

**223.34 • Sociological Theory II: Contemporary Theory (3 hrs.)**  
Professor: Dennis W. Hiebert, Ph.D.  
[dennis.hiebert@prov.ca](mailto:dennis.hiebert@prov.ca)

Providence College  
Winter Session, 2010  
Wednesdays 8:30 – 11:05am

## SYLLABUS

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### A. Calendar Description of the Course

A systematic overview of contemporary sociological theory, highlighting its roots in classical theory, and emphasizing the development of competing schools of thought in sociology. (Prerequisites: 223.11 and 223.12)

### B. Purpose of the Course

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. summarize and characterize the nature of sociological theory and its relationship to other social sciences and the humanities;
2. understand the importance of theoretical logic to sociology in contradistinction to the importance of research methods and empirical findings;
3. compare the various theoretical perspectives within sociology, and demonstrate particular familiarity with several;
4. outline how sociological theory is foundational to and applied within various sub-disciplines of sociology;
5. identify the main contributors to contemporary sociological theory and describe their main contributions;
6. demonstrate their ability to think sociologically by applying several selected perspectives to the analysis of a real life issue;
7. critique the assumptions and conclusions of theoretical perspectives from a Christian world view, and pursue integration of sociological theory and Christian faith;
8. express encouragement toward his or her own potential for more enlightened and satisfactory human relationships;
9. display an appreciation for and commitment to the well-being of social life and human society.

#### *Note re. Syllabus:*

It is the student's responsibility to retain their course syllabi for use as support for possible future applications to other educational institutions for transfer of credit.

## C. Textbooks

### Required:

Allan, Kenneth. 2007. *The Social Lens: An Invitation to Social and Sociological Theory*. Pine Forge Press.

Kivisto, Peter. 2008. *Social Theory: Roots and Branches*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Oxford University Press.

### Recommended:

Farganis, James, ed. 2008. *Readings in Social Theory: The Classic Tradition to Post-Modernism*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Garner, Roberta, ed. 2007. *Social Theory: Continuity and Confrontation: A Reader*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Broadview Press.

Heddendorf, Russell. 2009. *Hidden Threads: Social Thought for Christians*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Wipf & Stock.

Kivisto, Peter, ed. 2005. *Illuminating Social Life: Classical and Contemporary Theory Revisited*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Pine Forge Press.

Ritzer, George. 2008. *Sociological Theory*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Note: All of these texts were also used in 223.33 Sociological Theory I: Classical Theory, taught in the fall semester.

A **Selected Bibliography** for this course is available in your Blackbaud student portal under "Shared Documents" for this course.

### The leading encyclopedias are

Ritzer, George, ed. 2007. *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. 11 vol. Blackwell.

Ritzer, George, ed. 2005. *The Encyclopedia of Social Theory*. 2 vol. Sage.

## D. Course Requirements

### 1. Class Attendance and Participation (10%)

Your attendance and participation in class is even more important in this course than in courses that are primarily lecture courses. In upper level seminar courses such as this, you have the opportunity to learn about and from your classmates, not just your instructor, and to develop your own ability and ease in conversing intellectually. The quality of the class experience will be socially constructed by what the members of the class bring to it; the better prepared and more willing to participate each student is, the richer the course will be for all. As part of the final exam, you will be asked to grade your classmates for the overall quantity and quality of their interactions in class during the semester. Your own grade for this component will be the average of the evaluations your classmates give you, with the highest and lowest scores deleted from the calculation.

### 2. Reflection Papers (7 x 5% = 35%)

There are eleven block classes of content in the class schedule below. Select any SEVEN of the eleven classes and write a 2-3 page (double-spaced, 12 point font), informal, personal reaction to the readings and discussion. Your reflection can be submitted no later than the next class. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have submitted seven reflections by the end of the semester. No further study beyond doing the assigned readings and participating in class discussion is required. The intent is that this regular exercise become a form of journaling that documents the progress of your thinking throughout the semester. Your comments could include a critical assessment of the content, implications you foresee, possible integration with Christian perspectives, etc. Your papers will be graded according to the quality of their interaction and reflection.

### 3. Elaborations and Applications (20%)

Our discussion of each theorist or theoretical perspective will begin with me leading a discussion of the reading assigned from the Allan text that all students are expected to complete prior to class. All students will also select one (where there is more than one) of the primary source readings in the Kivisto text from the theorist or perspective being discussed, and come to class prepared to summarize and discuss it. Both of the above are the foundational discussions of each theorist or perspective, and are ungraded (other than “class participation”) course expectations.

For the graded component of classes, each student will sign up to lead two or more of the following presentations and/or discussions, depending on course enrollment.

