Topics in Social Interaction: Contemporary Social Psychological Theories (SOCL 7691)

Louisiana State University, Department of Sociology
Fall 2016
Thursday, 9am-11:30am
26 Stubbs Hall

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Office Hours: M, F 12-1:30pm or by appointment

DESCRIPTION

This course will provide a broad overview of the field of sociological social psychology.

COURSE MATERIALS

The required textbook for this course is:


This text is available for purchase at the University Book Store. You can also purchase the book online.

Other required readings will be posted on the course website.

REQUIREMENTS

Your progress in this course will be evaluated as follows:

- Research grant proposal (40 points)
- Research proposal presentation (15 points)
- Weekly article response (15 points)
- Leading discussion (15 points)
- Participation (15 points)

Research Grant Proposal. Students will submit a ten-page (single-spaced, 1- inch margins all around; 12-point Times New Roman font) proposal written in accordance with the National Science Foundation Dissertation Improvement Grant format. Further information can be found on the following Web site:

The paper should address some important aspect of sociological social psychology, broadly conceived. Students are encouraged to explore a variety of theoretical perspectives and methodological strategies in developing proposals. Due dates for this requirement are as follows:

* **Week 5** – Inform me of a paper topic.
* **Week 7** – Draft of the Project Overview and Objectives due in class.
* **Week 16** – Final proposal due on Monday, December 5th at 5 pm.

We will also devote some class time to discussing students’ proposal ideas as the semester proceeds. The proposal is worth 40 points.

**Research Proposal Presentation.** Your “final exam” for this class will be a 15-20 minute oral presentation of your research proposal. Powerpoint, overheads, or handouts are recommended. We will schedule each of these presentations in the time allotted for the week of November 30th. The presentation is worth 15 points.

**Weekly Article Response.** With the exception of Week 1, you will e-mail me a 1 to 2 page summary of the readings by 5 pm on the Tuesday prior to Wednesday’s class. The summary will not be an abstract for each article, but rather:

- A brief description of the weekly readings’ theme, and how each piece contributes to that theme.
- A brief critique of each piece: what is missing? What is not satisfying? How might you do it better?

These reports are crucial for you to keep up with the readings of the course.

**Weekly Discussions of Course Readings/Participation.** Students should be ready to discuss the following items for each assigned reading each week.

First, what assumptions or claims do the authors of the article make about the individual? What aspects of the individual (if any) do the authors consider to be of theoretical importance? Second, what assumptions or claims do the authors of the article make about social structure? If the authors address social structure, how do they conceptualize it? And third, what assumptions or claims do the authors make about the relation between the individual and social structure? Discussants should also be prepared to address the following standard issues:

a. Theoretical contributions and adequacy – What are the main conceptual and theoretical ideas in the piece? Are they adequately developed? How innovative or insightful are the main ideas underlying the paper?

b. Methodological approach and adequacy (where appropriate) – What is the general methodological strategy or approach taken? Is it appropriate? Is there a good fit between the theory, method, and analysis? Is the empirical analysis well done and thorough?
c. Contribution to the field – Theoretical? Empirical? Does the paper have a clearly important message? What is it?

d. Interest value of the piece – To what audience?

e. The quality of the writing – Is the piece clearly written and pleasurable to read?

**Discussion Leader.** Each person in the class will be required to lead discussion for one week. Discussion leaders should come prepared with thoughtful questions about the assigned readings. They point here is not to lecture or present, but to spark meaningful discussion about the readings. The issues above might be a good jumping-off point for developing your own, more targeted discussion questions.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1 (8/25). INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW OF COURSE**

**Week 2 (9/1). INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**


**Week 3 (9/8). SOCIAL STRUCTURE**


Chapter 6 in Self, Symbols, and Society (Pp. 116-142) – Mead on Self and Society


**Week 4 (9/15). AGENCY-STRUCTURE & MICRO-MACRO DEBATES**


**Week 5 (9/22). SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM**

*Inform me of paper topic*

Chapter 1 in Contemporary Social Psychological Theories (Pp. 1-23) – Symbolic Interactionism, George McCall

Chapter 12 in Self, Symbols, and Society (Pp. 249-263) – Hebert Blumer on Symbolic Interactionism


**Week 6 (9/29). IDENTITY THEORY I**

Chapter 5 in Contemporary Social Psychological Theories (Pp. 88-110) – Identity Theory, Jan E. Stets


**Week 7 (10/6). Fall Break.**

**Week 8 (10/13). IDENTITY THEORY II**

*Hand in draft of Project Overview and Objectives.*


**Week 9 (10/20) AFFECT CONTROL THEORY**

Chapter 7 in Contemporary Social Psychological Theories (Pp. 137-164) – Affect Control Theory, Dawn T. Robinson and Lynn Smith-Lovin


**Week 10 (10/27). SOCIAL STRUCTURE & PERSONALITY I**


**Week 11 (11/3). EMOTIONS**


Week 12 (11/10). EXPECTATION STATES THEORY

Chapter 12 in Contemporary Social Psychological Theories (Pp. 268-300) – Expectations, Status, and Behavior, Joseph Berger and Murray Webster, Jr.


Week 13 (11/17). POWER & EXCHANGE


Week 14 (11/24). THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 15 (12/1). In-Class Presentation of Grant Proposal.

Week 16 (12/8). Final (Written) Proposal Due