Syllabus

Course Number: FORE 6331

Course Title: Social Change

Semester: Fall 2017

Course Time/Location:

>   **Face-to-face:**   Cameron 229, Wednesday 5:30-8:30 pm US Central Time

>   **Online:**   http://uh.adobeconnect.com/socialchange

>   **Recording:**   Click on date in the Recordings discussion group

Website: https://elearning.uh.edu

Instructor: Dr Cindy Frewen

Contact information:

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>   **Skype:**   cfrewen

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>   **Appointments:** By request, at least one scheduled meeting during semester

Prerequisites: None

Overview

This course reviews classical and contemporary theories of social change—why and how organizations and societies change over time.

Objectives

The objectives of the course are:
- Learn how different thinkers have explained the phenomenon of social change over time
- Understand the assumptions that each explanation requires
- Reflect on one's own explanation(s) of social change
- Be able to explain social change using the different theories reviewed
- Apply the appropriate explanations to historical and contemporary social change
- Create alternative scenarios for contemporary social changes using different explanations and their associated assumptions

Required Texts

This course is about reading, discussing, analyzing, and writing. It is a typical graduate seminar in which students prepare readings before class, discuss them in class or online, and write up their best ideas in a clear and well-supported manner.

The required text for this course is Trevor Noble (2000), *Social Theory and Social Change*, New York: St Martin's Press. This text covers many of the theories in the course in a clear and

consistent manner. We will read more than three-quarters of this book over the course of the semester.

The other readings are articles taken from classical and contemporary sources. They include theoretical pieces as well as descriptions of actual social changes. Some of these are original texts so they can be challenging to read. Still, reading what a noted author actually said is important.

This course is about ideas, assumptions, and explanations about social change. We read for the overall point of each piece, not for the details. We read to be able to explain that overall point, its support and its implications. Most of all, we read for insight —
- What am I learning that I did not know before?
- What ideas or responses do I have about what this author is saying?
- What contribution (in the form of an observation or a question) can I make the discussion about this theory?

So the reading is to stimulate our thoughts, and the thoughts are a prelude to communication-- first in discussion and eventually in written form.

Framework

The foundation of the course is built around three documents (provided in zip file):

- The **course generalizations**, basically what this course is about.

- The **outcomes** of the course, basically class discussion (in class and online), an initial essay, four short papers and one final paper.

- The **levels of outcomes**, how well you demonstrate the ability to understand and analyze theories and examples of social change in those papers.

Your first step is to study these documents, ask any questions you wish, and then get into the introductory activities.

The first content section is a consideration of the ways in which theories differ, basically the assumptions that writer make about fundamental reality—the material world, human nature, society, etc.

The rest of the course is divided into sections (weeks), each of which begins with an introductory paper and a set of readings. The readings are chosen to explain and illustrate the theory covered in that section. Everyone reads some of the readings, usually from the text; others are read by just a few based on a random allocation.

We discuss each reading, using the following general questions:
1. What is the main point(s) of the reading/theory?

2. What evidence or examples are supplied or are otherwise available to illustrate that the theory is valid?

3. How does that theory appear in historical, contemporary or potential future social changes in addition to the evidence presented in the reading(s)?

4. What part of the reading/theory does not make sense or might even be wrong? And why?

5. What does this reading/theory assume about people or society that distinguishes it from

other theories?

Your objective is not to memorize the details in these readings. Rather you should focus on the main point (the theory), the examples, the issues and the assumptions that the theory suggests. Most of all, and more so as the course goes on, use the reading to stimulate your own ideas, theories and examples of social change and compare them with the author's and with each other's.

The course therefore is about understanding and developing theories of social change and applying those theories to actual changes going on today. We study what others have written or said about social change, not as an end in itself, but as a means to create and use our explanations of social change. You demonstrate your ability to understand, develop and apply these theories by participating in class discussion and on the discussion boards (i.e., by offering valuable insight and information to your classmates) and by writing papers. Essentially, this course requires thinking, analyzing, and reflecting about types of change and their consequences.