An **elaboration** consists of reading the extra material on the theorist or perspective from the Ritzer text on reserve in the library, selecting material that supplements the material from the Allan text, and presenting that material to the rest of the class, facilitated by a one-page outline handout prepared by the presenter. The student presenter will normally have 25-30 minutes to present the material and lead the class discussion of it.

An **application** consists of reading the article based on the theorist or perspective from the Kivisto 2005 text on reserve in the library, and presenting that material to the rest of the class, facilitated by a one-page outline handout prepared by the presenter. The student presenter will normally have 25-30 minutes to present the material and lead the class discussion of it.

Sign-up is on a first come, first served basis, but will be finalized by January 20. Your grade for this component of the course will be based on all your leaderships combined.

#### 4. Case Study (20%)

**Due Date: April 14**

Select one of the Harvard Business School case studies posted in your Blackbaud student portal under “Shared Documents” for this course, and write a 6-8 page analysis of it from the perspective of at least three different sociological theoretical perspectives. The cases from which you will select one include:

1. Crisis and Response: Sexual Abuse Allegations in the Boston Archdiocese
2. MBA in Jeopardy
3. This Case Sucks: Beavis, Butt-head, and TV Content

Your analysis should demonstrate that you comprehend selected theoretical perspectives, and can use them to compare and contrast how social theorists would approach a real life issue. What questions would each theoretical perspective ask of the issue? What aspects of the issue would each perspective examine, and what aspects would it ignore? What would each perspective expect to find? How adequately would each perspective have understood the issue? Come to the last class of the semester prepared to discuss and compare your case analyses with your classmates.

## 5. Final Exam (15%)

You will write one final, comprehensive exam on **April 21**. The short answer questions will basically ask you to define concepts and match theorists and/or theoretical perspectives with general ideas. The long answer questions will ask you to summarize concepts, evaluate perspectives, and explain your personal preferences.

Any request to reschedule a final exam must be approved by the Academic Committee in accordance with the policy in the College Academic Calendar.

## E. Grading Summary

### 1. Grade Components

Class Participation	10%
Reflection Papers	35%
Elaborations & Applications	20%
Case Study	20%
Final Exam	15%

Note: The last date for **Voluntary Withdrawal** from this course is Friday, March 12.

### 2. Grading Scale

Final course letter grades and their Grade Point equivalents will be calculated using the following scale:

<i>Percent</i>	<i>G.P.</i>	<i>Quality</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>G.P.</i>	<i>Quality</i>
91 – 99 = A+	4.0	Exceptional	67 – 69 = C+	2.5	Satisfactory
85 – 90 = A		Excellent	63 – 66 = C	2.0	Adequate
80 – 84 = A-			60 – 62 = C-		
77 – 79 = B+	3.5	Superior	57 – 59 = D+	1.0	Marginal
73 – 76 = B	3.0	Good	53 – 56 = D		Poor
70 – 72 = B-			50 – 52 = D-		
			< 50 = F	0.0	Failure

## F. Course Policies

The full text of the academic policies, procedures and regulations of Providence College can be found online in the Student Handbook ([http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/student\\_life/](http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/student_life/)) and the College Academic Calendar ([http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/programs/registrars\\_office/calendar/](http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/programs/registrars_office/calendar/)).

### 1. Class Attendance

As described above, full attendance at all classes is expected, because active listening, thinking, and discussing are primary learning experiences in a seminar course like this. Class attendance will be recorded, and one mark subtracted for every absence after the second. I am happy to give additional assistance outside the classes to students who find themselves struggling with course material, but only to those who have demonstrated the self-discipline to attend all the classes they possibly can.

### 2. ICTs in Class

Student use of information and communication technologies for purposes other than class note-taking is not allowed in the classroom, as students are expected to give their total attention to class activities. Use of cell-phones or ipods is never appropriate in the classroom, and use of laptop computers to play games, write blogs, chat with others, browse the internet, or engage material not related to the class is always distracting to classmates and disrespectful to the instructor. While some instructors here at Providence College and other universities have begun banning laptop computers and other ICTs from the classroom, as have I in my Introduction to Sociology course, I am expecting you more senior students in this course not to abuse the privilege of using laptops for note-taking in class.

### 3. Plagiarism

Students are expected to demonstrate academic integrity in all its various forms, and will be held accountable for doing so by the policy on Academic Conduct in the Student Handbook ([http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/student\\_life/](http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/student_life/)). One particularly problematic breach of academic integrity is plagiarism, which is stealing from the ideas and writings of another person and passing them off as one's own. For an elaboration of the nature, types, and prevention of plagiarism, see the document entitled "Academic Dishonesty: The Problem of Plagiarism in Academic Writing" posted under Shared Documents in your Blackbaud student portal.

