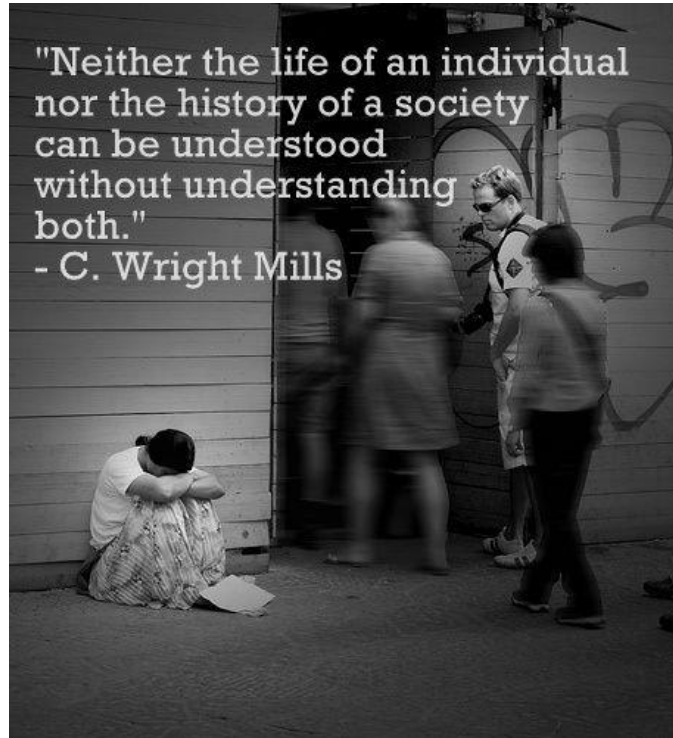


Western Kentucky University

Sociology 304: Sociological Theory: Perspectives on Society



Professor: Donielle M. Lovell, Ph.D
Telephone: Please see policy

Office Hours: see syllabus
Office: ECTC Room 130D

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Meeting Times: Online

Some Comments on Fall 2021:

The last year and a half has been a very trying time. I know that as you enter this course, each of you has experienced some kind of challenge regarding COVID-19 just as I have. I REALLY hope we will have a Fall 2021 where our kids stay in school and we stay healthy. But, we will approach this semester with a motto of flexibility and grace. If you find yourself needing some more time on an assignment, please let me know. If you miss a deadline, please let me know. Do not hesitate to reach out to me. Do not apologize for reaching out to me. I only know if there is an issue if you let me know. In that same vein, I'd ask you extend me the same if I miss grading deadlines or find myself behind on email. Together we can make this semester successful even if we have some bumps along the way.

For SOCL Majors: SOCL 304 material will be on your Senior Capstone Exam. Save all materials so you can use them to study for that test.

Catalog Description: SOCL 304:

Study of leading developments of schools of sociological theory from Marx, Weber and Durkheim to the present.

Prerequisite/Co-requisite: Six hours of sociology

Text(s): Ritzer, George. 2014. *Sociological Theory Ninth Edition only*. McGraw Hill: New York, NY.

Other readings as assigned and available on Blackboard

Students must have access to the following films: Factory City, Food Inc. The True Cost, and Miss Representation. If you have Amazon Prime Factory City and Miss Representation are included. You can rent The True Cost for \$2.99.

Course Content:

- Classic sociological theory including Marx, Durkheim and Weber;
- Modern sociological theory including structural functionalism, critical theory, symbolic interactionism; and
- Recent developments in feminist theory, race theory, and globalization and post modernism.

In this course we will look at the work of the theorists such as Marx, Durkheim & Weber but also look at the applied theoretical application of their works. In essence, I am trying to show you how mostly old, dead white guys are still important to how we view the world with a sociological lens. We will also use films to interrogate our social world for the sociological concepts we are studying. Along with class participation, groups and other outside activities, I hope to show you a new lens in which to critique society.

This course is reading and writing intensive, so be prepared for that. It is a 300 level core sociology class and therefore, in my view, incredibly important to your sociological education. Hence, you will work harder in this class than you will electives. You will need to do at least *some* reading every day in order to keep up. You will need to start on your writing assignments early.

Course Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- Review classical sociological theory and examine modern sociological theory;
- Encourage critical examination of social theory;
- Analyze the development and intellectual heritage of social theory; and
- Create practical applications of theory to social life.