Schedule

Week 1: Orientation, theory (Aug 22)
- Become familiar with course objectives, expectations, and procedures
- Become familiar with the learning platform (Canvas and Adobe Connect)
- Discuss critical thinking and appreciative inquiry
- Introduce yourself to your classmates, in class and on line (post by 1st class if possible or by next class)
- Read critical thinking and Vanston 5 Views

Week 2: What is Social Change? (Aug 29)
- Introduction to different theories of social change, with an overview of Noble
- Review your first ideas of social change
- Submission: Your definitions of what is and is not social change.
- Read Noble preface and introduction

Week 3: Progress & Development (Sept 5)
- Progress/Decline: That social change is generally an improvement of the human condition; or alternatively, that societies have descended from a better period to today.
- Development: That social change moves in a definite direction, but that the direction is neutral—not necessarily any better or any worse than the past, just different.
- Submission: Some will have reading summaries to post, and all will have a short essay of your initial view of social change.
- Read Noble Ch 3, plus other articles which will be distributed for summaries.

Week 4 & 5: Tech I and II, Materialism (Sep 12, 19)
- That we are fundamentally material beings so that our interaction with the material world is the source of social change
- That technology mediates our relationship with the material world and is therefore the fundamental source of social change
- Reference Course Map and zip file on Canvas for submissions and readings

Week 6 & 7: Ideas I & II, Idealism, Culture (Sep 26, Oct 3)
- That we are essentially cultural beings so that our interaction with each other is the source of social change
- That culture, including the ideas it contains, mediates our relationship with each other and is therefore the fundamental source of social change

Week 8: Cycles (Oct 10)
- That change does not progress in any specific direction
- Rather that it exhibits the life-cycle characteristics of birth, growth, maturity, and death

Week 9: Conflict (Oct 17)
- That society is not a unity, but rather a collection of individuals and groups each pursuing their own interests
- Therefore, that change arises from the conflicts among these groups

Week 10: Markets (Oct 24)
- That producing and consuming what we need to survive and thrive are the fundamental human activities that occupy most of our time and energy in life
- Therefore, that trade, markets and commercial relationships are the fundamental source of social change

Week 11: Power (Oct 31)
- That the macro forces of change in society are actually controlled by small groups of powerful individuals

Week 12: Evolution (Nov 7)
- That change occurs because the environment selects among the variations presented to it by a species, a group or by society as a whole

Week 13: Complexity, Chaos, Criticality (Nov 14)
- That change occurs from the patterns that emerge as the result of the interaction of multiple agents in a complex system

Week 14: Ideas III: TransModern, Post-Structural (Nov 21)
- That change occurs at the edge, not the core, and is different for each person and condition, with limits constantly changing
- Therefore, change emerges through novelty and uncertainty

Week 15: Semester Overview (Nov 28).

Week 16: Final Portfolios Due (Dec 5) Confirm possible class.

Approach

Each section contains a number of activities designed to help us understand the theory and its application.

1. Each week begins with reading the introduction which places the readings in context and contains many of the main points of that theory and how the readings illustrate those points.

2. The second activity is to read the required readings, as noted within the readings. You should answer the five questions about each of the authors in the required reading in order to be able discuss then in class; some students will post their summaries.

3. One or more people are then assigned to some of the other readings at random. They are responsible for leading a discussion about one of those readings, either in class or online. The discussion leaders answer the five general questions (posted above) about their first reading and substantive responses to their second and third readings while others post responses and additional material about the reading and/or about the

discussion leaders summaries.

Postings, in all cases, should be substantive--that is, they should add materially to the discussion. So think about how you can further the discussion with each of your postings. Good responses and questions clearly reference the pertinent portion of the reading (by quoting the text, if possible). They genuinely add interesting points or seek clarification for points that you do not understand, questioning others with respect and without taking a point too harshly. To express disagreement with another person's contribution or with an author's concepts, begin with what you agree with and recognize that the other person may have contributed something of value or even that she or he is actually right according to their frame or mental map. Different perspectives are encouraged; provide adequate support for your argument and read/listen openly and respectfully to others in order to find the underlying assumptions that form different opinions.

