

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

Providence University College  
Fall Session, 2011  
Mondays 12:40 – 3:15pm

## SYLLABUS

---

### A. Calendar Description of the Course

A systematic overview of both classical and contemporary sociological theory, highlighting the contributions of major theorists and emphasizing the development of competing schools of thought in sociology. (Prerequisites: 223.11 Introduction to Sociology I and 223.12 Introduction to Sociology II)

### B. Purpose of the Course

Upon completion of this course, you 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 sociological theory and describe their main contributions;
6. demonstrate 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 join the conversation of sociological theory and Christian faith;
8. express encouragement toward your 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

### 1. Required:

Ritzer, George. 2010. *Contemporary Sociological Theory and Its Classical Roots: The Basics*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

### 2. Recommended:

Allan, Kenneth. 2010. *A Primer in Social and Sociological Theory: Toward a Sociology of Citizenship*. Pine Forge Press.

Allan, Kenneth. 2010. *The Social Lens: An Invitation to Social and Sociological Theory*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Pine Forge Press.

Appelrouth, Scott A., and Laura Desfor Edles. 2011. *Classical and Contemporary Sociological Theory: Text and Readings*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Pine Forge Press.

Farganis, James, ed. 2011. *Readings in Social Theory: The Classic Tradition to Post-Modernism*. 6<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. 2010. *Social Theory: Roots and Branches*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford University Press.

Kivisto, Peter, ed. 2011. *Illuminating Social Life: Classical and Contemporary Theory Revisited*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Pine Forge Press.

Ritzer, George. 2011. *Sociological Theory*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Sears, Alan. 2008. *A Good Book, In Theory: A Guide to Theoretical Thinking*. University of Toronto Press.

Smith, Christian. 2010. *What is a Person? Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up*. University of Chicago Press.

3. Leading encyclopedias:

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 (5 x 5% = 25%)

There are ten block classes of content in the class schedule below. Select any FIVE of the ten classes and write a 2-page (double-spaced, 12 point font), informal, personal reaction to the readings, discussion, and presentations. The only topic for which you may not do a reflection is one on which you have given an elaboration (see below). Your reflection can be submitted no later than the next class. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have submitted five 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. Summaries, Elaborations, and Applications (25%)

Our in-class study of each theorist or theoretical perspective will begin with me leading a 30 minute discussion of the reading assigned from the Ritzer text that all students are expected to complete prior to class. These discussions are foundational to comprehending each theorist or perspective.

a) *Summaries*: Following the discussion of the Ritzer text, one student will give a 5-10 minute summary of a primary source reading of their choice on the theorist or theoretical perspective being discussed. When it is your turn to present a reading summary, you can find an appropriate one in either of the following texts on reserve in the library.

Kivisto, Peter. 2010. *Social Theory: Roots and Branches*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford University Press.

Farganis, James, ed. 2011. *Readings in Social Theory: The Classic Tradition to Post-Modernism*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Both the discussion and the reading summaries together will constitute the “class participation” grade component of the course.

The balance of each 75 minute class will be given to two 15 minute student presentations as follows.

b) *Elaborations*: One student will be assigned to research and present additional information on the theorist or theoretical perspective that supplements what is contained in the Ritzer text. The following books on reserve in the library should serve as primary sources for elaborations:

Allan, Kenneth. 2010. *The Social Lens: An Invitation to Social and Sociological Theory*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Pine Forge Press.

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

Ritzer, George. 2011. *Sociological Theory*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

c) *Applications/Legacies*: Another student will be assigned to read and summarize an application from the Kivisto text below, or a legacy from the Garner text below. An application takes the theorist/theory being discussed and applies it to a particular social phenomenon. A legacy shows how the theory being discussed has informed the theorizing of a subsequent theorist.

Kivisto, Peter, ed. 2011. *Illuminating Social Life: Classical and Contemporary Theory Revisited*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Pine Forge Press.

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

A one-page outline summary handout for all members of the class is expected to accompany all elaborations and applications. The number of summaries, elaborations, and applications required of each member of the class will be determined by course enrolment. Sign-up is on a first come, first served basis, but will be finalized by September 19. Your grade for this component of the course will be based on all your elaborations and applications combined.

#### 4. Case Study (15%)

**Due Date: November 28**

Select one of the Harvard Business School case studies posted in your Blackbaud student portal under “Shared Documents” for this course, and write a 5-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

As an alternative, you may prefer to do a case study of some social phenomenon of your own choosing, such as a Providence campus event or dynamic, or a news story that unfolds over a period of time. If you choose to analyse your own choice of a social phenomenon, you will need to add 2 pages of careful description of it as an introduction.