Course Organization and Approach:

Sociology 304 uses a *participatory, learner-centered, adult education* approach. This approach recognizes that *YOU are responsible* for your own learning. The instructor can only provide **opportunities** to learn, but cannot force you to learn. Course material is presented in **substantive readings** from the text; **structured activities**; **lecture**; and **class discussions**. You are expected to work hard in this course; for every hour of class time, you should spend at least **two to three hours** outside of class preparing by doing readings, assignments, studying for exams, and thinking about the course material.

*You are expected to take **responsibility** for the success of the course*, that is, you should take an active interest not just in the course material, but in the course itself, making it a success for all participants. Factors such as **interest, motivation, creativity**, and **initiative** are important elements in evaluating your performance in the course and assigning a grade.

This class will be a place for sharing ideas and voicing opinions. Intelligent argument and polite disagreement is welcome. It is important each student is respectful of an individual's point of view. Further, you are expected to critique the theories we discuss.

Description of Major Assignment(s)/Project(s):

Discussion Questions: (7 @ 25 points each): For each set of readings I will provide questions in which you must respond to on the Blackboard discussion board. There are a total of 10 opportunities to participate in discussion questions. You must complete 7 this semester. However, I will not accept late discussion questions. **Therefore, if you get to week 13 and have only responded to one question I will not take late entries.**

Analysis Papers (3 @ 100 points each): Following each major section of theory we will view a film and I will ask a series of application questions that you will need to respond to in a well-argued paper with evidence. These papers are to be 5 pages each. I am doing the analysis papers 3 times during the semester rather than 1 final paper of 15 pages at the end of the semester. These papers must be uploaded to blackboard by **midnight which ever time zone you are located in** of the due date. Formatting guidelines and the grading rubric can be found on blackboard.

Tests (100 points each @ 3 tests): Tests could consist of multiple choice, fill in the blank, matching, short answer or essay. I will provide a study guide.

Assessment of Student Learning:

Activity	Points Possible	Approx. Percent of Total Grade
Discussion Questions	175	40.5%
Analysis Papers	300	40.5%
Tests	300	19%
Total	775	100%

Points Needed	Percent	Letter Grade
697.5-775	90-100	A
620-697	80-89	B
542.5-619.5	70-79	C
465-542	60-69	D
464.5	59 and below	F

Expectations of Students:

Quality of Written Work: I expect you to write with the highest quality. I expect complete sentences in all written work. I expect well thought out responses. Further, I will deduct points if you use text message abbreviations or language in your formal papers. I still value proper grammar and expect you to do the same while in this course. This is not the place for “slang” terminology unless you are using it to make a theoretical point.

Further, write in a professional manner. I do not expect your papers to sound like you just sat down at your computer and typed a conversation to me. Avoid phrases such as, “Well, in my personal opinion”—even if I am asking for your thoughts and opinion, that is not a necessary phrase. Think “professional tone” while writing. Also, limit the use of “I.” Once again, even when asking you to respond from your own life you can minimize the first person. There is nothing worse than reading a paper that begins every sentence with “I think”, “I want to discuss”, “I believe”, “I feel”, etc. Please refrain from addressing the reader directly. For example, there is no need to thank me for reading your paper. Finally, proof read all your work. I really hate to read papers that are full of grammatical errors. It takes away from your thoughts and ideas and frustrates me. You do not want me to grade your paper frustrated!

Instructor Policies:

How do Address me: It is my request that you address me in emails and calls as Dr. Lovell.

Emails Etiquette: I expect professionally written emails with an opening, body, and closing. Please use this structure when communicating for this course. I will respond to emails within 24 hours during the week and you can expect a response on Monday from weekend emails.

Office Hours: Please email me to schedule a time to discuss the course. We may do so via zoom or telephone. In your email, please include the issue or content you'd like to talk about. At that time I will provide my phone number.

Academic Honesty: You are expected to **comply with all academic standards and ethics** as defined in the Western Kentucky University College Catalogue (page 42). You are expected to do your **own work** in this course. Plagiarism, fraud and other forms of cheating will **NOT** be tolerated. I will fail you on the assignment and depending on the seriousness of the offense may report you to your department. Do not test me on this. I have failed students in the past and will continue to do so for academic dishonesty.

IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO UNDERSTAND THESE GUIDELINES. Make sure you know what constitutes plagiarism and cheating **BEFORE** turning in any assignments. Once you turn in an assignment, you are representing it as your own work. If you are concerned about your knowledge of plagiarism, please see me and I will give you a handout with examples of plagiarism. Just a note, copying and pasting directly from a website is plagiarism. Copying and pasting and changing only a few words is still plagiarism. Do not copy from Wikipedia. It is obvious.

