COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course approaches the dynamics of social interaction from the symbolic interactionist (SI) perspective. The course provides an overview of both classic and contemporary works in this tradition. In the first section of the course, we will focus on the development of the SI perspective and will read major theorists including Mead, Cooley, Blumer, Goffman, and Stryker. In the second section of the course we will cover recent theoretical developments, focusing on topics including stigma, the looking-glass self, reflected appraisals, identity processes, identity and stress, identity negotiation, and emotions. Throughout the course, we will focus on how selves and identities are created, modified, and enacted through interactions with others.

COURSE MATERIALS


Suggested reference texts:

Course Requirements

1. **A research guide on one of the major theorists (30%)**
   You will prepare a research guide on one of the major theorists we will read in the first section of the course (weeks 2-5). Your research guide should include:
   - A brief summary (2-3 pages) of the works we read by that theorist.
   - A 2-3 page review essay situating the theorist you have chosen and her/his work in the broader field of SI and in sociology more generally. Consider how s/he drew on extant sociological theory as well as how her/his work has influenced SI and sociology. What major concepts, methodological approaches, and/or substantive areas did her/his work contribute to? How have other scholars used her/his work? Include a brief (no more than 2 pages) compilation of teaching resources. Imagine how you would teach
this theorist in an undergraduate theory or social psychology course. What activities and/or assignments would you use? What examples could you draw on in lectures? How would you make this material accessible and relevant to your students?

2. **Two discussion facilitations and critical review papers (2 @ 15% each)**
   Each student will facilitate class discussions twice during the semester (one or both discussion facilitations may be done in pairs depending on the size of the class). Your discussion facilitation should begin with a brief overview of the readings (5-10 minutes) and you should then use the discussion questions you prepare to facilitate a discussion among seminar participants. You will also write a 5-page critical review essay of the works we read on the days you facilitate seminar discussions. Please turn in a hard copy of your discussion questions and critical review essay on the days you facilitate discussions.

3. **Active and Informed Participation 10%**
   The success of this seminar depends on the active and informed participation of all seminar members. This means reading carefully and preparing questions and comments in advance.

4. **Final paper (30%)**
   Your final paper will give you the opportunity to apply an interactionist theory to a substantive topic of interest. Papers should be 15-20 pages.
   - A one page proposal including abstract (200-300 words) and selected working bibliography is due November 20th
   - A hard copy of your final paper is due in my mailbox by 5pm on Monday, December 17th

**SCHEDULE**

Recommended readings are review and/or reference pieces and are optional for both graduate and undergraduate students.

**Sep 4**  
**Introductory Discussion**

**Sep 11**  
**George Herbert Mead**

**Sep 18**  
**Herbert Blumer**
**Sep 25**  
**Erving Goffman**  

Recommended:  

**Oct 2**  
**Sheldon Stryker**  

**Oct 9**  
**Stigma**  

**Oct 16**  
Fall Break

**Oct 23**  
**Construction and Presentation of Self**  

Recommended:

Oct 30

Looking Glass Self and Reflected Appraisals

Nov 6

Looking Glass, cont’d.

Nov 13

Identity Processes: Identity Control Theory

Recommended:

Nov 20 Negotiating Identities


Recommended:

Nov 27 Negotiating Identities, cont’d


Recommended:


Dec 4 Identity Processes: Social Identity Theory and Comparison to ICT


Dec 11 Emotions and Emotion Management


Recommended:

**Final Papers Due Monday Dec 17th by 5pm** (please leave a hard copy in my mailbox, located in the Sociology Department Office in Tarbutton)