EMORY UNIVERSITY

Sociology 457w

DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Spring 2021
Tuesday/Thursday
2:40 – 3:55 pm (EST)
PAIS Room 290 and Remote via Zoom

Dr. Timothy J. Dowd
Zoom Office Hours:
Wed 1:30 – 3:302 pm (EST)
tdowd@emory.edu

Graduate Assistant: Jiaxuan Yu; jiaxuan.yu@emory.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sociological theory sometimes has the unfortunate reputation of being (a) removed from empirical matters and (b) done by people who are now long-dead. That reputation cannot be further from the truth. In fact, sociological theory remains vibrant in the present and, in both its classical and contemporary formulations, it has remained tied to understanding the world in which we live.

One thread that runs through sociological theory is the concern with inequality – both in terms of understanding why it occurs and what needs to be done to eliminate it. To that end, sociologists have put forward theories that address inequality by emphasizing race, gender, class, status and the like (as well as the interplay and intersections found between them).

We take that thread as the organizing principle of this theory class. Indeed, we focus on sociological theory dealing with the mechanisms by which inequality is produced and reproduced, as well as sociological theory that offers solutions about those mechanisms. In the process, we will show, on the one hand, how sociological theory is firmly linked to empirical research and, on the other hand, how sociological theories are formulated and refined by people addressing the present world – both in understanding and improving it.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A) Attendance

You are strongly encouraged to attend class, especially because we will use class time to integrate the assigned readings and to present additional information not found in the readings.

Of course, given the current pandemic, some students might become sick or will need to go into isolation or quarantine. If you feel ill or fear that you are sick, please understand that I will be flexible about attendance. Thus, do not put yourself at risk for fear of missing a class. Each lecture will be recorded and posted on the Canvas site and available for you.
For those students attending the class in-person, I expect that we all will follow the safety protocols for our classroom – which includes the need for social distancing and masks.

As we navigate this semester together, let us also stay in touch.

**B) Office Hours and Appointments**

I will be holding “virtual” office hours via Zoom on Wednesdays from 1:30 to 3:30 pm. Please use my Calendly link to sign up for a specific time: [https://calendly.com/tdowd-1-office-hours](https://calendly.com/tdowd-1-office-hours).

If you cannot make those office hours, please email me for alternative times.

The Zoom link for office hours is: [https://emory.zoom.us/j/94647323595](https://emory.zoom.us/j/94647323595).

I will occasionally hold in-person office hours, as well. I will share more information on those hours as the semester unfolds.

**C) Written Assignments**

You are required to complete a final paper – one that you will write in stages across the semester.

For each “stage” I will distribute a question to which you will provide a 3- to 4-page answer that draws upon the class materials.

The final paper will emerge as you combine the stages together (incorporating the feedback that you receive along the way) and, at the end, provide an introduction and conclusion to the paper.

The dates for the staged assignments, as well as the final paper, are listed below. Each staged assignment is worth 25% of your grade, with the final paper itself also worth 25%.

**D) Honor Code**

The Emory University honor code applies fully to this course. When you submit your assignments, you are pledging to the honor code. For reference, please consult: [http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html](http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html).

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**COURSE RESOURCES**

As the semester progresses, class materials (e.g., syllabus, lecture slides) will be posted on the Canvas site for SOC 457w (see [http://classes.emory.edu/](http://classes.emory.edu/)).

The assigned readings are drawn from many sources, so there is no textbook. Instead, the required readings will be available on our Canvas site.
If you have any special needs, please contact me at the beginning of the semester and we will discuss the necessary arrangements. For additional information, visit the Emory Office of Accessibility Services website (see http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/index.html).

THREE POINTS ABOUT THE COURSE READINGS

Please keep in mind two points regarding the readings below. (1) Sociological theory is found across a sprawling and wide body of scholarship. There is far too much theorizing to address in this course. Thus, the readings below constitute the “tip of the iceberg,” so to speak. Yet, at the same time, I have picked readings that help us grapple with key ideas and lessons. (2) The readings below provide a mixture of classics, “modern classics,” and new articles. Both types of classics matter because they put forward important theoretical formulations and provide an important comparison with contemporary situations. Meanwhile, the newest articles help us keep apprised of the latest developments. (3) Some of these articles are written for specialists. Consequently, they sometimes make use of jargon and sophisticated techniques of analysis. But, have no fear! My job will be to translate those articles for you and, in the process, show you the usefulness of those articles for making sense of sociological theory and everyday life. Put another way, we will use class-time both to ground and go beyond the readings below.

COURSE SCHEDULE
(subject to revision)

January 26: Introductions

SOUNDS AND INEQUALITY


*Qualitative Sociology* 36: 303-321.

**CREDENTIALS AND INEQUALITY**


**FIRST-STAGE ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED**


**COMMODOIFICATION AND INEQUALITY**


**FIRST-STAGE ASSIGNMENT DUE**


March 16: NO CLASS (Rest Day)


SECOND-STAGE ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED

WORK AND INEQUALITY


SECOND-STAGE ASSIGNMENT DUE


THIRD-STAGE ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED

CONNECTIONS AND INEQUALITY


THIRD-STAGE ASSIGNMENT DUE


April 29: CLASS WRAP-UP

May 6: FINAL PAPER DUE