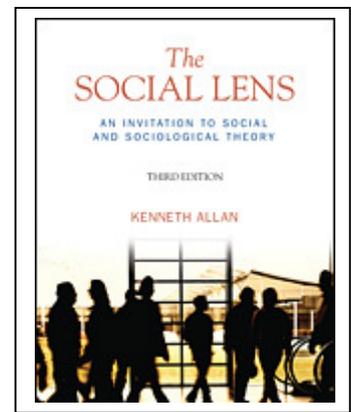


Lakehead University
Department of Sociology
Sociology 3411WAO – Contemporary Social Theory
Instructor: Kevin Donald Willison, Ph.D.



Day/Time: Tuesday and Thursday: 1:00 - 2:30 pm

Class Room Location: OA 2006 **Office Location:** Third Floor cubicle area

Office Hours: by appointment (via e-mail: kdwillis@lakeheadu.ca).

Course Prerequisite: SOCI 1100

Course Description: This course encourages reflection, engagement and debate on the broad topic of contemporary social and sociological theory. Borrowing from such classical theorists as M. Weber, E. Durkheim, G. Simmel and K. Marx, this course will then ponder upon such contemporary theorists as Talcott Parsons, Harold Garfinkel, Erving Goffman, George Homans, Dorothy Smith, Peter Blau, Randall Collins, Pierre Bourdieu and Jürgen Habermas. How theory is developed and the dynamic (versus static) nature of theory is also considered. Highlighted throughout this course will be a focus on how theories / theorists may help answer “so what” and “now what” questions. We will do so by considering both theoretical as well as practical applications of theory, including consideration of the importance of theory when conducting research.

Course Aims: This course serves as an introduction to contemporary sociological theory. It will place a strong emphasis on what is known as *engaged scholarship*. Overall, we will strive to: [1] draw from varied theories as a way to explain “reality”; [2] think critically about the way in which social structures and social forces determine the way in which the world is perceived and represented; [3] introduce sociology as both an academic as well as practical discipline; and [4] introduce theories as tools / constructs which can help us expand upon our logical thinking and critical reasoning skills. To help reach these course aims, class participation / engagement is both expected and strongly encouraged.

Course Organization: This course is organized around classroom discussion, lectures and reflection of the readings and other materials presented. Classroom activities such as group work are used. All are encouraged to provide input, ask questions and respect the right of others to do so through active listening.

Caution: The term goes quickly!! Be sure to keep up with your required readings.

Required Text Book:

Kenneth Allan. *The Social Lens: An Invitation to Social and Sociological Theory*. **Third Edition**. 2014. SAGE Publications. ISBN: 978-1-4129- 9278-7 (pbk.)

Note 1: There may also be (testable) material posted on Desire2Learn.

Note 2: Required readings may need to be read more than once so be sure to budget your time accordingly. The tests and exams will presume that you have read and understood

the material. All are strongly encouraged to review and reflect upon the required readings plus raise related questions and issues in class (prior to exams).

To get the most out of the course, you should complete your weekly readings *before attending* class. This will help you be more prepared for the lectures.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Your performance in the course will be evaluated on the basis of the following:

- [1] **Test One (20%): Thursday February 5, 2015**
- [2] **Essay Assignment (20%): DUE Thursday March 5, 2015.**
- [3] **Test Two (20%): Thursday March 12, 2015**
- [4] **Final (April) Exam (40%):** Scheduled by the Registrar (stay tuned for day and time).
Duration = three hours.

FORMAT OF EXAMS

The two tests and one exam will be a combination of multiple choice, definitions and essay style questions. There will not be any true/false questions.

You will be responsible for course readings, lecture materials, and anything else presented during our class time. There will be a pre-exam review session with the purpose of clarifying difficulties and problems encountered during your preparation for the final exam.

Required Essay (value = 20 percent)

* Research and write an academic essay. Select a topic directly relevant to sociological theory, of interest to you. For topic ideas, review your required textbook.

