

Modern Sociological Theory

**SOCY 611
Spring 2009**

5:30-8:00 pm Thursdays, Ward 1

**Professor Natalia Ruiz Junco
Office Address: T-16 Battelle
Office Phone: 202-885-2254
email: ruizjunc@american.edu
Office Hours: T & TH 2:15 pm-5:15 pm and by appointment**

Course theme and goals

The University catalog describes this course as follows: "An analysis of modern sociological theories and major schools of social thought. Problems of theory construction." Another description could be: SOCY 611 starts where SOCY 610 left off. However, this description will not be accurate, since, as we will study, one cannot argue that the sociological theories generally examined in a course such as SOCY 610 are REALLY gone from the subject matter of SOCY 611.

This course follows the format of a seminar. This seminar will help you learn modern sociological theories through in-class discussions and activities and through reading and writing about the subject matter outside of class. The number of theorists and theories that we will cover in this seminar is significant. Therefore, you will have to make considerable efforts to learn these theories and theorists in relatively short periods of time. You are expected to put the necessary effort to make the seminar experience successful for you and for the rest of us.

Readings for this course

**PETER L. BERGER AND THOMAS LUCKMANN. THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY.
ANCHOR**

**HERBERT BLUMER. SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM: PERSPECTIVE AND METHOD.
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS**

ERVING GOFFMAN. FRAME ANALYSIS: AN ESSAY ON THE ORGANIZATION OF EXPERIENCE. NORTHEASTERN

PATRICIA HILL COLLINS. BLACK FEMINIST THOUGHT: KNOWLEDGE, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND THE POLITICS OF EMPOWERMENT. ROUTLEDGE

JURGEN HABERMAS AND STEVEN SEIDMAN. JURGEN HABERMAS ON SOCIETY AND POLITICS: A READER. BEACON PRESS

ADDITIONAL REQUIRED READINGS WILL BE AVAILABLE THROUGH BLACKBOARD AND DISTRIBUTED AS HAND-OUTS IN CLASS

SUGGESTED READINGS (SECONDARY SOURCES) WILL BE AVAILABLE THROUGH BLACKBOARD

Course requirements

It is required to attend class and it is expected that students will arrive to class on time. If there is a reason why you are repeatedly late to class, it is your responsibility to let the Professor know why you are regularly late to class. During class meetings, it is not allowed to use laptop computers unless it has been permitted by the Professor for the execution of a class activity. It is also not allowed to use cell phones while the seminar is in session. Finally, it is prohibited to be disrespectful of others. Anyone who uses disrespectful language will be asked to leave the seminar.

A) Attendance and Participation:

Seminar courses require students to **attend** class and **participate** in class discussions and activities. Attendance is **mandatory**. Excused absences must qualify as excused by the policies of American University. Everyone should attend the seminar meetings and write their name in a sheet of paper, which will serve as the record of attendance. Failure to attend **one seminar session** will not require any special action on your part, except for the courtesy of providing the Professor with a reason why you have missed the class. Failure to attend **two seminar sessions** will result in a reduction of your grade. If you do not attend **three seminar sessions**, your grade will be significantly reduced. **Failure to attend four seminar sessions** will result in failing this course (**Letter Grade F**).

Everyone should thoroughly prepare to participate in each of the seminar discussions. To make sure this is accomplished, the Professor requires everyone in this seminar to write a "**question log**" for each seminar session with scheduled assigned readings. The guidelines for this assignment will be distributed the first day of class and will be posted on Blackboard.

B) Assignments:

In addition to the almost weekly question log, students will be required to complete 4 written assignments (at least two choices for each written assignment will be given in advance), 1 class presentation, and 1 final paper (students will be given at least two options for completing this final assignment). **Specific guidelines** for these assignments will be distributed in advance.

Grading

The following is a summary of how points will be distributed in this seminar:

- 1) Seminar Participation = 50 points (10% of your grade)
- 2) Written Assignment 1 = 50 points (10% of your grade)
- 3) Written Assignment 2 = 50 points (10% of your grade)
- 4) Written Assignment 3 = 50 points (10% of your grade)
- 5) Written Assignment 4 = 50 points (10% of your grade)
- 6) Class Presentation = 50 points (10% of your grade)
- 7) Final Paper = 200 points (40% of your grade)

Letter grades will be determined as follows: A=93%-100%; A-=90%-92%; B+=87%-89%; B=83%-86%; B-= 80%-82%; C+=77%-79%; C=73%-76%; C-=70%-72%; D=60%-69%; F=below 60%.

