Theories of Culture and Society

Ward Keeler

Ant 330C (30705)
TTh 9:30 - 11:00
Spring, 2015

The purpose of this course is to acquaint students with some of the most important theoretical contributions made to the study of culture and society since the nineteenth century. The first half of the course is devoted largely to reading the great systems builders of the social sciences: Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Freud. All of their ideas have been under attack for decades, but their thinking still pervades the social sciences and must be reckoned with. We then turn to figures influential primarily in the history of anthropology, and finally, to recent and contemporary writers in the social sciences whose ideas fuel ongoing debates in anthropology today. The course is conceived primarily for majors but above all for students who are committed to working with difficult, influential, and fascinating texts.

The course combines both lecture, on Thursdays, and seminar discussion, on Tuesdays. Seminar discussion will be based in most cases on short written assignments submitted before class. Attending lectures and seminar discussion is required, and absences must be explained.

The course integrates an intense and demanding regime of reading and discussion with an equally intense and demanding program of writing. In order to assist students with their writing, a portion of every Tuesday class will be devoted to discussing writing. The aim is to encourage students to develop the habit of writing clear and concise prose, organized in such a way that a reader is aware of the overall structure of each sentence, paragraph, and essay.

Note that this course satisfies the criteria of a "Writing Flag" course. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Requirements:

Final grades will be based on the following requirements: eight short assignments, two longer essays, plus attendance and participation. The short assignments, no more than one page in length, will be worth five points each, for a total of forty points. (Ten short assignments will be made: students can choose not to submit one before spring break, and one after. If a student submits all ten short assignments, the two lowest grades will be dropped.) Each of the two longer essays, about five pages in length, will be worth twenty-five points, for a total of fifty points. Attendance and participation will count for ten points. No short assignment will be granted credit unless the student attends class on the day the assignment is discussed. No extra credit is available in this course.

Please note that Wikipedia can give good background information about the various authors we will read, and you are welcome and even encouraged to consult it. However, it will not enable you to address the specific topics you are assigned, and similar phrasing in a number of papers points clearly to a shared source.

Other useful information:

Undergraduate Writing Center (UWC) FAC 211, 512-471-6222 uwc.utexas.edu The Undergraduate Writing Center provides university undergraduates individualized, professional advice on all aspects of writing on a walk-in basis or by appointment. Students may request that UWC send me a note confirming their visit.

Students with disabilities: The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic adjustments for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY. Please make known to me, in a timely manner, any special needs you might have so that reasonable accommodation can be made. I cannot make these arrangements immediately before a major assignment is due.

Counseling and Mental Health (CMHC) SSB 4th floor, 512-471-3515 cmhc.utexas.edu The Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) helps students with their personal concerns so they can meet the daily challenges of student life. The CMHC is staffed by psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and other licensed mental health professionals. CMHC’s 24-hour phone counseling line is 512-471-CALL (2255).
Readings:

All readings are available on reserve at the Perry-Castañeda Library. They are also available for purchase. The following books are available at the University Coop Bookstore:

Durkheim, Emile. 2008 [1912]. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Tr. C. Cosman. New York: Free Press. (Other translations are acceptable, but the new translation is preferable.)

Week 1 January 20 - 23


The first short assignment will be assigned on Thursday, January 22, and will be due on Tuesday, January 27.

Week 2 January 26 - 29


The second short assignment will be assigned on Thursday, January 29, and will be due on Tuesday, February 3.

Week 3 February 2 - 6

Durkheim, Emile. Introduction; Book 1, Ch. 1 Definition of religious phenomena and of religion; Bk 2, Ch. 7 Origins of these beliefs; Bk 3, Ch. 5 Piacular Rites and the ambiguity of the notions of sacredness; Conclusion. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. (Since different editions of this book are in circulation, providing page numbers would only cause confusion.)

The third short assignment will be assigned on Thursday, February 5, and will be due on Tuesday, February 10.

Week 4 February 9 - 13


The fourth short assignment will be assigned on Thursday, February 12, and will be due on Tuesday, February 17.

Week 5 February 16 - 20

The first longer writing assigned on Tuesday, February 17. A draft will be due on Tuesday, February 24. Final versions will be due on Tuesday, March 10.

**Week 6 February 23 - 27**


The fifth short assignment will be assigned on Thursday, February 26, and will be due on Tuesday, March 3.

**Week 7 March 2 - 6**


**Week 8 March 9 - 13**


The sixth short assignment will be assigned on Thursday, March 12, and will be due on Tuesday, March 24.

**Spring Break**

**Week 9 March 23 - 27**


Note: Bourdieu's writing is notoriously difficult. Be sure to allow yourself a good deal of time to do this reading.

The seventh short assignment will be assigned on Thursday, March 26, and will be due on Tuesday, March 31.

**Week 10 March 30 - April 2**


The eighth short assignment will be assigned on Thursday, April 2, and will be due on Tuesday, April 7.

**Week 11 April 6 - 10**


The ninth short assignment will be assigned on Thursday, April 9, and will be due on Tuesday, April 14.

**Week 12 April 13 - 17**


The tenth short assignment will be assigned on Thursday, April 16, and will be on Tuesday, April 21.

**Week 13 April 20 - 24**


**Week 14 April 27 - May 1**


The second longer essay will be assigned on Thursday, April 230. It will be due on Monday, May 18, by 4 p.m.

**Week 15  May 4 - 8**

No additional reading.