4. Finally, find some article from a current publication or from the Internet that illustrates the theory. Be looking for those throughout the semester. People are explaining social change in the media and the blogosphere all the time. Post the reference to the article under the URL and provide a short annotation about what the article is about and how it illustrates this theory.

You are additionally asked to write three short section papers, as described in the Outcomes, in order to demonstrate your ability to develop and communicate your own ideas about social change and to apply those ideas to real social changes. The three papers overall (the initial essay, one theory paper and one application paper) act as practice for the term paper. The deadlines for the first drafts of the short papers, plus debates and business presentations are:

Section Papers	**Due dates**
Initial essay	September 5
Theory paper	September 19
Application paper	October 10
Debates	October 23, 31
Biz presos	November 7, 14

One term paper finishes off the semester. You have two options. You may write your own theory of social change, integrating what you have learned in the course from the various sections. OR you may write a major application paper in which you explain a contemporary social change using at least *two different theories* to show how the same change can be understood and explained from different perspectives. You should also contrast the two theories by showing how the theories differ on the critical assumptions each one makes and by forecasting the alternative futures that would result if that theory and its assumptions were true. The deadlines for the first draft of the term paper is:

Term paper proposal or sentence outline	October 31
Draft term paper + draft portfolio	November 21
Final portfolio	December 5

So in the end, there are activities for each reading (reading, response), for each section (post a URL) and for the course as a whole (section papers, debate, presentation, final term paper).

Grading

Your grade for the course will be determined at the end of the course based on the quality of your work, timeliness of your submissions, and engagement with your peers, the instructor and the material. The instructor will send you feedback on your participation in the course (postings and papers). The feedback will be based on how well you meet three primary criteria:

- Understanding the material in the readings

- Extending the material with your own evidence, applications and critiques

- Developing your own original ideas about social change

Your final grade is the average of the section papers, each of the term paper (weighted equal to two section papers), and the quality of the postings (weighted equal to two section papers). That average will be weighted by the percent of activities and assignments that you submitted on time and your contributions to the course environment. Each assignment submitted late receives a 10% deduction for each week late, prorated for each day.

You submit your final work in a portfolio that includes:

- Seven postings that you believe represent your best work. The set must include at least one reading synopsis, one Internet example and one substantive responses.

- The three section papers (Everybody gets an A for the initial essay)

- Recap and reflections of Debate and Presentation including slide decks

- Final term paper

- An optional essay describing what you learned this semester, using the portfolio as evidence of your learning. (The essay receives an automatic A, as one section paper.)

Submit the final portfolio by midnight, Thu, Dec 5.

No specific grades will be given with the feedback during the course so we can concentrate on the substantive issues involved. Papers may be re-written, however, in order to incorporate the feedback received. If you resubmit a paper, indicate in a short paragraph or embedded comments what you changed since the last submission. You can be sure of a good grade when the instructor sees all the required elements in your work and has no additional feedback to offer.

This course involves a lot of writing so it would be a good idea to review the Grammar Rules. You can get help with your writing from the Writing Center at the university. They are very helpful people. Use them if you have any doubts about your ability to express yourself in writing.

You might also review some excellent papers turned in during previous semesters, which I'll post on the course website. Yours should not be like them; none are perfect. Therefore, follow them only generally, looking for how they 1) had a main point, 2) used readings (from here and elsewhere) along with their own experience to explain and support that point, and 3) drew a conclusion that was interesting. Also remember that these are some of the best over a number of years. Others have done well and been quite satisfied with this course without making this list. So work towards these; don't compare yourself with them right away. Learning takes time and practice!

