OVERVIEW

This is a course in the socio-historical dynamics of societies and how such societies evolve and change. We consider the internal cultural and structural dynamics of a large range of societies including Western and Eastern societies, societies in the developed core and those in the less developed periphery, those of ancient times, of post-Renaissance history and of the present day. We address the differential cultures of these societies by addressing the common sociological forces that lead to cultural differentiation and the production of institutions and ideologies that are different from our own. We also address the social problems that faced by these societies and the forces that lead to either the successful overcoming of these obstacles or the society’s dissolution and defeat. We consider such problems as poverty, corruption, crime, ethnic warfare and ecological crisis. We address how new ideas and cultures are created, how institutions of social adaption are created and how they fail, and the forces leading to unity and division in issues requiring global cooperation. Over 85% of the course material involves a detailed consideration of the history, sociology and distinctive institutions of nations other than the United States.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Learn the causes of social change and the determinants of the features of societies and world systems.

2. Learn to use historical and cross cultural materials to understand contemporary American phenomena.

3. Understand the distinctive properties of societies and cultures in regions and other historical periods other than our own – and appreciate how these are similar to or different from those of the contemporary United States.

4. Critically assess claims about what types of social institutions or social policies promote improvements in societal well-being.

5. Explain macrosociological and macrohistorical processes clearly, without confusion, using correct sociological terminology and historically accurate descriptions of social conditions.

6. Correctly interpret social indicators and other quantitative measures of social well-being.

7. Demonstrate social responsibility by identifying significant social problems and demonstrating some familiarity with their causes and remedies.

GRADING AND EVALUATION

Grades are based on four exams. These involve a mix of multiple choice items and essays.

On any five multiple choice questions per exam, students can write an explanation of their answer. They get credit for the question if either they choose the right answer, or their explanation is reasonable.

The exams are Tuesday February 5, Tuesday March 5, Tuesday April 9, and Wednesday May 8. The May 8 final exam is at 1 PM.

Each exam counts as 25% of the grade.

READINGS

Most of the readings for the course can be found in the electronic course reserve section of the library. There will be a special section of the course reserves webpage with the material for this class.
There are also a number of books which students are expected to purchase. You can purchase these on the internet just as well as a bookstore can—so get on line and buy up what you need.

Here are the books that you will need.


AGGIE HONOR STATEMENT

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do."

Upon accepting admission to Texas A&M University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor System. Students will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the TAMU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor System.

For additional information please visit: www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor

ADA STATEMENT

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, in Cain Hall, Room B118, or call 845-1637. For additional information visit http://disability.tamu.edu.
Week 1:

Class A: Administrative Introduction to Class & Short Lecture on the Life Span of Civilizations

Class B: The Determinants and Limits of Secularization

The reading is a preparation for next week rather than a coverage of Week 1 material.


Week 2:

Class A: Social Network Models of Ideological Change

Class B: Organizational Models of Religious Change


   Read the rest of the book.


Selections to be announced.

Week 4: World Systems Theory

Class A: EXAM

Class B: The Historical Interrelation Between the Core and Periphery of World Systems


Chapter 3. Pp. 44-52 ONLY.


Week 5: Underdevelopment and Recovery

Class A: Classical Underdevelopment Theory: How Eastern Europe, Indonesia and the Middle East Became Poor

Class B: The Secrets of Successful Late Economic Developers


Chapters 2-5. Pp. 40-121.

This is one of the most left-wing readings you will get in the course. Actually, the author is a Korean economist at Cambridge University in England ... and in South Korea, these positions are enthusiastically endorsed by the business community. “Left” and “Right” don’t always mean the same thing in other cultures as they do in the United States. That said, many Texas students will find Chang’s arguments very radical. The question that has to be asked is whether his facts back him up.
Week 6: The State and Social Functioning

Class A: Big Government and Economic Growth in the United States

Class B: The State, the Rise of Science and the Historical Decline of Violent Crime


Week 7: Crime and Corruption

Class A: Sociological Determinants of Crime Rates
Class B: Sociological Determinants of Corruption


(Note: This is available through Electronic Reserve as a pdf made by the electronic librarian himself. You can also get this directly from the Economist website. If you do this, be aware. British Websites are often organized incompetently, and the site for the Economist is no exception. In particular, the article is filled with false End of Article marks, along with bogus requests if you wish to move to the next article. To get the real whole article, you have to keep flashing 'See Next Article' over and over and over again. Don't stop seeing next article until the next article stops talking about Nigeria. The pdf made for our library reserve page should be clean enough.)

Week 8: State Strength and State Weakness

CLASS A EXAM
Class B: Determinants of State Strength and State Weakness


SPRING BREAK

Week 9: Revolutions and Agrarian Uprisings

Class A: Determinants of Revolutions

Class B: Determinants of Agrarian Uprisings


Week 10: Protest

Class A: Resource Mobilization Models – Resources
Class B: Resource Mobilization Models - Mobilization


Chapter 2. Pp. 23-50 only. (Note: This is a chapter on what doesn’t work, not what does.)

Chapter 3. All. (The chapter on what does work.)

Week 11: Intensive Labor Conflict/Intensive Ethnic Conflict

Class A: Sturmthalian Crises
Class B: Materialist Models of Ethnic Conflict


Week 12: Kondratieff Cycles

CLASS A EXAM

Class B: Kondratieff Cycles


Chapter 11. Pp. 269-83 ONLY.

Week 13: Core Model of Social Decline

Class A: Theory
Class B: Applications


Week 14: Additional Sources of Potential Crisis

Class A: Ecological Crises

Class B: The Newest Challenge to Economic Growth


FINAL EXAM DURING FINAL EXAM PERIOD