

Tom Chiang  
RUCAB, 306 (Th. 6:30-9:15)  
Office Hours by Email:  
Chiang@rowan.edu

## CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

### **Course Description:**

This course has three objectives:

- To give students an understanding of the major contemporary theoretical traditions in sociology from the middle of the twentieth century to the present
- To illustrate how to apply the appropriate theories to one's own lived experiences
- To demonstrate how the historical and cultural contexts and the biography of theorists interact to shape the theories they create/adopt.

### **Recommended/Suggested Reading:**

- Ritzer, George and Jeffrey Stepnisky. *Modern Sociological Theory*.
- Other readings will be on Canvas in PDF Form in the "Files" Tab

### **Course Requirements/Grading:**

Assignment	%
Course Participation Posts	20%
Autobiography Midterm	30%
Final Exam	50%
Total	100%

Grade Distribution (%)	Letter Grade	Grade Distribution (%)	Letter Grade
100 - 92	A	81 - 78	B-
92 - 88	A-	77 - 75	C+
87 - 84	B+	74 - 72	C
83 - 82	B	71 - 69	C-

**\* Any grade below a 68% will fall in the D+ through F range \***

## **Assignment Outline**

### **Discussion Posts:**

Participation of the posts is required. Discussions may focus on completed assignments, films, readings, and lectures. There are **six (6) such posts** you are required to complete **throughout the semester**. Based on your experiences, you will write your response to a posted question or questions and **why you found it to be important**. The initial postings by 11:59 p.m. EST Sunday. This online discussion participation will count 20% of your final grade.

### **Midterm:**

You will write a midterm theory/concept autobiography, 4-6 double-spaced pages, worth 30%. In this paper **you will reflect on one (1) aspect of your own life** in the perspective of the **theoretical perspectives or studies we have covered in class** up to this point. Analyze and put in perspective your own experience using at least **6 class concepts**, including at least **3 theoretical perspectives**, and at least **3 research studies** we have read about or covered in class.

You need to write this utilizing a sociological perspective, not just personal reminiscences. Include specific examples where relevant. Make the paper a thoughtful, creative, synthetic, well-written analysis of your educational career as seen through the eyes of one now familiar with some basic concepts, principles, and research in the sociology of education. Label and reference the class material as you use it, either in footnote style or using text references to a bibliography (even if it's to the text or reader or lecture notes). You may underline or highlight each theory, concept and research study you use so they are easily identifiable. Please use ASA (American Sociological Association) or APA (American Psychological Association) for bibliographic format.

Email me if you have any questions about how to cite something (or any other questions, of course).

The paper will be evaluated for (a) the extent to which ideas are presented clearly and thoughtfully (8 points); (b) the extent to which your experiences are related to class material, concepts, and analysis (10 points); and (c) writing composition and mechanics, including proper citation of sources (including class material) (2 points) and will count 30% of your final grade.

### ***Potential Aspects of Life:***

Education, Gender, Socioeconomic Class, Job/Occupation, Parenting

### **Final Exam.**

There will be a final essay exam in essay format, open book/notes, worth 50% of your total grade. Study questions will be given in advance.

### ***Exam Policy***

There will be 1 fully online exam in this course. Detailed information is provided in the week in which each exam is administered. Exams must be submitted by their posted due date/deadline.

During all quizzes and examinations, students are permitted to use the following resources:

- Textbook(s) by specific title
- Handwritten or typed notes
- Notes on your computer
- Internet access or web sites of any kind other than the Canvas LMS system

**General Requirements:** You are responsible for all the material covered in the reading, lectures, and classroom discussions. The introductory lectures on theory building and testing provide the criteria by which to evaluate the various theories that are examined in the last six units of the course. Taking good lecture notes is imperative in this course. **You are also responsible for my emails to the class. Covid demands that I be as flexible as possible. Highest priority is accorded to protecting students' health. Unforeseen events due to Covid may necessitate altering the format or the requirements of the course or both.**

## **Class Structure:**

### **Unit I: Theory Construction and Evaluation, the History of the Discipline and its Epistemology**

Jan. 20. Overview of Syllabus, Enlightenment & Theory Construction

Jan. 27. Ritzer and Stepnisky, *MST*, Chapter 2 “The Later Years” pp. 67-79

### **Unit II: Structural-Functionalism**

Feb. 3 Ritzer and Stepnisky, *MST*, Chapter 3 “ pp. 93-102.

Feb. 10 Ritzer and Stepnisky, *MST*, Chapter 3, pp.107-115. Robert Merton’s Structural-Functionalism and the major criticisms of Functionalism.

### **Unit III: Conflict Theory**

Feb. 17 Hostility and Tensions in Conflict Relationships (Out-Group)

Feb. 24 Ritzer and Stepnisky *MST*, Chapter 3, “ Conflict Theory, the Work of Ralf Dahrendorf and A More Integrative Conflict Theory” pp.119-128.

Mar. 3 Steven Lukes, Robert Dahl, & the 3 Dimensions of Power: Moral Entrepreneurs

### **Unit IV: Feminist Theory**

Mar. 10 Ritzer and Stepnisky *MST* Chapter 8 “Contemporary Feminist Theory” pp. 291-333.

### ***Mar. 20 Midterm Exam Due***

Mar. 24 Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation*, Preface, Introduction,

- Chapter 1 “Men and Women of the Corporation: The Population”
- Chapter 2 “ Industrial Supply Corporation: The Setting” and
- Chapter 3 “ Managers”

Mar. 31 Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation*,

- Chapter 4 “Secretaries”
- Chapter 5 “Wives”
- Chapter 7 “Power”

April 7 Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation*

- Chapter 8 “Numbers: Minorities and Majorities”
- Chapter 10 “Contributions to Practice: Organizational Change, Affirmative Action and Quality of Work Life”

#### **Unit V: Theories of Race and Colonialism**

April 14 Ritzer and Stepnisky, *MST*, Chapter 11 “Theories of Race and Colonialism” pp. 416-450.

#### **Unit IX: Post Industrial Societies Globalization Theory**

April 21 Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* & Movie

#### **Important Dates:**

Mar 20: Midterm due

April 28 Free Day/Makeup day “Cushion”

May 6 Final Exam Due