

Course n°20209:920:415
Contemporary Sociological Theory
Fall 2020 - Writing Intensive
Thursday 6-8.40pm, ONLINE
Zoom link will be posted on Blackboard for each class

Zahra Ali

Email: z.ali@rutgers.edu

Phone #: 973 353 2955

Office hours (online): Wednesdays 4-5.30pm and by appointment

Course description

This course explores contemporary sociological theories and provides tools to develop a complex and articulate understanding of the social world. The course aims to strengthen knowledge of foundational theories still widely used and relevant today as well as recent and new conceptual approaches in the field of sociology. Throughout the semester, we will read texts authored by prominent sociologists, in addition to texts authored by philosophers and scholars that have shaped the discipline of sociology. We will delve into these authors' historical contexts and intellectual development as well as the different ways in which their work can help us understand, explain and analyse the world today. The course focuses on essential dimensions shaping our lives such as class, race, gender and sexuality and explores various themes such as capitalism, racism, patriarchy and democracy.

Sociology as a discipline is very much connected and informed by current events. In light of the ongoing Black Lives Matter uprising, special sessions will be dedicated to the study of racism and anti-racism.

How the course works

The course consists of lectures, seminars and workshops using texts, images and videos. We use Blackboard (BB) to access course documents, and the power-point of the course will be accessible after the session. **No need to buy the books, all the course material will be made available on BB.** We also use BB to exchange relevant information, resources and links. **The Zoom link to attend each class will be posted on Blackboard (BB) at the beginning of each class. You must check BB regularly since readings on the syllabus are subject to change.**

Course goals

The course aims to provide knowledge, history and context to the understanding of contemporary sociological theories. At the end of the term, students should be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge of major sociological theories
- understand and explain the context and the historical development and significance of essential conceptual ideas in the field of sociology
- apply these sociological perspectives to the contemporary world
- discuss different ways to think about and define sociology as a discipline and engage with issues of class, race, gender and sexuality
- begin exploring research horizons and broader sociological questions.

Course Requirements

Learning is a collaborative experience of mutual sharing and learning, it is important to come to class prepared, having read all texts before class. Again, **no need to buy the books, all the course material will be made available on Blackboard.** **You must check it regularly since readings on the syllabus are subject to change.**

SPECIAL ONLINE REQUIREMENTS: Your camera has to be ON during the full duration of the class (exceptions can be discussed prior to class).

Grading

20 % class participation: your active presence and your participation to the class dynamic and discussion.

20 % oral presentation: you will give a 10 mn max presentation on a weekly reading

20% reaction paper: you will write a short paper of around 500 words reflecting on a text or a film or both. You are encouraged to write as many reaction papers as you want, the best grade will be kept as your final grade. The deadline is the following Monday at midnight.

40% essay: you will write an essay of around 1000 words answering one question in the list of questions available on BB.

Deadline to submit the essay draft: Friday November 27, Midnight.

Deadline to submit the final essay: Friday December 18, Midnight.

Grading scale

A : 100-90

B+ : 89.9 – 84.5

B : 84.49-79.5

C+ : 79.49-74.5

C : 74.49-69.5

D : 69.49-59.5

F : 59.49-0

Schedule FALL 2020

Important note: Readings are subject to change, please rely mainly on Blackboard postings. No need to buy the books, the readings are available on Blackboard.

WEEK 1: Thursday September 3

General introduction to the course

No preparation or readings required

WEEK 2: Thursday September 10

The “social” between fact and ideal types

-Durkheim, Emile. 1895. “What is a social fact?” and “Rules for the observation of social facts”. In *The Rules of the Sociological Method*.

-Weber, Max. 1905. Excerpts from *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

WEEK 3: Thursday September 17

Double Consciousness of Class and Race

-Marx, Karl. “Estranged labour” & Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich. “The Manifesto of the Communist Party”(1848). In Tucker, Robert C. 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Second Edition. Norton and Company.

-Dubois, W.E.B. 1935. Excerpts from *Black Reconstruction in America (1860-1880)*.

WEEK 4: Thursday September 24

Society, Structure and the Sociological Imagination

-Giddens, Anthony. 1984. Excerpts from *The Constitution of Society*. Polity Press.