Make-up and Late Work: If you are late turning in an assignment you will receive a 10% reduction in grade for every day you are late until there are no more points unless you communicate with me in light of the ongoing issues with COVID-19. If it is COVID related, I will need a doctor's note.

Extra Credit: Extra Credit is at my discretion. The overall enthusiasm, preparedness and attitude of the class will depend on how many extra credit opportunities I provide. I do not grade any extra credit assignments until all regular course activities are complete and submitted.

Grading: Your assignments will be graded within a 2 week time period. Please do not email about when grades will be posted.

Communication: I will use university email to contact you. **You must access and check this account regularly.**

Americans with Disabilities Act: "In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services in Downing University Center A-200. The phone number is 270-745-5004; TTY is 745-3030. Per university policy, please **DO NOT** request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the OFSDS."

FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act): Once a student reaches 18 years of age or attends a postsecondary institution, he or she becomes an "eligible student," and all rights formerly given to parents under FERPA transfer to the student. Therefore, I am unable to disclose information about grades, attendance, class schedule, etc. to parents, spouses and other interested parties. If you would like to give these rights to your parents or spouse you need to file a waiver with Western Kentucky University. Until I have received such waiver, please discourage other parties from contacting me regarding your status as my student.

University COVID Statement: *All students are strongly encouraged to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Students who are fully vaccinated will not be required to wear masks or to quarantine if exposed to the virus. Based on the latest CDC and KY public health guidance, WKU will require the wearing of masks while indoors for those who have not been fully vaccinated to protect themselves and others. Persons not fully vaccinated must quarantine if exposed to someone with Covid-19. Accommodations can be requested in special cases through the Student Accessibility and Resource Center (SARC): [270-745-5004](tel:270-745-5004) (voice), [270-745-3030](tel:270-745-3030)(TTY), or [270-288-0597](tel:270-288-0597) (video).*

All students must immediately report a positive Covid-19 test result or close contact with a person who has tested positive to the Covid-19 Assistance Line at 270-745-2019. The assistance line is available to answer questions regarding any Covid-19 related issue. This guidance is subject to change based on requirements set forth by public health agencies or the office of the governor. Please refer to the Healthy on the Hill website for the most current information. www.wku.edu/healthyonthehill

Some Comments on Critical Thinking:

It is my intent that the lectures, discussions, and activities will enhance your critical thinking skills. You might ask, "What is critical thinking? Everyone keeps saying we are building critical thinking skills, but what does that actually mean?" Critical thinking can mean a variety of things for different professors. For me, critical thinking involves the following: applying, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information "generated from observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or community. Critical thinking is based on clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, sound evidence, good reasoning, depth, breadth, and fairness" (National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking). Further, I really like this paragraph from the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking:

"Critical thinking is self-guided, self-disciplined thinking which attempts to reason at the highest level of quality in a fair-minded way. People who think critically consistently attempt to live rationally, reasonably, empathically. They are keenly aware of the inherently flawed nature of human thinking when left unchecked. They strive to diminish the power of their egocentric and sociocentric tendencies. They use the intellectual tools that critical thinking offers – concepts and principles that enable them to analyze, assess,

*and improve thinking. They work diligently to develop the intellectual virtues of intellectual integrity, intellectual humility, intellectual civility, intellectual empathy, intellectual sense of justice and confidence in reason. **They realize that no matter how skilled they are as thinkers, they can always improve their reasoning abilities and they will at times fall prey to mistakes in reasoning, human irrationality, prejudices, biases, distortions, uncritically accepted social rules and taboos, self-interest, and vested interest.** They strive to improve the world in whatever ways they can and contribute to a more rational, civilized society. At the same time, they recognize the complexities often inherent in doing so. **They avoid thinking simplistically about complicated issues and strive to appropriately consider the rights and needs of relevant others.** They recognize the complexities in developing as thinkers, and commit themselves to life-long practice toward self-improvement. They embody the Socratic principle: The unexamined life is not worth living , because they realize that many unexamined lives together result in an uncritical, unjust, dangerous world.*

—Linda Elder, National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking

Studying social theory helps you enhance your ability to apply, synthesize or evaluate the information in the lessons and create something new from them. Within this course you must be ready to critically reflect through a sociological lens, engage with material that will challenge you, and reflect on challenging discussion questions. The social world is complex and therefore social theory is complex.