Your analysis should demonstrate that you comprehend selected theoretical perspectives, and can use them to compare and contrast how sociological theorists would approach a real life issue. This is an exercise in theorizing, not just comprehending or communicating theory, though it remains the application of existent theory that stops short of developing your own sociological theory. What questions would your selected theoretical perspectives 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?

5. Citizenship Topic Summary (10%)

**Due Date: December 5**

For the final class of this course, we will overview how sociological theory addresses major topics concerning the sociology of citizenship. Each student will again sign up to do a 15 minute presentation that summarizes one chapter of the Allan text below, again with a one-page outline handout. You should include additional analysis from the rest of the course, beyond the Allan chapter, that is pertinent to your topic. The topics include modernity/democracy, society, self, religion, capitalism, power, gender, race, and globalization. Sign up will occur in the middle of the semester.

Allan, Kenneth. 2010. *A Primer in Social and Sociological Theory: Toward a Sociology of Citizenship*. Pine Forge Press.

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

6. Final Exam (15%)

You will write one final, comprehensive exam on **December 12**. 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

Attendance/Participation	10%
Reflection Papers	25%
Elaborations/Applications	25%
Case Study	15%
Citizenship Topic Summary	10%
Final Exam	15%

Note: The last date for **Voluntary Withdrawal** from this course is Monday, Nov. 14.

## 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 University 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/registrar\\_office/calendar/](http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/programs/registrar_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 University College and other universities have begun banning laptop computers and other ICTs from the classroom, as have

I in other sociology courses, I am expecting you more senior students in this course not to abuse the privilege of using laptops for note-taking in class.

### 3. Academic Integrity

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 student presentations, and only a small minority of time given to lecture. Therefore it is imperative that you complete the Ritzer reading assigned **prior** to class, and come prepared to discuss it. You are expected to purchase the Ritzer text, which is available in the Providence Bookstore. The rest of the texts listed in this syllabus are on reserve in the Learning Resource Centre. Ask for them by title at the front desk.

Each theorist and theoretical perspective will be studied using a combination of the following categories:

- Discussions: All students will do all the assigned readings from the Ritzer text and come to class prepared to discuss them.
- Summaries: One student will be assigned to select one of the primary source articles from the theorist or theoretical perspective being studied and summarize the article for the rest of the class.
- Elaborations: One student will be assigned to do further reading on the theorist or theoretical perspective being studied, and present information to the rest of the class that supplements what all have read in the Ritzer text.
- Applications: One student will be assigned to read the application article from the Kivisto text and present a summary to the rest of the class.
- Legacies: One student will be assigned to read the legacy article from the Garner text and present a summary 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>Theorist/Perspective</u>	<u>Reading of Ritzer</u>
Sept. 12	Orientation to the Course Introduction to Sociological Theory – Lecture	Chapter 1
Sept. 19	Historical Overview of Sociological Theory – Lecture Classical Theories I: Emile Durkheim	pp.15-21
Sept. 26	Classical Theories I: Karl Marx, Max Weber	pp.21-43

Oct. 3	Classical Theories II Georg Simmel, Thorstein Veblen, George Herbert Mead	Chapter 3
Oct. 10	<b>Thanksgiving Break (classes cancelled)</b>	
Oct. 17	Contemporary Grand Theories I Structural Functionalism, Conflict Theory, General Systems Theory	Chapter 4
Oct. 24	Contemporary Grand Theories II Neo-Marxian Theory, The Civilizing Process, Colonization of the Lifeworld, The Juggernaut of Modernity	Chapter 5
Oct. 31	Contemporary Theories of Everyday Life Symbolic Interactionism, Dramaturgy, Ethnomethodology, Exchange Theory, Rational Choice	Chapter 6
Nov. 7	Contemporary Integrative Theories Exchange Theory, Structuration Theory, Culture and Agency Habitus and Field	Chapter 7
Nov. 14	Contemporary Feminist Theories	Chapter 8
Nov. 21	Postmodern Grand Theories	Chapter 9
Nov. 28	Globalization Theory	Chapter 10
Dec. 5	Citizenship Topic Summaries Modernity/Democracy, Society, Self, Religion, Capitalism, Power, Gender, Race, Globalization	
Dec. 12	<b>Exam</b>	