

**SOCIOLOGY 251H1S – Section L0101: CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY
WINTER 2018**

Lecture: Thursdays 2-5pm, Location – Ramsay Wright rm140

Instructor: Christian Caron

E-mail: christian.caron@utoronto.ca

Phone: 416- 978-8263 (if you leave a voice mail, always follow-up with an e-mail)

Office: Dept of Sociology, Rm. 286

Office hours: By appointment

Teaching Assistants: Melissa Godbout and Yvonne Daoleuxay

E-mail: melissa.godbout@mail.utoronto.ca & y.daoleuxay@mail.utoronto.ca

Office: Dept of Sociology, Rm. 225

Office hours: By appointment

Course Description

A selective introduction to major contemporary thinkers and approaches whose ideas have achieved wide influence, as well as an on-going inquiry into the nature and role of sociological analysis.

Teaching Methods

My teaching philosophy is organized around three key principles, collaborative learning, transparency, and choice. We do not learn alone, we learn in conversation with others. We learn by listening, by asking questions, by explaining. The classroom will be organized in such a way as to foster this collaborative learning environment through an emphasis more on discussion and interactive learning than on simply delivery content. Students will also have opportunities to pursue this collaborative learning approach in more depth through certain assignments. Learning is also a process and you should receive continual feedback on your thoughts and application of the material in assignments in order to know where you are doing well, where you are falling a little short and most importantly have the opportunity to make changes and improve. Finally, you will have ample and different ways to demonstrate your knowledge and comprehension of the material since not every student excels in the same kind of assignment. The course will allow every student to build their own individualized learning plan that best suits their interests and learning style.

The course is organized in such a way that it privileges the development and deployment of various skills, namely critical reading, critical writing and effective and inquisitive discussion and their relationship with one another. Writing notes while reading, organizing and synthesizing the material and one's own thoughts, communicating this effectively to colleagues, and asking probing questions are all part of this course's teaching approach. It is essential for you to keep up with the reading and to read actively. Active reading means taking notes as you read, making a list of questions you have as you read, and ideally reading far enough ahead that you have a chance not only to read but to think about what you have read. The expectation is that you will have read each class's readings by our class meeting. The goal is to foster a community of learners who will help each other make their way through the material, topics and issues, in collaboration with one another.

Prerequisites

The prerequisite to take SOC251H1S is SOC201H. Students without the prerequisite can be removed at any time discovered, and without notice.

Communication

This course will rely heavily on Portal (<https://weblogin.utoronto.ca/>) to facilitate this community of learners. It will act as the ‘nervous system’ of this course. On the Portal page you will find this syllabus, assignments, announcements, grades and student-generated content on a series of discussion boards. You should check the Announcement tab on a regular basis as it will be the main mechanism to communicate about course related matters. Treat the Announcement tab as a series of appendices to this syllabus. While the Portal page will start relatively small, it will grow slowly in size over the course of the semester. One element present at launch is a discussion board called Questions about the Course. This discussion is to be used for all course-related questions of a non-personal nature this semester, question about the course content, activities, assignments, exams, deadlines, and in the first week of class, the best place to ask clarifications about the ILP system. This way all clarifications provided are available to every student in the course. Of course, feel free to contact me by e-mail for any questions of a more personal nature regarding illness, special accommodations, grade review or anything else you might want to discuss with me privately. All e-mails are answered within 48h unless explicitly stated otherwise.

Required Course Material

All course readings will be made available as pdf on the course Portal page

Evaluation - Individual Learning Plan

Every student has their own learning style, set of interests, and schedule. To reflect this fact, this course offers a variety of options from which students can choose to build their own individual learning plan. 50% of your final grade will come from a midterm and a final exam, but you get to choose where the other 50% will come from.

Midterm (15%) – February 15th

A 2h midterm on the content from the first half of the course held in our regular classroom at our regularly scheduled time

Final exam (35%) – in April, scheduled by the University

A 3h cumulative exam on the content of the entire course scheduled at a time and location TBD

Every student must submit their proposed learning plan (to me by e-mail) no later than Jan 18th. This will be a working document with an updated version due Feb 15th and Mar 22nd), so three versions in total. The individual learning plan must include a description of what course material the student commits to produce and how it adds up to 50%. In further updates, the student must clearly lay out what they have done so far and what remains to be done to complete their semester. Students can choose any combination from the following four type of opportunities to build their own individual learning plan as long as it adds up to 50%. *Note: You will submit your ILP as a series of four digits, for example (20-10-0-30) which represents 20% in in-class*

activities, 10% in online peer contributions, 0% on term paper and presentation and 30% in critical reflection papers. 16-0-20-24 would represent 16% in in-class activities, 0% in online peer contributions, 20% in paper and presentation, and 24% in critical reflection papers.

