**DEREE COLLEGE SYLLABUS FOR:**

**SO 4461 CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY**  
(Updated Spring 2015)

**– UK LEVEL: 6**  
**UK CREDITS: 15**  
**US CREDITS: 3/0/3**

**PREREQUISITES:**  
SO 1000 LE Introduction to Sociology  
SO 3260 Classical Sociological Theory  
Two additional courses in Sociology

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**  

**RATIONALE:**  
As a continuation of SO 3260 Classical Sociological Theory, this course covers all theoretical trends in sociology since the 1920s. It seeks to familiarize sociology students with the various schools of thought, a knowledge of which is an indispensable resource for grasping the development of concepts in sociology. Offering a wide theoretical background, the course should attract majors from the other social sciences and humanities, particularly from economics, history and philosophy. Since theories are interwoven with social change, an important dimension that emerges is the need to reconstruct sociology’s theoretical categories in order to achieve greater adequacy in explanation.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**  
As a result of taking this course, student should be able to:

1. Identify the role of the classical founders in contemporary developments in sociological theory.

2. Demonstrate detailed knowledge of the main theoretical schools of thought in sociology, from Parsons’ attempt at a general theory of society to current debates.

3. Identify and critically evaluate meta-theoretical problems, which still shape sociological theory, like the “action-structure” dualism.

4. Interpret advanced texts in contemporary sociological theory.

5. Discuss current theoretical and epistemological debates like ‘public sociology’ to the legacy of contemporary sociological theory.

**METHOD OF TEACHING AND LEARNING:**  
In congruence with the teaching and learning strategy of the college, the following tools are used:

- Classes consist of lectures, discussions of selected issues,
showing of video documentaries and in-class illustrations of various issues.

- Office hours: students are encouraged to make full use of the office hours of their lecturer, where they can address issues and ask questions pertinent to the course material.
- Use of a blackboard site, where instructors post lecture notes, assignment instructions, timely announcements, as well as additional resources.

### ASSESSMENT:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summative:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term examination (1-hour) - summative</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay (3,500 words) - summative</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formative:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpretive in class exercises on selected texts – formative</td>
<td>0</td>
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The formative assignments test Learning outcomes 2, 3, with emphasis on 4, plus writing skills.

The mid-term examination tests Learning outcomes 2, 5, with emphasis on 3 and 4, and writing skills.

The term paper tests Learning outcomes 1,2,3 and 4

### INDICATIVE READING:

**Required material:**

**On Reserve Status in the JSB Library (required):**
(chapters will be assigned by the lecturer in order to complement the main source with a view to sharpen interpretive skills on primary sources)

Recommended Material:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS:</th>
<th>Word</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WWW RESOURCES:</td>
<td>Useful specialized journals include:</td>
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|                        | *Sociological Theory*  
|                        | *European Journal of Social Theory*  
|                        | [http://www.est.sagepub.com](http://www.est.sagepub.com)  
|                        | *Journal of Classical Sociology*  
|                        | [http://www.jcs.sagepub.com](http://www.jcs.sagepub.com)  
| INDICATIVE CONTENT:    | 1. What is theory?  
|                        | 2. The classical attempt at synthesis: Talcott Parsons  
|                        | - Parsons on the road to normativist functionalism  
|                        | - Parsons and the elaboration of normativist functionalism  
|                        | 3. Interpretive approaches (1): symbolic interactionism  
|                        | 4. Interpretive approaches (2): ethnomethodology  
|                        | 5. Conflict sociology and conflict theory  
|                        | 6. Habermas and critical theory  
|                        | - Habermas’ ‘theory of communicative action’  
|                        | 7. Niklas Luhmann’s radicalization of functionalism  
|                        | 8. Anthony Giddens’ theory of structuration and the new British sociology of power  
|                        | 9. Structuralism and poststructuralism  
|                        | 10. Between structuralism and theory of practice: The cultural sociology of Pierre Bourdieu  
|                        | 11. Feminist social theories  
|                        | 13. Neo-pragmatism  
|                        | 14. On ‘public sociology’ and its critics  
|                        | 15. How things stand  
|                        | *adapted from the chapter outline of Joas, H. and Knöbl, W., Social Theory: Twenty Introductory Lectures, Cambridge: Cambridge, 2009.*