-Mills, C. Wright. 1959. “The Promise” pp.3-24. In *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford University Press.

WEEK 5: Thursday October 1

Habitus and the Self

-Bourdieu, Pierre. 1972. Excerpts from *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge University Press.

-Goffman, Erving. 1956. Excerpts from *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. University of Edinburgh.

WEEK 6: Thursday October 8

Feminist Sociology: Sex, Gender and Power

-Butler, Judith. 1990. “Subjects of Sex/Gender/desire” pp1-34. In *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the subversion of identity*, Routledge.

-Foucault, Michel. “Bio-power” pp257-273 and “Sex and Truth” pp291-300. In *The Foucault Reader*.

No class Thursday October 15

WEEK 7: Thursday October 22

Intersectionality: Gender, Race and Class

- Crenshaw, Kimberlé W. 1993. Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color. *Stanford Law review*, 43.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 1993. Toward a new vision: Race, Class Gender as categories of analysis and connection.

WEEK 8: Thursday October 29

On Blackness: Racism and Colonialism

- Baldwin, James. 1962. *The Fire Next Time*. Vintage International.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1952. "The Fact of Blackness" pp.109-140. *In Black Skin, White Masks*.

WEEK 9: Thursday November 5

Racial Capitalism and the Sociology of Prison

- Alexander, Michelle. 2010. Excerpts from *The New Jim Crow*. The New Press.
- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. 2007. Excerpts from *The Golden Gulag*. University of California Press.

WEEK 10: Thursday November 12

Racial Formations and Whiteness

- McIntosh, Peggy. White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack. *Reconstructing Gender: A Multicultural Anthology*, pp. 71-76.
- DiAngelo, Robin. 2011. White Fragility. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*. Vol 3 (3) pp54-70.
- Omi, Michael & Winant, Howard. 1994. *Racial Formations*.

WEEK 11: Thursday November 19

Decolonizing Sociology

- Quijano, Anibal. 2000. Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America. *Nepantla: Views from South* (1) 3, pp533-580.
- Go, Julian. 2020. Race, Empire, and Epistemic Exclusion: Or the Structures of Sociological Thought. *Sociological Theory* (0) pp1-22.

Thanksgiving Break: No class Thursday 26 of November ☺
Deadline to submit the essay draft: Friday November 27, Midnight

WEEK 12: Thursday December 3

Hegemony, Fascism and Totalitarianism

- Gramsci, Antonio. Selected excerpts from *Prison Notebooks* (1929-1935).
- Arendt, Hannah. 1958. Totalitarianism. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. The World Publishing Company.

WEEK 13: Thursday December 10

Film: Sociology is a Martial Art

Additional important information

Academic integrity

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. The Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy will apply to all course work. If you have any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, ask me and/or consult the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>. Take precautions by always referencing the materials you have read by adding a footnote, endnote, or citing your source text in parenthesis. Referencing shows you have done serious research, and that you have acknowledged the work of other scholars and engage critically with their work and ideas.

Policy on late submission of course work

Papers submitted late will be marked down 3% percent for each day past the deadline, and will not be accepted after ten days past the deadline. Please contact me in advance if you have difficulty meeting a deadline for health or personal reasons.

Important semester dates

Please check these important dates (last day to drop a class, last day to add class etc.) to avoid any penalty: <https://registrar.newark.rutgers.edu/office-registrar-academic-calendar>

Learning resources available

Rutgers Learning Center (tutoring services)
Room 140, Bradley Hall
973 353 5608
<http://ncas.rutgers.edu/rlc>

Writing Center (tutoring and writing workshop)

Room 126, Conklin Hall
973 353 5847
nwc@newark.rutgers.edu
<http://ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter>

Disability services

We welcome students with disabilities, in order to receive consideration you can complete and submit the Registration Form, schedule and complete an intake meeting. If you request for reasonable accommodations is approved, you will receive a Letter of Accommodations (LOA), which you should present privately to me as early in the semester as possible. You can begin the process through the following links:

Applying for Services: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services>

Documentation Guidelines: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>

Letter of Accommodations (LOA) : <https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/Forms/LOA>

Office of Disability services (ODS):

Suite 219, Paul Robeson Campus Center
973 353 5375
odsnewark@rutgers.edu