Plagiarism

This is a reminder that participants enrolled in this seminar are expected to know the regulations regarding academic offenses.

Course Schedule*

*This course scheduled is tentative and it might change throughout the semester.

Thursday January 15 (Week 1)
Introduction of the course. Introduction to modern sociological theory.
Thursday January 22 (Week 2): Parsons and Structural-Functionalism
You should have read: PARSONS, <i>The Social System</i> (pp. 3-23 & pp. 24-67 & pp. 68-112)

Thursday January 29 (Week 3): Parsons and Structural-Functionalism
<p>You should have read: PARSONS, <i>The Evolution of Societies</i> (pp. 182-214) PARSONS, <i>On Institutions and Social Evolution</i> (pp. 224-252) MERTON, <i>On Theoretical Sociology</i> (pp. 39-72)</p>
Thursday February 5 (Week 4): Phenomenology and Social Construction (I)
<p>You should have read: SCHUTZ, <i>On Phenomenology and Social Relations</i> (pp. 72-76; pp. 79-95; pp. 111-122; pp. 245-262) BERGER/LUCKMANN, <i>The Social Construction of Reality</i> (pp. 19-91)</p>
Thursday February 12 (Week 5): Ethnomethodology
<p>You should have read: GARFINKEL, <i>Studies in Ethnomethodology</i> (pp. 1-75) HANDEL, <i>Ethnomethodology: How People Make Sense</i> (pp. 53-77)</p>
Thursday February 19 (Week 6): Symbolic Interactionism
<p>You should have read: BLUMER, <i>Symbolic Interactionism</i> (pp. 1-89 & pp. 153-182)</p>
Thursday February 26 (Week 7): Symbolic Interactionism and Social Construction (II)
<p>You should have read: BECKER, <i>Outsiders</i> (pp. 41-58) PRUS, <i>Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research</i> (pp. 1-21) BERGER/LUCKMANN, <i>The Social Construction of Reality</i> (pp. 92-173)</p>
Thursday March 5 (Week 8): Goffman's Theory
<p>You should have read: GOFFMAN, <i>Frame Analysis</i> (Chapters 1-5)</p>
Thursday March 12 (Week 9): SPRING BREAK; NO CLASS

Enjoy your break!
Thursday March 19 (Week 10): Goffman's Theory
You should have read: GOFFMAN, <i>Frame Analysis</i> (Chapters 7, 10 & 14) HOCHSCHILD, <i>The Managed Heart</i> (pp. 35-55)
Thursday March 26 (Week 11): Rational Choice Theory and Exchange Theory
You should have read: BREDEMEIER, "Exchange Theory" (pp. 418-456) in <i>A History of Sociological Analysis</i> HOMAS, "Social Behavior as Exchange" COLEMAN, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital"
Thursday April 2 (Week 12): Feminist Theory
You should have read: SMITH, <i>The Everyday World as Problematic. A Feminist Sociology</i> (pp. 49-100) WEST/ZIMMERMAN, "Doing Gender" CONNELL, Excerpts from <i>Gender</i>
Thursday April 9 (Week 13): Black Feminist Theory
You should have read: W. E. B. DU BOIS, Excerpts from <i>The Oxford W. E. B. Du Bois Reader</i> HILL COLLINS, <i>Black Feminist Thought</i> (Chapters 1-6)
Thursday April 16 (Week 14): Black Feminist Theory
You should have read: HILL COLLINS, <i>Black Feminist Thought</i> (Chapters 7-12)
Thursday April 23 (Week 15): Habermas's Critical Theory
You should have read: HABERMAS/SEIDMAN, Chapter 4, 9, 10 & 12
Thursday April 30 (Week 16): Final Seminar Meeting

Wrap-up class on Habermas and the critiques of Habermas's theory; final paper is due at class time

Summary of due dates & relevant information for this course

February 5	Written Assignment 1
February 26	Written Assignment 2
March 26	Written Assignment 3
April 16	Written Assignment 4
April 30	Final Paper