

Contemporary Sociological Theory
Tuesday and Thursday: 2 pm – 3:15 pm
Haines 220

Professor Guhin
guhin@soc.ucla.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1 pm to 1:45 pm
Office Hours Appointments: <https://www.slotted.co/guhintheorywinter2018>

Welcome and Overview

Hello students! This is going to be a great class. We'll be reading some of the most important theorists since the year 2000, making it an actually *contemporary* theory course.

1. While this course emphasizes sociology, it is very much a course on social theory. It draws from philosophy, literary theory, the history of science, anthropology, and other disciplines. However, each of the thinkers we're reading is cited by and engaged by sociologists.
2. There is obviously a lot more that could have been in this course, which is true for any quarter-length course. Please do ask me about other readings if there's something you'd like to learn more about!
3. It's a lot of reading, but I cut a lot too. You'll generally have between 30 and 50 pages a session, which should be about two to at most three hours per class of outside work. If it's much more than that, please do let me know. I want to be fair in how much of your time my class demands.

Poll Everywhere and Daily Questions

This class will make extensive use of the Poll Everywhere app. As such, you must have the app on your phone and bring your phone, charged, to class every session. We will do in class questions with poll everywhere, and your answers to these questions will be part of your grade.

Screenless Classroom

There is ample research that students who take notes longhand remember more and have a better grasp of the material. For more, see the following article:

Mueller, Pam A., and Daniel M. Oppenheimer. 2014. "The pen is mightier than the keyboard: Advantages of longhand over laptop note taking." *Psychological science* 25(6): 1159-1168.

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0956797614524581>

As such, this will be a screen-free classroom in which we take notes and have discussions. Screens are distracting for all of us, so I'll be sure to put my phone away too! We'll then take our phones (or other screens) out when we're going to use Poll Everywhere.

If you need to use a laptop or some other screen to take notes or for another purpose in class, please contact me or have Disability Services contact me.

Lectures: Attendance, Absences, and Podcasts

Attendance will be taken via Poll Everywhere. You are allowed up to three absences from lecture. These are your only absences and they are *supposed to be used for emergencies*. Ideally, you will not use them at all. *I will not offer any excused absences*. This means that you should save these absences for when you will actually need them for real emergencies like family problems, illness, car trouble, or anything else. Do not send me an e-mail about any of these problems because these absences are allowed precisely for situations like this.

If you are, for some unknown reason, enrolled in another class at the same time as this one, please choose one or the other. This class is a required course for majors and has a huge waiting list. I had to turn down a lot of students who really needed this class, so if you're not serious about attending lectures, there are others who will be.

I've done podcasts of lectures in the past and I won't do them anymore as too many students view the podcasts as reasons not to attend lecture. You are free to record lectures with either video or audio recording equipment for your own personal use, but there will be no podcast of the course.

Section Attendance

Teaching Assistants will take attendance at section. If you miss one section, it's not a big deal, but after that it will affect your grade. Your section grades each day will be from 0 to 1:

0: absent.

.5: present, doesn't speak.

1: actively involved.

Contacting Me and Office Hours.

My office hours are Tuesday and Thursday from 1 pm to 1:45 pm, Haines 296. Come on by! I'm also available most days by appointment.

You are not required to have an appointment for office hours, but those with appointments have first priority. You can stay as long as you like, but if there's a line, you can stay for no longer than 15 minutes. If you need more than 15 minutes, we can set up another time.

Here's the website to set up an appointment: <https://www.slotted.co/guinththeorywinter2018>

Daily Questions, Check-In Quizzes, Midterm, and Final

Daily Questions

There will be daily questions on Poll Everywhere about the reading. These should be really easy and will be a relatively small part of your grade. They could be at any point in the lecture. The point of these quizzes is really to engage student learning and I might well give you the answer in class.

Check-In Quizzes

These will be short multiple-choice quizzes in weeks three and eight. They should take about twenty minutes and will gauge how well you've internalized the material up to that point. Neither of these are cumulative, meaning they are only about what we have covered in the previous three weeks.

Midterm and Final

The midterm and final will both be open-note and open-book. The midterm will only cover the first five weeks and the final will only cover the second five weeks. They will be timed exams in which you will have 48 hours to respond to two questions. Your answers must be in fully essay format and use direct quotes. You may not work with other students on the exams, but you can work with them to study for the exams. Each essay should be at least three double-spaced pages and no more than six double-spaced pages.

Midterms and Finals will be graded as follows:

A+/- (100/95/91 percent): A coherent, well-organized argument with original insights into meaningful differences and similarities between the authors and texts. Expands significantly beyond lecture and session discussion. Superior use of primary sources to make arguments. No errors,

minor or major. Excellent (though not necessarily perfect) style, grammar, and form.

B +/- (90/85/81): A good though imperfect argument with a capable description of similarities and differences between the authors and texts. Expands beyond lecture and section discussion. Good style, grammar, and form.

C +/- (80/75/71): A simple comparison that might not necessarily be an argument, but nonetheless adequately describes the similarities and differences between the texts. Expands at least slightly from discussion in lecture. Inconsistent use of primary sources to make arguments. No major errors though more minor. Adequate style, grammar, and form.

