

## **Selected Topics in Social Theory**

Sociology and Anthropology 850

Section: G100

Term: 2010 Spring

Instructor: Dr. Robert Menzies

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Discussion Topics: This course will be held in the evening at Burnaby Campus.

This advanced seminar will take an intensive look at some of the dominant writings, personalities, paradigms, historical developments, and trajectories of thought to have shaped social (and, by inclusion, sociological) theory from mid-twentieth century to the present. We will engage with a selective repertoire of texts (and extracts there from) which capture crucial theoretical moments, discursive ruptures, and points of transition for the sociological project through the past two generations. We will expressly adopt a history of ideas perspective, drawing on the works of such innovators as Mills, Goffman, hooks, Smith, Hill Collins, Eagleton, Hacking, Foucault, Bourdieu, Butler, Fraser, Harvey, Douglas, Beck and Rose to contemplate enduring questions about the social condition of humanity in our (late)(hyper)(post)modern world.

By necessity and design, this itinerary through the contributions of contemporary social theorists will be at best partial, skewed, peripatetic, and yes, idiosyncratic. That said, a concentration on select authors and theoretical currents will allow us to ponder in depth some key questions that continue to fuel the sociological imagination in this current millennium namely, about the making (and unmaking?) of modernity; the interplay between the State and civil society; the constitution of the self and the social; the operations and effects of power, ideology, culture and language; the governance of the citizenry through the conduct of conduct; the hierarchical and exclusionary organization of everyday life through class, gender, race, sexuality, generation, (dis)ability and mentality; the prospects for resistance, social movement and transcendence; and onward.

In addition to active involvement in weekly class dialogue, participants will be expected to serve as facilitators for two separate half-seminars through the term; to write four reflective memos on selected course texts; and to compose a 4000-word essay on a topic in contemporary social theory to be developed in consultation with the instructor.

Grading: General Seminar Participation\09\09\0920%

Seminar Facilitation Exercises (2 x 10% each)\0920%

Review Memos (500 words) (4 x 5% each)\0920%

Term Essay (4000 words)\09\09\09\0940%

All the assignments in this course must be completed for a final grade to be assigned. The Department of Sociology and Anthropology follows SFU policy in relation to grading practices, grade appeals (Policy T 20.01) and academic dishonesty and misconduct procedures (Policy T 10.03). It is the responsibility of students to inform themselves of the content of these policies (available on the SFU website under Administration, SFU Policies & Procedures).

Materials/supplies: None

Required Texts: The following books will be available for sale in the SFU Bookstore:

C. Wright Mills. *The Sociological Imagination* (40th Anniversary edition). New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Dorothy Smith. *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Power*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990.

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Terry Eagleton. *Ideology: An Introduction* (2nd edition). London: Verso, 2007.  
bell hooks. *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End Press, 1990.  
Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1: *The Will to Knowledge* (Penguin edition). London: Penguin, 1998.  
Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller. *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life*. Cambridge: Polity, 2008.

Additional books will be placed on reserve, and/or will be available in electronic form via the SFU Library. Other materials will get distributed in seminar.

Recommended Texts: An inventory of recommended texts will be included in the course syllabus, to be distributed in the first week of January.

Materials/Supplies: None

Prerequisite/Corequisite: For SA 850: SA 849 or permission of the instructor.  
For SA 450: Minimum of 72 units including SA 350, a GPA of at least 3.25 and consent of the instructor

Notes: All students are expected to read and understand SFUs policies with regard to academic dishonesty (T 10.02 and T 10.03). These policies are available at the following web addresses: <http://www.sfu.ca/policies/teaching/t10-02.htm> and <http://www.sfu.ca/policies/teaching/t10-03.htm>

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