Course Code / Title: HS3001 Contemporary Social Theory

Pre-requisites:
- HS1001 Person and Society
- HS2001 Classical Social Theory
- HS2002 Doing Social Research

No. of AUs.: 3 AUs

Contact Hours: 39

Course Aims

This course is designed to provide an overview of theoretical perspectives derived from sociology, anthropology, science and technology studies and political theory to help students interrogate the human and non-human condition in contemporary times. After taking this course, students should be able to reflect on—and ask better questions about—the workings of power, knowledge and resistance in the broader world and in their own lives.

The course is organized into two broad themes. Part I, “Producing Hegemony” interrogates how contemporary theorists have theorized the workings of power, knowledge and violence in the state and the how the status quo comes into being. As such, this module is also an exploration of the unevenness of modernity. Part II, “Contesting Deviance and Dualities” surveys how scholars have theorized power and society from the position of so-called deviant identities, being a woman, Black, queer, disabled, colonized or animal, and investigates how various groups have resisted processes and institutions of hegemony. In doing so, this thematic section also implicitly examines how binaries in classical social theory, black/white, man/woman, nature/culture, human/nonhuman, mind/body have been troubled and subverted by contemporary social theorists.

The pedagogical philosophy behind this course is refrain, “the personal is political” whereby one recognizes how problems that seem to be isolated and individual are actually systemic and social. Thus, while we will be trafficking in writings about the powers of the state, corporate entities, social movements, we will also be reflecting on our own “positionality” in society—that is, how we as citizens, subjects and consumers are hailed into being with particular privileges and disadvantages in society. Yet, far from being merely focused on the workings of systemic structures, we will also interrogate the construction of the personal, the self, and our own realities to show the fluid qualities of the structures and societal “givens” we take for granted.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Recognize and describe different theories of society from a diverse group of contemporary thinkers about how power circulates and stabilizes.
2. Recognize and describe different theories of society from a diverse group of contemporary thinkers about how power is destabilized and contested.
3. Engage with and apply critical social theory to reflect on the natures of power and inequality in their contemporary world.
4. Trace the connections and disjunctures between personal, everyday experience and broader, structural phenomenon

Course Content

Week 1: Introduction to class (LO 1)
Lecture: The stakes of this course. Why social theory?

Week 2: Science and (Post)Modernity (LO 1, 2, 3)

Week 3: Culture, Knowledge and State Power (LO 1,3)

Week 4: Coproducing Knowledge, Technology and Society(LO 1, 2, 3, 4)
(Read Chapter 2: “An Anthropologist Visits the Laboratory”)
(Read Chapter 1: “The Power of Technology.”)

**Week 5: Governmentality, Subjectivity and Nature (LO 1, 2, 3, 4)**


**Week 6: Globalization, Neoliberalism and the Individual (LO 1, 2, 3, 4)**


**PART II: CONTESTING DEVIANCE and DUALITIES**

**Week 7: Theorizing postcoloniality through the instability of texts (LO 1, 2, 3, 4)**


**Week 8: Theorizing categorical stabilities through the Black-White binary (LO 1, 2, 3, 4)**

Frantz Fanon, The lived experience of the Black Man.


Mbembe, Achille. Necropolitics

Watch at home: Black Power Mixtape (1967-1975)

**Week 9: Theorizing race (LO 1, 2, 3, 4)**


Guest speakers to be announced

**Week 10: Theorizing categorical instabilities through the man/woman binary (LO 1, 2, 3, 4)**

Donna Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs and Women (London: Routledge, 1991), (Read Ch. 9 “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective”)

Judith Butler (1990) *Gender Troubles*. (Routledge, Chapman & Hall: New York) (Read Chapter 1)


**Week 11: Theorizing Affect and Assemblages through debility and the abled/disabled binary (LO 1, 2, 3, 4)**

Deleuze, Gilles. “Postscript on the Societies of Control.”


**Week 12 : Theorizing decolonization through the human/animal binary (LO 1, 2, 3, 4)**

Parrenas, Juno (2018). “Introduction” *Decolonizing Extinction* 


**Week 13: Revision**

**Course Assessment**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CA1</th>
<th>Reading and participation</th>
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<tr>
<td>CA2</td>
<td>Weekly blog posts about reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA3</td>
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<td>Final Examination</td>
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**Total** 100%