Option 1: In-Class Activities (2%/activity for up to 20%)

Except for the first class on Jan 11th and the first test on Feb 15th, in-class activities will take place during each lecture. They will involve collaboratively discussing, and then answering a series of questions related to the week's course material, either the readings for that week or the lecture content, or both. They make take place at the beginning, middle or near the end of lecture, but there will be 10 of these in-class activities, each worth 2%. You can select to do anywhere from none to ten of them.

Option 2: Online Peer Contributions (0.25%/contribution for up to 10%)

Up to 10% of your grade can come from making forty 'significant contributions' to the online forum for this course on Portal. Significant contributions include (1) helping other students with their questions; (2) offering clarification or additional thoughts and information on some aspect of the readings or course material; (3) submitting a link to a web site containing documents or video clips with a few sentences describing its relevance to course material; (4) linking something students saw in the mass media, a news article, or content from another course to some relevant aspect of course material; or (5) fostering or participating in discussions that highlight an issue touched upon in the readings or course material. Contributions are credited as significant if they are deemed useful to their fellow students by meeting one of these criteria. All posts, other than answering colleagues' questions, including all links to other sources, should be well annotated with no less than 150 words discussing their relevance to course material. Contributions of less than 150 words, or contributions not furthering the understanding of course material, will not be credited as significant. No more than five contributions can come from a single discussion board. Students will be updated on the status of their significant contributions on a regular basis so they can keep track of their progress.

Option 3: Paper & Presentation (20%)

The term paper and presentation are a substantive engagement with a topic raised in one of the course readings, subject to approval. The term paper and presentation is a staged semi-structured assignment, with opportunities to get feedback on the way towards a final paper. The presentation is an 8 to 10 powerpoint slides summarizing your research. The final paper needs to be 3500 words in length if worked on alone. You can also take this opportunity to work in collaboration with a colleague in which case you need to write a 4500 words paper.

Stage 1: Proposal – Feb 8th

The first stage involves a two page proposal laying out what topic you propose on writing a term paper on, the research question you plan on answering, and a tentative title for your projected paper. This stage is completed to ascertain the suitability and feasibility of your topic and its alignment with the course objectives.

Stage 2: Submission of presentation – March 15th

The second stage is the submission of your powerpoint presentation. Uploaded as a .ppt, pptx, or .pdf to Portal page. This is done both as a way for students to communicate effectively their hard work to their peers, and to receive feedback from them in order to help with the final write-up.

Stage 3: Submission of final write-up – March 29th

The final stage is the submission of the term paper. Three copies of the paper must be submitted, through Portal, Turnitin AND as a hard copy. Note: there are no late penalties per day late because assignments will not be accepted past the due date without submission of UofT's Verification of Illness form.

Each stage is mandatory. You cannot move to the next stage without completing the previous one. While these are the only mandatory stages, you are highly encouraged to communicate with your TA several times in the semester and to sit down and chat with them at various point to get further guidance and feedback on the term paper. A specific discussion board will also be set aside to ask questions, offer comments or advice, and help one another with this assignment. Further details will be discussed in the early weeks of the semester.

Option 4: Critical Reflection Papers (2%/reading for up to 40%)

A critical reflection paper is two pages (650-700 words) that analyzes your thoughts and questions about one individual reading (not all the readings assigned on a given week). These are a chance for you to think critically about the reading, the best possible preparation for lecture and tests. Your reflection paper should have four separate sections (ie paragraphs) reflections each of these in turn:

- i) One to two *reactions* – What did you like or dislike about the content of the piece? And why?
- ii) One to two *keepers* – What were the key ideas worth remembering and making note of? What did you take away the most from the readings?
- iii) One to two annotated *questions* – What question(s) do you have for the author or after reading this piece? Why is this a good question?
- iv) One *so what* – Why does the topic matter? How does it contribute to our understanding of contemporary sociological theory and its relevance?

