TOPIC WILL BE INTRODUCTION TO FUNCTIONALISM.** **NO CLASSES IN COMMERCE & ROCKWALL THIS WEEK.**

**Weeks 8-9: Monday, 10/13 to Sunday, 10/26: TOPIC WILL BE DURKHEIM.** Read Chapter 6 in C&M. **PARSONS & MERTON.** Read Chapter 12 in C&M textbook; and **MAX WEBER.** Read Chapter 7 in C&M textbook. Work on Discussion 5.

**Take EXAM 2 on Monday, October 27 online, covering Conflict Theory & Functionalism perspectives.**

**Week 10: Tuesday, 10/28 to Sunday, 11/2: TOPIC WILL BE INTERACTIONISM OF MAX WEBER.** Read Chapter 7 in C&M textbook. Work on Discussion 6.

**Week 11: Monday, 11/3 to Sunday, 11/9: TOPICS WILL BE SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM OF GEORGE HERBERT MEAD, COOLEY, GOFFMAN, THOMAS. Read Chapters 9 & 14 in C&M textbook. Work on Discussion 7.**

**Week 12-13. Monday, 11/10 to Sunday, 11/23: TOPIC WILL BE BACKGROUND TO HOMANS' EXCHANGE THEORY. Read detailed handout. Work on Discussion 8.**

**Take EXAM 3 on Monday, November 24 online, covering Symbolic Interactionism & Exchange Theory perspectives.**

### **Thanksgiving Break**

**Week 14: Monday, 12/1 to Sunday, 12/7: STEPS TOWARD INTEGRATING SOCIAL THEORY & ITS APPLICATION. Read handout online. Work on Discussion 9 (carrying a weight of 20 points).**

**Take FINAL COMPREHENSIVE-MAKE UP EXAM, covering selected topics from the entire course to be given in class on Tuesday, December 9.**