Interaction

The key to any successful learning experience is interaction. Knowledge may be learned passively, but even that is debatable. Learners of all ages, and particularly adults, need to

engage with the material to truly understand it. Even then the understanding one gets in school is only the beginning of a life-long understanding if one continues learning, as one should, after the course or the degree is finished.

What is true for acquiring information is even truer for learning skills. No one ever learned to play golf, drive a car, raise a child or become a skillful futurist just by reading books or listening to lectures. The active learner begins there, with helpful instruction, but immediately moves into an interactive mode. She picks up the club, gets behind the wheel, changes the diaper or starts developing futures products to really learn what that skill is all about. An environment of supportive and helpful feedback then helps the learner advance both his knowledge and skill of that particular method or technique. That is the ideal for this class, and indeed it ought to be the ideal for every class. Learning requires interaction.

Interaction is difficult in today's learning environment on two counts. Even for those who can attend class, the default mode is still listening to lectures and taking notes. It is the instructor's intent to create a classroom environment that encourages interaction, discussion, practice and engagement with the material. But interaction is a two-way street. Learners must come to class prepared to engage in interaction as well. And the instructor needs to shut up long enough for discussion to begin!

The problem is made that much more difficult in the emerging online environment where learners are not able to attend class. It is quite a challenge, therefore, to create an interactive environment where most of the interaction takes place on a website and requires everyone to work together to create a lively exchange.

The paper submissions, discussion boards and email in this course, therefore, are the most important tool for interaction. The readings and the activities contain the material over which to interact. Interaction consists therefore of posting activities on time, responding to others' activities in a substantive manner, responding to and using the instructor's comments as opportunities for dialogue and improvement, and posting related material to the Learning Company so we can all benefit from what others have found. Interaction is measured in this course, and it counts in the final grade; but true interaction and engagement with the material cannot be dictated nor measured. So let's get to it.

Check the online discussions frequently, contribute when you are compelled and have time; more interaction increases learning for everyone. And a good practice is to read the instructor's feedback to all the postings, not just your own. A lot of teaching goes on there, and not just for the one who posted the original message.

A final and important piece of interaction is between the instructor and the learner. There is belief that learners must work independently from the very beginning. That is the ultimate objective, but not the immediate objective. Collaboration among learners and between learners and the instructor is essential at the beginning of the learning process. Sharing draft products with others is encouraged as long as the final product is uniquely developed and submitted by the learner.

Much of that interaction will take place online, but some will not. In that spirit, the instructor is always available via email, and when immediate help is needed or a more complex question arises, call or text to 913-961-1702 or arrange to Skype the instructor at cfrewen. The best time to make a comment or ask a question is when you think of it – so jump on email or text right away.

We also develop a roster of telephone numbers and email addresses for students. The instructor needs those numbers and addressed to be able to contact students out of class. Please indicate if you would prefer that your number or email address not be listed.

Social Change is a course with a great deal of interaction. My goal is that we have just as much and perhaps even more interaction online as we do during the class period and that perhaps that

interaction is even deeper and more substantive because we can read, consider and respond with more forethought than a face-to-face discussion allows.

Other policies

Academic honesty policy All UH students are responsible for knowing the standards of academic honesty. Please refer to the UH catalog. Plagiarism, using research without citations or using a created production (such as other people's words) without quotations or citations, will result in a grade penalty or failure of the course. Internet sources must be credited according to the sites recommended citation guideline if available. If no citation guideline is provided by the web source, then the date, URL site owner, and author must be included with the web material used.

Disabilities: If you have a disability and need a special accommodation consult first with the Center for Students with Disabilities, telephone (713) 743-5400, and then discuss the accommodation with me.

Incompletes: A grade of "I" is given only in cases of documented emergency or special circumstances late in the semester, provided that the student has been making satisfactory progress. An Incomplete Grade Contract must be completed.

Withdrawals: Refer to University of Houston schedule at www.uh.edu to determine dates to withdraw without evaluation from a course. Last day to withdraw or drop without a grade penalty (you will receive a 'W') for **Fall 2017** is **October 31 (confirm with UH Calendar).**