

**SOC251H1S**  
**Contemporary Sociological Theory**  
**University of Toronto**  
**Class hours:** Tuesdays & Thursdays 15:10 — 18:00  
**Location:** Online, Synchronous

**Instructor:** Sébastien Parker

**Email:** [sebastien.parker@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:sebastien.parker@mail.utoronto.ca)

**Office Hours:** By appointment, please refer to Quercus calendar

**Webpage:** [q.utoronto.ca](http://q.utoronto.ca)

**Teaching Assistants:** Brody Trottier & Olimpia Bidian

**Emails:** [brody.trottier@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:brody.trottier@mail.utoronto.ca)

[olimpia.bidian@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:olimpia.bidian@mail.utoronto.ca)

**Office Hours:** By appointment, please refer to Quercus calendar

---

### **Statement of Acknowledgement**

We acknowledge this sacred land on which the University of Toronto operates. It has been a site of human activity for 15,000 years. This land is the territory of the Huron Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. The territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Today, the meeting place of Toronto is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in the community, on this territory. [*Council of Aboriginal Initiatives, 2014*]

### **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. Restricted to sociology majors and specialists.

### **Prerequisites**

The prerequisite to take SOC251H1F is SOC201H. Students without the prerequisite can be removed at any time discovered, and without notice.

### **Learning Objectives**

There are 5 learning objectives in this course:

- 1) Critically read and assess contemporary sociological theorists
- 2) Critically write about the nature and role of sociological analysis
- 3) Draw connections between contemporary theory and current phenomena
- 4) Consider ongoing theoretical debates in the field of sociology and provide your own perspective in peer discussion
- 5) Evaluate implications of different theoretical approaches and reflect on them

**Evaluation Components**

Type	Due Dates	Weight
First reflection	July 18	20%
First test	July 20	25%
Second reflection	August 3	20%
Second test	August 10	25%
Participation	Ongoing	10%

**Grading Description**

---

**Participation (10%)**

Five times (5 x 2%) during the term, students will have to showcase ongoing, active participation on the discussion board. Participation prompts will be assigned during selected lectures and ask students to complete the written submission usually by the following lecture. Participation submissions will be marked on a satisfactory (2 pts), non-satisfactory (1 pts), or incomplete (0 pt.) basis.

**Reflection pieces (2 x 20%)**

Twice (2) during the term, students will have to write reflections based on assigned readings, which will be discussed during tutorials. The first reflection will be in response to Jan Fuhse's 'How can theories represent social phenomena?'; while the second reflection will ask to engage with Prasad's piece 'Pragmatism as problem solving'. Content for both articles will be discussed during tutorials. For each reflection, students must write 2-pages single-space, in accordance with the general guidelines and expectations communicated during tutorials and in assignment documents on Quercus.

**Take-home tests (2 x 25%)**

Twice (2) during the term, students will have to have to respond to test questions (worth 25% each). The first take-home assesses comprehension for the first part of the course, while the second take-home assesses comprehension for material covered in the second part. Students will receive the test document, outlining the expectations and test questions, 48 hours before the due date. For both tests, students will have to answer one essay-type question (2 pages, single-spaced) and two short-answer questions (1 page, single-spaced, each).

**Course policies**

---

**Missed work**

Students who miss the test, or are late in submitting an assignment for medical reasons, need to email the instructor (not the TA), and also declare their absence on the system (ACORN).

Students who miss the test, or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

**Handing in assignments**

All assignments must be submitted electronically via Quercus.

**Deadlines**

The assignments are due online via Quercus for the stated date. Please refer to the Due Dates stated on page 2 of the syllabus.

**Late tests and assignments**

If a student misses a test or submit assignments later for medical reasons, the student must contact me (not the TA) within 1 day of the missed test or assignment and also declare their absence on ACORN. For other reasons, such as family emergencies or personal reasons, they must have the college registrar email me.

**Accessibility**

If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.

**Student Responsibilities and Expectations**

---

**Email Policy**

I will respond to your email within two business days (48 hours, except weekends and holidays). In an email exchanges, you must use your official University of Toronto email. Please also include the course code (e.g. SOC251) in the subject line and your full name and student number in your message. Please do not send a repeat email (e.g., “did you get my email?”).