Do not use quotes from the readings for this, but instead use entirely your own words. Every critical reflection paper must be submitted on Portal (using a .doc, .docx, or .rtf file format) no later than midnight Wednesday before class for which the reading was assigned. The purpose of these critical reflection papers is to have a base of knowledge on the course material before class starts so that we can build upon this foundation during lecture. See Blackboard for list of eligible readings for these critical reflection papers. Note: CRPs will never be accepted late. If you cannot submit it on time, then you can complete one(s) that is/are due the following week.

Weekly Lecture Topics and Readings

Note that the reading list is tentative and topics are subject to change

Week 1 – Jan 11th – Introduction

Introduction to Contemporary Sociological Theory

Week 2 – Jan 18th – Micro-Sociological Analysis

Alfred Schutz – Phenomenology of the Social World

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann – The Social Construction of Reality
Erving Goffman – The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life
Herbert Blumer – Symbolic Interactionism
Harold Garfinkel – Studies in Ethnomethodology
Randall Collins – Interaction Ritual Chains

Week 3 – Jan 25th – Exchange and Rationality

George Homans – Social Behavior as Exchange
Peter Blau – Exchange and Power in Social Life
Mancur Olson – The Logic of Collective Action
Michael Hechter – A Theory of Group Solidarity
Karen Cook et al. - Cooperation without Law or Trust
Additional readings: TBA

Week 4 – Feb 1st – Institutions and Networks

Mark Granovetter - Economic Embeddedness
Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell – The Iron Cage Revisited
Harrison White – Catnets
Ronald Burt – Structural Holes
Additional readings: TBA

Week 5 – Feb 8th – Power and Inequality

C. Wright Mills – The Power Elite
Antonio Gramsci - On Hegemony
Charles Tilly – Coercion, Capital, and European States
Steven Lukes – Power: A Radical View
Anthony Giddens – State, Society, and Modern History
Additional readings: TBA

Week 6 – Feb 15th Midterm

Week 7 – Reading week

Week 8 – March 1st – The Sociological Theory of Michel Foucault

Michel Foucault – The History of Sexuality
Michel Foucault – Truth and Power
Michel Foucault – Discipline and Punish
Additional readings: TBA

Week 9 – March 8th – The Sociological Theory of Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu – Social Space and Symbolic Space
Pierre Bourdieu – Structures, Habitus, Practices
Pierre Bourdieu – The Field of Cultural Production
Pierre Bourdieu – Rethinking the State
Additional readings: TBA

Week 10 – March 15th – Race, Gender, Difference

Dorothy Smith – The Conceptual Practices of Power
Patricia Hill Collins – Black Feminist Epistemology
Frantz Fanon – Black Skin, White Masks
Orlando Patterson – The Paradoxes of Integration

Additional readings: TBA

Week 11 – March 22nd – Modernity

Norbert Elias – The Social Constraint towards Self-Constraint

Jurgen Habermas – Modernity: An Unfinished Project

Zygmunt Bauman – Modernity and the Holocaust

Anthony Giddens – The Consequences of Modernity

Bruno Latour – We Have Never Been Modern

Additional readings: TBA

Week 12 – March 29th – Crisis and Change

Readings: TBA

Make-Up Tests and Deadline Extension

If you miss a test or a paper deadline, do not contact the instructor or a TA unless you have followed the steps described here. Telling the professor or TA why you missed a deadline or a test will not be considered.

- In case of illness, you must supply a duly completed Verification of Student Illness or Injury form (available at www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca). A doctor's note is not acceptable. The form must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted with your work no later than the following class.
- If a personal or family crisis prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must get a letter from your college registrar (it is a good idea anyway to advise your college registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies). The letter must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted with your work no later than the following class.

Plagiarism

Cheating and misrepresentation will not be tolerated. Students who commit an academic offence face serious penalties. Avoid plagiarism by citing properly. Practices acceptable in high school may prove unacceptable in university. Know where you stand by reading the “Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters” in the Calendar of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Turnitin

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Assignments not submitted through *Turnitin* will not be assessed unless a student instead provides, along with their work, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own. The alternative (not submitting via *Turnitin*) is in place because, strictly speaking, using *Turnitin* is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

Accessibility

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodation or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.