D +/- (70/65/61): An adequate description of similarities and differences that does not significantly advance beyond what was discussed in lecture. Inadequate use of primary source citations. Major errors. Poor style, grammar, and form.

F (60): An inadequate description with no argument. Very poor style, grammar, and form. No primary sources.

Incomplete: (0 percent): Not turned in or plagiarized.

Grading

See the paper rubric above for how percentages turn into letter grades.

Daily Questions/Lecture Attendance: 20%

Check in Quiz 1: 15%

Check in Quiz 2: 15%

Midterm: 20%

Final Exam: 20%

Section Attendance and Participation: 10%

Honors Seminar

If you wish, you can also participate in the class honors seminar, which for this course will be reading a short story each week with similar themes to the class. Each student will write one short story related to the class with a brief explanation of the story's relevance.

Academic Honesty

If you're caught plagiarizing, you get an automatic 0 on the midterm or final (which is a 0, making it pretty hard to pass my class). I'll also report you to the Dean, virtually without exception. If you are caught cheating on either of the check in quizzes, we will also report you to the Dean. For more in academic honesty at UCLA, please see the following website:

<http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Academic-Integrity>.

Difficult Material

Some material in this class might be hard for some students. If you're worried that's the case, please contact me beforehand.

Week One: Introduction: What is Theory?

Tuesday, Jan 9

Introduction

Thursday, Jan 11

Abend, Gabriel. "The meaning of 'theory'." *Sociological Theory* 26.2 (2008): 173-199.

Honors Seminar

"The Speckled Band" by Arthur Conan Doyle

Week Two: Isaac Reed

Tuesday, Jan 16

Reed, Isaac Ariail. "Epistemology Contextualized: Social-Scientific Knowledge in a Postpositivist Era." *Sociological Theory* 28.1 (2010): 20-39.

Thursday, Jan 18

Hirschman, Daniel, and Isaac Ariail Reed. "Formation stories and causality in Sociology." *Sociological Theory* 32.4 (2014): 259-282.

Honors Seminar

"Story of Your Life" by Ted Chiang

Week Three: Omar Lizardo

Tuesday, Jan 23

Lizardo, Omar, and Michael Strand. "Skills, toolkits, contexts and institutions: Clarifying the relationship between different approaches to cognition in cultural sociology." *Poetics* 38.2 (2010): 205-228.

Thursday, Jan 25

Lizardo, Omar. "Improving Cultural Analysis: Considering Personal Culture in its Declarative and Nondeclarative Modes." *American Sociological Review* 82.1 (2017): 88-115.

Honors Seminar

"Brownies" by ZZ Packer

Week Four: Nina Eliasoph

Tuesday, Jan 30

Eliasoph, Nina. "'Close to home': the work of avoiding politics." *Theory and Society* 26.5 (1997): 605-647.

Thursday, Feb 1

Eliasoph, Nina, and Paul Lichterman. "Culture in interaction." *American Journal of Sociology* 108.4 (2003): 735-794.

Honors Seminar

"A Good Man is Hard to Find" by Flannery O'Connor

Week Five: Rogers Brubaker

Tuesday, Feb 6

Brubaker, Rogers. "Ethnicity without groups." *European Journal of Sociology/ Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 43.2 (2002): 163-189.

Thursday, Feb 8

Brubaker, Rogers. *Trans: Gender and Race in an Age of Unsettled Identities*. Princeton University Press, 2016. (selections)

Honors Seminar

"The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven" by Sherman Alexie

MIDTERM: 7 pm, Friday Feb 9 – 7 pm Sunday Feb 11

Week Six: Jane Bennett

Tuesday, February 13

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things*. Duke University Press, 2009. (selection)

Thursday, February 15

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things*. Duke University Press, 2009. (selection)

Honors Seminar

"Pastoralia" by George Saunders

Week Seven: Bruno Latour

Tuesday, February 20

Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory*. Oxford university press, 2005. (selection)

Thursday, February 22

Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory*. Oxford university press, 2005. (selection)

Honors Seminar

"The Lady with the Dog" by Anton Chekhov

Week Eight: Sandra Harding

Tuesday, February 27

Harding, Sandra. *Sciences from below: Feminisms, postcolonialities, and modernities*. Duke University Press, 2008. (selection)

Thursday, March 1

Harding, Sandra. *Sciences from below: Feminisms, postcolonialities, and modernities*. Duke University Press, 2008. (selection)

Honors Seminar

“Interpreter of Maladies” by Jhumpa Lahiri

Week Nine: Patricia Hill Collins

Tuesday, March 6

Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Routledge, 2002. (selection)

Thursday, March 8

Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Routledge, 2002. (selection)

Honors Seminar

“Recitatif” by Toni Morrison

Week Ten: Christina Simko

Tuesday, March 13

Simko, Christina. *The politics of consolation: Memory and the meaning of September 11*. Oxford University Press, 2015. (selection)

Thursday, March 15

Simko, Christina. *The politics of consolation: Memory and the meaning of September 11*. Oxford University Press, 2015. (selection)

Honors Seminar

“Gimpel the Fool” by Isaac Bashevis Singer

FINAL: 7 pm Friday March 16 to 7 pm Sunday March 20