#### 4. Late Assignments

Assignments will not be accepted after their due date; a grade of zero will be given for that component of the course. Furthermore, I will *not* receive requests for due date extensions. If you feel an extension is warranted, attach a cover letter to your assignment when you hand it in, explaining why it is late, and I will make a decision if and when your paper is graded. Assigning a late penalty (usually 10% or one letter grade per week) or waiving the zero grade will be considered only in the cases of medical or personal emergencies as detailed in the cover letter. Computer problems, conflicts with co-curricular activities, changes in employment schedules, or competition for library resources do not constitute such personal emergencies. Failure to plan ahead, or to maintain a margin of time for unforeseen events prior to the due date, does not warrant an extension either.

#### 5. Missed Exams

Students who miss the exam are responsible to contact me within one week of the exam date if they still wish to write the exam. Permission to do so will be given to only those students who present evidence, acceptable to me, of medical reasons for having missed the exam. The format of the exam will be at my discretion, with essay questions likely. Students who do not write the exam by at most two weeks after the exam date will receive a grade of zero for that component of the course.

### G. Class Schedule

This course employs a seminar format of learning, wherein the large majority of class time will be given to discussion of readings and only a small minority of time given to lecture. Therefore it is imperative that students complete the readings assigned **prior** to class, and come prepared to discuss them.

Students are expected to purchase the Allan and Kivisto texts, and access the articles in PDF format posted under “Shared Documents” for this course in their Blackboard student portal. The Ritzer and Kivisto 2005 texts are on reserve in the Learning Resource Centre. Ask for them by title at the front desk.

Each theorist or theoretical perspective will be studied using the following categories:

- Discussions: All students will do all the assigned readings from the Allan text and come to class prepared to discuss them.
- Elaborations: One student will be assigned to read the Ritzer text on the theorist or perspective being studied and present supplementary information to the class.
- Summaries: Each student will select one of the primary source articles from the theorist or perspective being studied, and come to class prepared to summarize and highlight the article to the rest of the class.
- Applications: One student will be assigned to read the application article from the Kivisto 2005 text and present a summary to the rest of the class.

*Summary:* Discussions – all students do all the readings from the Allan text  
 Summaries – each student selects one article from the Kivisto text  
 Elaborations and Applications:  
 - single students present to the rest of the class

I reserve the right to assign additional readings during the course of the term or to alter the schedule of topics as I see fit.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Readings</u>
Jan. 13	Orientation to the Course Lecture: Historical Sketch of Contemporary Sociological Theory	
Jan. 20	Structural-Functionalism	Parsons Discussion: Allan pp. 167-199 Parsons Summary: Kivisto #31 Merton Discussion: Allan pp. 199-209 Merton Summary: Kivisto #30 Elaboration: Ritzer pp.236-263 Application: Kivisto ch.5
Jan. 27	Conflict Theory	Coser Discussion: Allan pp. 211-220 Coser Summary: Kivisto #34 Dahrendorf Discussion: Allan pp.220-232 Dahrendorf Summary: Kivisto #36 Collins Discussion: Allan pp. 232-241 Collins Summary: Kivisto #37 Elaboration: Ritzer pp.264-275



Mar. 17	World Systems	Wallerstein Discussion: Allan pp. 431-450 Wallerstein Summary: Kivisto #70 Luhman Discussion: Allan pp. 451-469 Luhman Summary: Kivisto #32 Elaboration: Ritzer pp.331-346	
Mar. 24	Feminist Theory	Chafetz Discussion: Allan pp. 279-299 Feminist Summaries: Kivisto #52, #53, #56, #74 Smith Discussion: Allan pp. 471-488 Smith Summary: Kivisto #55 Collins Discussion: Allan pp. 501-517 Collins Summary: Kivisto #54 Elaboration: Ritzer ch.13 Application: Kivisto ch.8	
Mar. 31	Theories of Modernity and Globalization	Elaboration: Ritzer ch.15 Giddens Summary: Kivisto #63 Beck Summary: Kivisto #64 Elaboration: Ritzer ch.16 Robertson Summary: Kivisto #71 Appadurai Summary: Kivisto #72 Kellner Summary: Kivisto #73 Application: Kivisto ch.13	
Apr. 7	Post-Theories	Featherstone Summary: Kivisto #69 Foucault Discussion: Allan pp. 519-541 Foucault Summary: Kivisto #67 Baudrillard Discussion: Allan pp. 541-565 Baudrillard Summary: Kivisto #66 Elaboration: Ritzer ch.17 Application: Kivisto ch.11 or 12	
Apr. 14	Presentation of Case Studies		<b>Case Study due</b>
Apr. 21	<b>Exam</b>		