* The purpose of this assignment is to choose a (one) specific theory and appropriately link such to a (one) real-world (practical) problem and/or application. Make this link clear to your reader using a one-sentence and precise (short) thesis statement (that captures the reader's attention). Make your thesis known in the first as well as last paragraph. Support your thesis throughout your essay by using relevant literature.

* It is recommended that you discuss your topic and thesis statement *in advance* with the Instructor to help make sure you are on the right track.

* Start working on your paper as soon as possible. Be sure not to procrastinate as good writing takes practice, as well as extensive editing.

* Use APA format. There are APA format guidelines at the LU library.

* As a useful resource, Lakehead University (Orillia) has a Writing Centre to assist you if needed.

* Your essay must be six (full) pages in length (no longer), 12 cpi font, and 1.5-spaced. Use a one-inch page margin. Not included as part of the required six pages is: your cover page and cited references (therefore, a total of 8 pages).

* Further, use at least **eight different** scholarly books and/or journal articles for your reference material. * Your required text may be used but does not count as one of the 8

sources required. Cite completely each journal / book reference used. DO NOT cite http addresses).

* Your paper must be handed in during the start of the class on the due date. Late submissions will be penalized at the rate of 5 marks per day.

* Note: Do not e-mail me your completed assignment. Electronic files or e-mail attachments will not be accepted. Discuss your topic with me in person (not by e-mail).

* Be sure to use your text and other course material to argue/discuss the relevance of a given (one) idea and/or strategy pertinent to your topic. Such material does NOT count as one or more of your required six sources of information.

* Start early on your assignment as good writing usually requires extensive editing.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following grading scale will be applied in evaluating your course work:

90-100% (A+)

Outstanding Performance: superb mastery of the principles and materials treated in the course; exceptional fluency in communicating that mastery and a high degree of originality and independence in applying material and principles.

80-89% (A)

Excellent Performance: comprehensive in-depth knowledge of the principles and materials treated in the course; fluency in communicating that knowledge and originality and independence in applying material and principles.

70-79% (B)

Good Performance: thorough understanding of the breadth of materials and principles treated in the course and ability to apply and communicate that understanding effectively.

60-69% (C)

Satisfactory Performance: basic understanding of the breadth of principles and material treated in the course and an ability to apply and communicate that understanding competently.

50-59% (D)

Marginal Performance: adequate understanding of most principles and material treated in the course, but significant weakness in some areas and in the ability to apply and communicate that understanding.

40-49% (E)

Failure: inadequate or fragmentary knowledge of the principles and material treated in the in the course, or failure to complete the work required in the course.

1-39% (F)

Failure: inadequate or fragmentary knowledge of the principles and material treated in the in the course, or failure to complete the work required in the course.

0% (F)

Academic Dishonesty: demonstrable violation of the academic rules of conduct as defined by Lakehead University academic standards.

Your grade is a reflection of your performance in the course, which is the only criterion for your final course mark. *There will be no rescaling of grades at the end of the course* and no adjustments except for legitimate clerical errors. Please take note of that. According to Lakehead University defined standards, a grade of 0-49% constitutes unsatisfactory academic performance and means failing the course; 50-59% is a minimally accepted level of performance for passing the course, while 90-100% constitutes outstanding performance. For details on evaluation and grading see your Lakehead *University Academic Calendar*, section University Regulations (V Standing). If you wish to review your course work you can do so within *one week from the day your marks* have been posted.

GENERAL POLICIES

Email: E-mailing is to be regarded as an official form of communication. Only emails sent through Lakehead University account will be read and replied to. All other email messages will be ignored.

Cell phones: Cell phones are to be turned off during lectures (except under exceptional circumstances in which approval has been granted by the instructor). Avoid texting. Failure to follow this course policy *may* result in a loss of marks.

* Use of portable devices during lectures is **not allowed** (except under exceptional circumstances in which approval has been granted by the instructor).

