Sociological theories are the result of attempts to construct a meaningful world, to make sense of the complexity of human behavior. This seminar presents an overview of a wide range of classical and contemporary sociological theories. The goal is to expose students to the richness and diversity of approaches to the field as well as to provide the tools for analyzing contemporary and historical events. Although we shall cover several different perspectives, the coverage will not be comprehensive. Not all perspectives will be addressed and not all of those addressed will receive equal attention. But students should still gain an understanding and appreciation of the sociological imagination.

This course is designed as a seminar, and it will be handled in the same manner as a graduate seminar. This means that each session will be primarily a discussion rather than a lecture. I will begin each class with a brief lecture of normally between 45 and 60 minutes. After that, designated student facilitators will make a five to ten minute presentation designed to raise ideas for discussion. The remainder of the session will involve discussion.

Requirements

Students will be responsible for leading one or two discussion topics (depending on the size of the class), which they will choose the first or second week of the term. Students will meet with the instructor during the week prior to their presentation. In addition to one's presentations and contributions to class discussion, the grade will be based on two take-home, essay examinations, a midterm and a final. Students are also required to submit each week an approximately two-page running commentary on the assigned readings (this assignment is waived in the weeks of the student's presentations). This assignment will be described in more detail in class.

A list of required readings is presented in the course outline below. There are two required books, *Sociological Theory* (5th edition), by George Ritzer, and *Readings in Social Theory: The Classic Tradition to Post-Modernism*, (3rd edition), edited by James Farganis. These books, the latter of which is available in paper, can be purchased at the Shaman Drum Bookstore on South State Street. Additional required readings are
available in coursepack form at Dollar Bill Copying, located at 611 Church Street, just below South University.

COURSE OUTLINE

September 12: **Introduction: What is Sociological Theory, and Why Should We Care?**

September 19: **Marx and Contemporary Marxist Sociology.** Readings: Ritzer, pp. 39-71; Marx selections in Farganis, pp. 31-57. Recommended: Ritzer, pp. 271-316.


October 3: **Emile Durkheim on Sociology and Social Integration** Readings: Ritzer, pp. 73-105; Farganis, pp. 63-80.


October 17: **Conflict Theory.** Readings: Ritzer, pp. 250-253, 258-270; selections by Dahrendorf and Mills in Farganis, pp. 266-293.


MIDTERM EXAMINATION DISTRIBUTED

October 31: **Structural Sociology I. Distributional Approaches.** Readings: Preface to Peter M. Blau, Inequality and Heterogeneity, pp. ix-x (distributed in class); Rosabeth M. Kanter, Men and Women of the Corporation, pp. 186-221, 237-242 (pp. 35-58 of the coursepack); William Julius Wilson, The Truly Disadvantaged, pp. 1-19 (pp. 59-68 of the coursepack).


December 12: **Postmodernism.** Readings: Ritzer, pp. 587-621; selection by Foucault in Farganis, pp. 409-418.

**FINAL EXAMINATION DISTRIBUTED**