

SOCI 6305 Critical Social Analysis Spr 2008 Dr. Marc LaFountain

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Dept website: www.westga.edu/~soccrim

office hours: M 9:30-11:30 & 1:30-2:30; T 9:30-11 & 4:30-5:30; W 9:30-11:30; R 9:30-11 & 1-2; other times by appointment. Office hours will be expanded during Advance Registration, Apr 7-25

Required texts *Contested Knowledge* (3rd ed) – Seidman (2004)
Critical Social Theory – Dant (2003)
The Future of Social Theory – Gane (2004)

Course description: We begin with a review of selected classical social theorists and schools of theory to understand how currents in modern and contemporary social theory have developed. The focus of the course is critical social theories. We will apply these theories to issues and problems both in sociology as an internally contested discipline and in larger cultural frameworks.

Student Learning Outcomes

- 1) to differentiate critical social theories from other types of non-critical sociological theorizing
- 2) to apply critical social analysis to issues in contemporary culture
- 3) to develop critical thinking skills and oral competency accompanying them
- 4) to write a conference quality research paper

The above course learning outcomes are directly to the following Sociology Masters program learning outcomes: to understand and apply sociological theory, to think critically about sociology and issues of social inequality, and to communicate effectively orally and in writing

Course work:

Lead class discussions. Our framework is a seminar, thus it is crucial that you complete and be ready to discuss the readings for each of our meetings. Each week you will be responsible for leading the class discussion. You will either pose and answer a question of your own, or respond to an assigned question related to the meeting's readings. Your discussion should not simply be a summary statement of the readings. (For the readings for Apr 1-15, there is a common assignment: Discuss additional information on your theorist that meaningfully supplements or contextualizes ideas presented in the interview.) You should have solid knowledge of the readings and present to your classmates well-informed and thought provoking information and ideas. For each discussion you lead, turn in a 2-3 page typed summary of your thoughts. You will be graded on your preparedness to discuss the topic and the quality of thought put into your written summary. The combined scores of all class discussions and written summaries will account for **30% of your final grade.**

Research paper Complete a conference quality research paper. It should be at least 15-20 pages of text, typed, double-spaced, with appropriate bibliography in ASA style (style guide available on SocCrim website; for students from other disciplines, use the bibliographic style common to your discipline). Your project can be on any topic relevant to this course's subject matter and can be related to your thesis or dissertation project or other threads of interest you have been developing over time. The first version of your paper is due April 1. This version is

NOT a rough draft. It should be a final, completed paper – title page, page numbering, bibliography, carefully edited and proofread, etc. I will grade the first paper and return it with comments. Final version due April 29. The grade on the final paper will be based on how effectively you address the comments on the first version. The scores of the two papers will be added together to determine the grade for the project. Unless arrangements are made in advance, papers turned in later than the specified times will suffer a grade loss of 10% per day until received. When you submit the final version, attach the first version so I can see how you dealt with the initial set of comments. Failure to include the first paper with my comments will cost you 10 points off the final project grade, so please don't forget.

Each of you will make a presentation of your paper, as if at a conference.

Paper totals **70% of your final grade** (1st version = 25 pts, presentation = 10 pts, final version = 35 pts)

Attendance Students are expected attend each class meeting, on time, for the entire session.

Alert! Academic dishonesty is not acceptable and can lead to a failing grade, or worse, depending on circumstances. Go to the department homepage (www.westga.edu/~soccrim) and find “Statement on Academic Honesty” (under “Student Resources”). The department maintains a zero tolerance policy and violations will be met with sanctions.

Tentative schedule

Jan 15	Introduction and overview
Jan 22	Classical theory: Seidman 1-4
Jan 29	Modern theory: Seidman 5-7
Feb 5	Critical sociology: Dant 1, 2 (18-31), Seidman 9-10, Dant 3 (41-51)
Feb 12,19	Frankfurt School Critical Theory: Dant 7 (131-136), 4 (65-71), 5 (87-98), 6 (108-120), Seidman 8
Feb 26	Postmodernism: Seidman 11, Alvesson 1-3, 4 (63-81) (Alvesson book on reserve in library)
Mar 4	Foucault: Seidman 12, LaFountain (“Foucault and Rodney King: The "Rationality" of a Legal Beating” and “Foucault and Dr. Ruth” – handouts)
Mar 11	Baudrillard: Dant, 36-38, 55-59, 80-84, 100-105, 126-129, 144-149; LaFountain (“Obscene Ethics: A Baudrillardian View of Spurlock’s <i>Super Size Me</i> ” – handout)
Mar 18	Spring Break
Mar 25	Postmodernism and difference: Alvesson 5, Seidman 14-16
Apr 1	Gane: 2, 8 *First version of research paper due

Apr 8	Gane: 4, 5
Apr 15	Gane: 6, 7
Apr 22	presentations
Apr 29	presentations *Final version of paper due