

# INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Soc 350- 03, M01, W01

Fall 2020

MW 4:30-5:50pm

Zoom Meeting: every other Monday

Department of Sociology and Social Work  
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point



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## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

*“To have mastered ‘method’ and ‘theory’ is to have become a self-conscious thinker, a man [or woman] at work and aware of the assumptions and the implications of whatever he [or she] is about. To be mastered by ‘method’ or ‘theory’ is simply to be kept from working, from trying, that is, to find out about something that is going on in the world.”*

C. Wright. Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*

The main purpose of this course is to *experience* the fundamental ideas, concepts, and theories, and the men and women behind them, that shaped and continues to shape the discipline of sociology (as well as other social sciences). I use the word *experience* because all the material covered, although decades if not centuries old, is still applicable and relevant for understanding our social world today. In this way, it is my hope that you will find some aspect of this material that is relatable to in your own lives.

This course has three main objectives. First, we will cover the major elements of key social theories that have become an important bedrock of sociological thinking. But, these ideas and theories were created by men and women living in particular socio-historical contexts and conditions. Therefore, and secondly, we will also examine the lives and environmental characteristics (political, religious, economic, cultural, etc.) of the theorists themselves in order to gain a deeper understanding of their ideas and where they came from. Only after obtaining a thorough understanding of the material can adequate application of the theories to contemporary issues and problems be made – the third objective. By examining how others have applied these theories, and by applying

them yourself, it should be clear that these ideas are still very relevant for understanding social phenomena today.

As illustrated by the above quote by Mills, it is important that we not be slaves to particular ways of thinking or acting. ***Instead, we must constantly critique, evaluate, and question in order to develop and grow.*** By successfully completing the three objectives above, as structured in the course expectations described below, you will gain useful skills in critical thinking, analysis, reading and writing – important proficiencies for any academic or professional aspiration. Specifically, you will critically analyze the contributions and limitations of each theoretical concept. As this semester unfolds, you will notice that there is no such thing as a universal social theory that explains all social phenomena. Instead, each theory and idea have advantages and disadvantages, contexts where they work and do not work, groups of people and behaviors that they explain and come up short. It will be one of your tasks to see just how useful (or not) these theories were and still are.

#### REQUIRED TEXT

(1) Michele Dillon. (2013). Introduction to Sociological Theory: Theorists, Concepts, and their Applicability to the Twenty-First Century, the second edition.

(2) Supplementary material will be provided throughout the semester

#### COURSE FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS

**Description of Instructional Methods:** Since it is a hybrid class, the class is navigated through Canvas contents and Bi-weekly Zoom meetings.

The instructor's lecture slides, discussions, and exams will be posted on Canvas. It is students' responsibility to review lectures slides and post discussions to earn the associate points.

#### **Academic Integrity**

To ensure that the highest level of academic and personal integrity is upheld, it is important that you understand your rights and responsibilities as a student at UWSP (see [Academic Integrity: A Guide for Students](#)). For a complete overview of UWSP academic standards and disciplinary procedures, please visit: the following website: <http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Academic-Misconduct.aspx>

#### **Disability Services**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For

more information about UWSP's policies. Any student who feels that an accommodation may be needed based on the impact of a disability should contact [Disability Services and Assistive Technology](#) at 715-346-3365 in Room 609 Learning Resource Center at 900 Reserve Street. Staff will work to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

### **Assignment Submission and Late Policy**

All assignments (specified as below) should be submitted by the respective deadline electronically via CANVAS. Turnitin (originality checking software) is activated with results viewable to you and me. Please use this as a tool for writing. Late work is accepted up to one week after the specified deadline (1-point reduction). I will not accept assignments after this.

### **Academic Support Resources**

UWSP at Wausau students have academic support resources available to them for FREE. The Tutoring-Learning Center (TLC) offers tutoring services including one on one and drop-in tutoring services, academic skills workshops, and one on one academic coaching appointments. For additional information please contact Megan Sippel, the Academic Success Coordinator, via email [msippel@uwsp.edu](mailto:msippel@uwsp.edu) or phone 715-261-6148.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATIONS**

### **Attendance Points**

Your attendance and participation will be recorded and calculated as part of your final evaluation in the following aspects:

- i) The Zoom meeting is scheduled every other week. The instructor will meet with the class at the designated class time (**Monday 4:30PM – 5:50PM**) for more intensive discussions and Q&As. It is essential for you to attend the Zoom meeting to actively interact with other students in the class discussions.
- ii) One practical purpose of having the Zoom meeting is to monitor and record students' attendance. If the student were absent for non-eligible reasons (see Late Assignments Policies), he/she will never have another chance to earn participation points. Students can earn the participation points by engaging into oral discussions during the zoom session.