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Class attendance is not mandatory but is highly recommended. If you decide to attend, you are expected to arrive on time and be respectful to other students in class. Avoid disruptive and otherwise inappropriate behaviour in the classroom.

Disclaimer: The information in this Course Outline is subject to change; any changes will be announced in class.

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change; any changes will be announced in class)

* **Beyond required textbook readings, see posted material as found on D2L.**

Week 1 - (January 6 and 8)

COURSE INTRODUCTION & SYLLABUS WALKTHROUGH

* Roles / Functions / Importance of Theory

Text Required READING

• *Chapter One*: On Theory

Week 2 - (January 13 and 15)

Text Required READING (skip chapters 2-7)

• *Chapter Eight*: Structural Functionalism: Talcott Parsons, Robert K. Merton, and Jeffery Alexander

Week 3 - (January 20 and 22)

Text Required READING

• *Chapter Nine*: Conflict Theory: Lewis Coser, Ralf Dahrendorf, and Randall Collins

Week 4 - (January 27 and 29)

Text Required READING

• *Chapter Ten*: What happened to Class? Erik Olin Wright, Daniel Bell, and Pierre Bourdieu

Week 5 - (February 3 and 5)

Feb. 03 - Text Required READING

• *Chapter Eleven*: Structures of Racial and Gender Inequality: William Julius Wilson and Janet Saltzman Chafetz

Feb. 05 – TEST ONE

Week 6 - (February 10 and 12)

Feb. 10: Racial and Gender Inequality (Part Two) Structures of Racial and Gender Inequality: William Julius Wilson and Janet Saltzman Chafetz

Week 7 - (February 16-20)

STUDY WEEK: NO CLASSES

Week 8 - (February 24 and 26)

Text Required READING

• *Chapter Twelve*: Exchange Theory: George Homans, Peter Blau, and Randall Collins

Week 9 - (March 3 and 5)

(March 5th – Essay due date)

Text Required READING (for March 03 and 05)

• *Chapter Thirteen – Part One*: Self and Situation: Erving Goffman, R.S. Perinbanayagam and, Harold Garfinkel

Week 10 - (March 10 and 12)

Text Required READING

• *Chapter Thirteen – Part Two*:

March 12 – TEST TWO

Week 11 - (March 17 and 19)

Text Required READING

• *Chapter Fourteen*: Problems in Modernity: Jürgen Habermas and Anthony Giddens

Week 12 - (March 24 and 26)

Text Required READING

- *Chapter Fifteen*: Globalizing Systems: Immanuel Wallerstein and Manuel Castells

Week 13 - (March 31 and April 2)

Text Required READING

- *Chapter Sixteen*: Upsetting Reality: Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard

Week 14 - (April 7) – Partial term review [all classes end Tuesday April 07]

*** Final April Exam – Scheduled by Registrar.**

Missed Exams:

Make-up examinations will only be given with written (and original) documentation from a healthcare practitioner, using the official Student Health Certificate, available at:

<http://registrar.lakeheadu.ca/uploads/docs/F.HealthCertificate.pdf>.

Religious Observance Policy: If you require religious accommodation(s), you must make your request to the instructor preferably within the first two weeks of class.

Special Needs: Dr. Willison has received specialized training in AODA (the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Training Act). As there may be a need to provide information in accessible formats to persons with disabilities, students with special needs who require accommodations should speak with their Instructor privately at the very start of the course. Appropriate documentation must be provided to Student Services. If needed, refer to <http://policies.lakeheadu.ca/> for further information.

Course Concerns? Students are encouraged to speak with their Instructor should there be a problem or concern regarding the course which you feel needs to be raised.

Emergency? Know the Number to Call

Lakehead Security reminds everyone to **call 3911** (Orillia) if you require emergency service. Paramedics, firefighters and police officers do not always know where to find certain buildings or locations on our campuses. By calling 3911 (Orillia), Lakehead Security will quickly dispatch a security guard to your location and contact 911 services. Lakehead Security will then meet and escort emergency services to your location to save valuable time.