# Social Theories (And Education In A Global Context):

**ADMPS 3006 – 1010 (26416):**

# Fall 2020

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Online: September 12

October 03

November 07

December 05

Class time: 1:15 to 5:15

# OFFICE HOURS: Mondays and Wednesdays 3-4:30 by appointment, other times by appointment

# What can this course do for you – A life beyond a generic “permanent present”

One of SCAE’s strengths, is learning how to manage multiple, often conflicted perspectives, an essential skill in a globalizing world. These perspectives are not only needed for relationships with others in today’s world, but also affect both the different perspectives we have inherited from the past and the legacies we are passing on to the future. Social theories in education are fundamentally about meaning. How do people construct meaning in the world so that it makes sense to them? How do we negotiate the contested meanings that inevitably arise?

Ultimately, this course is about you, situating yourself in an increasingly global context, driven by technology and culture, a more interdependent economy, and seen by many different actors from many different points of view. As a consequence, this course will encourage you to explore the costs and consequences of these multi-layered, often conflicting points of view on your past, current and future life.

Most importantly, it can help you develop a professional “stance.” This means you will be better able to articulate your positions, relative to things such as policy formation, implementation and evaluation. This means identifying the social theories that underlie your position, questioning them and addressing the contradictions in your thinking that you might discover. Why is this important? Can you “hear” and “speak” respectfully, if appropriate, with someone with very different views?

Policy is not only a technical position. It can also be a question of values. What do you do when you need to work with others who may share your basic values, but interpret them in different ways? And what if they don’t share your values at all, and are in charge? This course won’t tell you *what* to think. Only you can do that. This course shows you how others have thought, and what they have learned, both recently and in the past.

# Course Assumptions

* The past is not necessarily a good predictor of the future.
* Asking good questions respectfully is an essential skill.
* It is important to question everything...respectfully, unless provoked otherwise.
* Education is often contested, so understanding multiple points of view is critical.
* It is important to challenge generic thinking.
* “One right way” thinking can quickly become problematic. It may work for teachable technical skills, but not for values-embedded education. They are not the same. Especially in politics.
* Education is an inter-disciplinary subject that reaches across the arts and sciences, as well as the professional schools.
* Framing and mapping can help you address “wicked” problems. Even “super-wicked” ones.
* Globalization, demographics and technology are increasingly disruptive forces in both the US and globally, because they can strongly influence revenue generation. The “who should pay for what” question is under the radar in much of the US media.
* Private, public and nonprofit education is funded through political means. Following the money” sometimes can be a good idea.
* The future is both volatile and uncertain and that is both a problem and an opportunity.
* Peer learning can help us think about complicated issues, in part because of “the wisdom of the crowds.”
* Today’s pedagogy needs to reward both structure and agency. How is this playing out in today’s reforms?
* Videos are an increasingly useful source for course texts.

# Assignments

The purpose of the assignments is to first help you discover and then better describe your current thinking. Second, is to help you better describe the thinking of others, especially the thinking of those with whom you disagree. Third, is to help you better communicate your thinking both to those with whom you agree, as well as to those with whom you disagree.

Finally, you then can advocate for what you think is important to a broader audience, drawing first on the strengths of your own positions, and then keeping in view how others may argue differently.

**DEADLINES? Final finals?**

* **Stories 12/01**
* **Summaries 12/01**
* **Book report 12/01**

***Try to post on Canvas 2 professional stories and 2 summaries monthly (September, October, November). Be smart and clear the deck before Thanksgiving, so you have time for assignments in your other course.***

**5 Institution-based Professional Stories (where possible): Up to 600 words (50%)**

**The purpose of these is to integrate what you are learning in the course with your recent and past professional experience, if possible.**

1. Success with others at work (if possible) because you were able to untangle meaning.
2. Personal success because you became more aware of how you were thinking, and how that affected others at work (if possible).
3. Demonstrated resilience by overcoming challenges through more flexible thinking.
4. Demonstrated frugality through more flexible thinking.
5. Used comparative/flexible thinking to craft a creative solution.
6. Negotiated an agreement where others couldn’t.
7. **Summaries of what you learned (or didn’t) from the readings and why, and course participation. (Up to 300 words) . (30%)**

**1 Book Review (Up to 800 words) (20%)**

* Book (related to the course) of your choosing, Includes summary, analysis and recommendations.
* Basics- What are key points and why do you think so?
  + What conclusions did the author(s) want you to take with you?
  + What arguments did they make?
  + What evidence did they present?
  + Do you agree with the authors? Why or why not?
* What, if anything, could the authors have done to strengthen their arguments?
* What has simply been left out and why is that important?

If you have already read one or more of these books, or have a book you would strongly prefer, you would prefer, make a suggestion

***Required*** ***books- only a small part of the course materials, as others are online in Canvas*** (– you can share, pick up used copies, rent, whatever, as long as you can have access):

***September - Framing and Mapping***

1. Jacobs, A.J. (2018). *Thanks a thousand: A gratitude journey*. TED Books. Simon & Schuster. (demonstrates issues of interdependence in trade – education and the economy)
2. Lakoff, G. (2014). *Don’t think of an elephant: Know your values and frame the debate: 10th Anniversary Edition.* Chelsea Green.

***October – Complexities***

1. Lakoff cont’d?
2. Noah, T. (2019). *Born a crime: Stories from a South African childhood*. (example of comparative experience of education). Spiegel & Grau.

***November – Speaking out***

1. Kling, A. (2019). *The three languages of politics: Talking across the political divides* (3rd ed.). Libertarianism.org Press.

***December – Strong Finish***

You are encouraged to consider and challenge these assumptions as you build your stance. Their discussions can also be a regular part of this course.

* **The Grand Questions** 
  + What are the wrong questions?
  + Is education a human right? Civil right? Why?
  + How is education local? National? Global? Education for what?
  + What are the generational responsibilities of education?
  + Education for whom?
  + Who owns education? Why?
  + What are the costs and consequences of education?
  + Who pays for education? How?
  + Who are you going to take it away from to pay for it?
  + Who decides what is taught?
  + Who decides what is merit?
  + What are the roles of technologies?
  + How should we measure the consequences of education?

***Chart 1. (WEIDMAN)***

***Classical Social Theories:*** A solid, albeit brief introduction to a very complicated topic.

Contrasting Assumptions Underlying the Structural-Functional, Marxist-Conflict, and Interpretivist Theories of Society \*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Theories/Society*** | ***Structural-Functional*** | ***Marxist-Conflict*** | ***Interpretivist*** |
| Nature of Society | Stable (Equilibrium) | Changing (Conflict) | Fluid |
| Nature of Elements in Society | Integrative | Disintegrative (Dialectical Basis) | Contingent (Meanings Made by Individuals) |
| Function of Elements in Society | System Maintenance | System Modification | System Enhancement |
| Basis of Social Structure | Consensus (Values/ Norms) | Coercion | Shared Patterns of Meaning |
| Type of Change | Evolutionary (Incremental) | Revolutionary | Negotiated |

**Sources:** Dahrendorf, Ralf. (1959). *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press (pp. 161-162).

Feinberg, Walter & Soltis, Jonas F. (1992). *School and Society*. 2nd Edition. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

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