*5 Attendance and Participation (4 points each) = 20 points*

### **Discussion Posts (DPs)**

Bi-weekly Discussion Posts are *critical* dialogues that you and your classmates generate on a regular basis. This platform will allow your fellow students to comment/discuss in a productive and respectful manner.

- A variety of discussion prompts are available for your selection and discussion board. You are to select ONE discussion prompt to use for your Bi-weekly discussion. The Discussion forums can be accessed via Canvas in “**Discuss.**” Write your own reflection answer and submit your response by clicking “Reply.” To respond to a fellow student’s post, click on the “Reply” under their posts. I will randomly select some posts and reply them.
- Discussion forums will become available at 12:00 AM on Monday and you must first submit your reflections and respond to another student’s posts before Friday at 11:59PM.

The **grading rubric** for the “Discussion posts” is as follows:

Contents:

- 2.5 points for completely answering all of the elements of the prompt that you select in a way that demonstrates comprehension and application of the sociological themes. 0.5 point will deduct if students did not fully explain or apply the sociological concepts into the prompt you select.
- 2.5 points for the critical thinking by engaging with discussion posts. Students are encouraged to think “outside the box” by implementing what they have grasped from the class materials. To be a critical thinker in this introductory sociology class and receive the 5 points, students need to demonstrate their ability of utilizing their “sociological imagination” to reflect on other students’ reflections. 1 point will deduct if you only try to summarize what other students were saying in their original posts.

*7 Discussion Posts (5 points each) = 35 points*

## **Exams**

There will be two exams throughout the semester: one midterm and one final exam. Both exams are arranged in the format of multiple choice questions and short essay questions. In general, these two exams allow you to apply the theories we have discussed in class to a setting/problem of your choosing. Both exams are set up within **2-hour** of choice and your only have **one attempt** to take them.

*2 exams (20points for midterm, 25 for final) = 45 points*

## **Evaluation**

Evaluation of this course is based on the standard UWSP grading scale.

Course Evaluation:

Attendance/Participation=	20
Discussion Posts =	35
Midterm=	20
Final=	25
<u>Total =</u>	<u>100</u>

Grading Scale

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>
A	93-100
A-	90-92.99
B+	87-89.99
B	83-86.99
B-	80-82.99
C+	77-79.99
C	73-76.99
C-	70-72.99
D+	67-69.00
D	60-66.9
F	<60

COURSE SCHEDULE

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Assignment/Zoom</b>	
Before Sep. 14	<b>Introductions and review of syllabus</b>	<b>p.2-29</b>	<b>NA</b>	
	Auguste Comte			
	Alexis Tocqueville			
	Harriet Martineau			
14-Sep	<b>Chapter 1: Karl Max</b>	<b>p.34-74</b>	DP1	<b>Zoom Meeting 1</b>
28-Sep	<b>Chapter 2: Emile Durkheim</b>	<b>p.78-115</b>	DP2	ZM 2
12-Oct	<b>Chapter 3: Max Weber</b>	<b>p.121-153</b>	DP3	<b>ZM 3</b>
19-Oct	<b>Midterm</b>			
26-Oct	<b>Chapter 4: Functionalism and Modernization</b>	<b>p.156-185</b>	DP4	<b>ZM 4</b>
	Talcott Parsons			
	Robert Merton			
9-Nov	<b>Chapter 6: Conflict, Power, and Dependency in Macro-Society Processes</b>	<b>p. 222-242</b>	DP5	<b>ZM 5</b>
	Ralf Dahrendorf			
	C. Wright Mills			
23-Nov	<b>Chapter 8: Symbolic Interactionism</b>	<b>p.274-298</b>	DP6	<b>ZM 6</b>
7-Dec	<b>Chapter 12: Race, Racism, and the Construction of Racial Otherness</b>	<b>p.330-366</b>	D7	ZM 7
14-Dec	<b>Final Exam</b>			

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*Unforeseen circumstances may necessitate changes in the course requirements and schedules. Any changes will be announced in advance.*

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