In general, please treat emails as you would any other professional communication. You should be respectful in the way you address the instructor and the TA. Email is most suitable for questions that are clear, concise, and easily answerable. If you need help on course material, I strongly encourage you to attend office hours or make an appointment. For all general inquiries, please refer to the course syllabus.

**Help from your Teaching Assistant**

Your T.A. will hold scheduled office hours and respond to your emails. Please be judicious in your use of email. Use it only for questions that are brief and specific. Before sending a question by email, be sure to check the syllabus to see if an answer is already available. Emails should not be seen as an alternative to doing the assigned reading or attending lectures. Expect to receive a response from your T.A. within two working days. For more in-depth discussions, please take advantage of your T.A.’s office hours.

**Grade Appeals**

You have 7 days after receiving a mark to appeal it. Please note that upon re-grade your mark may go down, stay the same, or go up. To proceed with an appeal, you must provide a document outlining why you deem your work was marked unfairly and explain why you believe your work should receive a higher mark.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

Familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>). It is the rule book for academic behaviour at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules.

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the Code. The consequences for academic misconduct can be severe, including a failure in the course and a notation on your transcript. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me.

If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, seek out additional information from me, or from other available campus resources like the [U of T Writing Website](#). If you are experiencing personal challenges that are having an impact on your academic work, please speak to me or seek the advice of your college registrar.

### **Generative Artificial Intelligence**

Students are encouraged to make use of technology, including generative artificial intelligence tools, to contribute to their understanding of course materials. Students may use artificial intelligence tools, including generative AI, in this course as learning aids or to help produce assignments. However, students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit.

If using generative artificial intelligence tools as they work through the term assignment in this course, students must document this in an appendix. The documentation should include what tool(s) were used, how they were used, and how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work.

## **Course Schedule**

---

### **Readings:**

All course readings will be available on the course website. Students are solely responsible for reading all required materials before class. Please give yourself enough time to come to class prepared to discuss the materials.

### **Session 1 (July 4)**

*Outline of course and expectations*

## **PART 1.**

### **Session 2 (July 6)**

*Readings for lecture*

Blau, Peter M. (1977). A macrosociological theory of social structure. *American Journal of Sociology*.

Granovetter, Mark (1985). "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness." *American Journal of Sociology*.

**Session 3\* (July 11)**

*Readings for lecture*

Bourdieu, Pierre (1990 [1977]). *The Logic of Practice*.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*.

*Readings for tutorial*

Fuhse, Jan A (2022). "How Can Theories Represent Social Phenomena?" *Sociological Theory*.

**Session 4\* (July 13)**

*Readings for lecture & tutorial*

Collins, Patricia Hill (2019). *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*.

**Session 5\* (July 18)**

**\*First reflection due\***

*Reading for lecture*

Bell, Daniel (1976). *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*.

**Session 6 (July 20)**

**\*First take-home test due\***

**PART 2.**

**Session 7 (July 25)**

*Readings for lecture*

Fraser, Nancy (1990). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. *Social Text*.

Habermas, Jürgen (1981). *The Theory of Communicative Action*.

**Session 8\* (July 27)**

*Reading for lecture*

Emirbayer, Mustafa, and Matthew Desmond. (2015). *The Racial Order*.

*Reading for tutorial*

Prasad, Monica (2021). Pragmatism as problem solving. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*.

**Session 9\* (Aug. 1)**

*Reading for lecture*

Go, Julian (2016). *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory*.

**Session 10\* (Aug. 3)**

**\*Second reflection due\***

*Readings for lecture*

Hedström, Peter (2005). *Dissecting the social: On the principles of analytical sociology*.

Tilly, Charles (1998). *Durable Inequality*.

**Session 11 (Aug. 8)**

*Reading for lecture*

Abend, Gabriel (2008). The meaning of 'theory'. *Sociological Theory*.

**Session 12 (Aug. 10)**

**\*Second take-home test due\***