

**SOC251H1S**  
**CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY**  
**Winter 2024**  
**University of Toronto, St. George**

**Instructor:** Prof. Christian Caron

**Class Time and Location:** Wednesdays 10:10-1pm

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**Office Hours:** In-person Wednesdays 1-2pm & Zoom Mondays 10-11am  
([https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/340976/external\\_tools/15685](https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/340976/external_tools/15685))

**Teaching Assistant**

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**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 a meaningful choice on how to demonstrate your knowledge and comprehension of the material since not every student excels in the same kind of assignment.

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.

## **Prerequisite**

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 Quercus to facilitate this community of learners. It will act as the ‘nervous system’ of this course. On the Quercus 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 Quercus 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 (to be discussed below). 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 readings are available digitally through UofT library or as pdf through the Quercus course 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. 60% of your final grade will come from a midterm and a final exam, but you get to choose where the other 40% will come from.

### **Midterm (20%) – February 14th**

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 (40%) – 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 19th. This will be a working document with an updated version due Feb 16th and Mar 22nd), so three versions in total. The individual learning plan must include a description of what course material you commit to produce and how it adds up to 40%. In further updates, you should clearly lay out what you have done so far and what remains to be done to complete the 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 40%. *Note: You will submit your ILP as a series of four digits, for example (20-10-0-10) which represents 20% in in-class activities, 10% in*

*online peer contributions, 0% on term paper and presentation and 10% in critical reflection papers. 16-0-0-24 would represent 16% in in-class activities, 0% in online peer contributions, 0% 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 January 10<sup>th</sup> and the midterm on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 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 participate in anywhere from none to ten of them.

**Option 2: 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 Quercus. 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 document or video clip 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 (30%)**

The term paper and presentation are a substantive engagement with a topic raised in one of the course readings or one of the course themes, 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 7th**

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 13<sup>th</sup>**

The second stage is the submission of your powerpoint presentation. Uploaded as a .pptx or .pdf to Quercus 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 27<sup>th</sup>

The final stage is the submission of the term paper, one digital copy through Quercus & Ouriginal. Late penalty is 10% per day.

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 30%)**

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, midterm and the final exam. 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 after reading this piece? Why is this a good question?
- iv) One *so what* – Why does the topic matter? How do you see it contribute to our making sense of the social world?

Do not use quotes from the readings for this, but instead use entirely your own words. Every critical reflection paper must be submitted on Quercus (using a .doc, .docx, or .rtf file format) no later than midnight Tuesday 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. 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**

Readings should be completed before lecture. Lectures will not systematically summarize the readings, but instead build and go beyond them.

### **January 10<sup>th</sup>: Introduction – About Theory**

Sears, Alan & James Cairns (2015) *A Good Book, In Theory* (pp1-24) Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

### **January 17<sup>th</sup>: The Sociology of Knowledge**

Mannheim, K. (1954). The Sociology of Knowledge. *Ideology and Utopia* (pp. 237-280). New York: Harcourt Brace.

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (pp1-44). New York: Doubleday & Company.

### **January 24<sup>th</sup>: Theorizing the Self**

Mead, G. H. (1967). The Self. In C. W. Morris (Ed.), *Mind, Self, & Society* (pp. 135-226). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (pp. xi-xii; 1-46). New York: Anchor Books.

### **January 31<sup>st</sup>: Theorizing the Everyday World**

Garfinkel, H. (1967). What is Ethnomethodology *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (pp. 1-34). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Smith, D. (1987). *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Methodology* (pp. 1-44). Boston: Northeastern University Press.

### **February 7<sup>th</sup>: Theorizing Gender and the Body**

Butler, Judith. (2004). "Acting in Concert." Pp 1-16 in *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge.

Siebers, T. (2008). *Disability Theory* (pp. 1-33). University of Michigan Press

### **February 14<sup>th</sup>: Midterm**

### **February 21<sup>st</sup>: Winter Reading Week**

### **February 28<sup>th</sup>: Theorizing Race and Intersectionality**

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. [1994] 2015. "The Theory of Racial Formation", Chapter 4 (pp. 105-134) in: *Racial Formation in the United States*. New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2015. Third Edition.

Collins, Patricia Hill. (1986). "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought." *Social Problems* 33(6): 14–32.

### **March 6<sup>th</sup>: Power and Knowledge**

Foucault, M. (1970). Preface and Classifying. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (pp. xv-xxiv, 125-165). New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. (1978). The Body of the Condemned, The Means of Correct Training, and Panopticism (pp. 3-31; 170-228). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books.

### **March 13<sup>th</sup>: Postcolonial and Decolonial Theories**

Hall, Stuart. (1992/2018). "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power [1992]." In: *Essential Essays, Volume 2*, pp. 141-184. Duke University Press, 2018.

Go, Julian. (2018). "Postcolonial possibilities for the sociology of race." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 4(4): 439-451.

### **March 20<sup>th</sup>: Indigenous Theorizing**

Coulthard, Glen. (2014). *Red Skin White Masks*, "Introduction: Subjects of Empire." (pp. 1-24); "The Politics of Recognition in Colonial Contexts." Chapter 1, (pp. 24-50).

Million, Dian. (2009). "Felt theory: An indigenous feminist approach to affect and history." *Wicazo Sa Review* 24(2): 53-76.

### **March 27<sup>th</sup>: Theory versus Practice**

Bourdieu, P. (1990). Book 1: Critique of Theoretical Reason. *The Logic of Practice* (pp. 25-142). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Wacquant, L., & Bourdieu, P. (1989). Toward a Reflexive Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu. *Sociological Theory* 7(1): 26-63.

### **April 3<sup>rd</sup>: Conclusion - Theory as Practice**

hooks, bell. (1991). "Theory as Liberatory Practice." *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 4(1): 1-12.

### **Missed Deadline and/or Missed Midterm**

If you become ill and it affects your ability to do your academic work, consult me right away. Normally, I will ask you for documentation in support of your specific medical circumstances. This documentation can be an Absence Declaration (via ACORN) or the University's Verification of Student Illness or Injury (VOI) form. The VOI indicates the impact and severity of the illness, while protecting your privacy about the details of the nature of the illness. If you cannot submit a VOI due to limits on terms of use, you can submit a different form (like a letter from a doctor), as long as it is an original document, and it contains the same information as the VOI (including dates, academic impact, practitioner's signature, phone and registration number). For more information on the VOI, please see <https://registrar.utoronto.ca/policies-and-guidelines/verification-of-illness-or-injury/>. For information on Absence Declaration Tool for A&S students, please see <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/absence>. If you get a concussion, break your hand, or suffer some other acute injury, you should register with Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

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

### **Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to know and adhere to the University's principles of academic integrity. Any act of plagiarism or other unethical behavior will be addressed in accordance with University guidelines. Please see the "Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters" (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) for specific information on academic integrity at the U of T.

Students are encouraged to make use of technology, including generative artificial intelligence tools, to contribute to their understanding of course materials. However, students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit.

### **Generative Artificial Intelligence**

In this course, you may use generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT and GitHub Copilot, as learning aids and to contribute to your understanding of course materials. However, any submitted work (term paper, CRPs, in-class activities, online contributions) needs to be your own. Students who choose to use generative artificial intelligence tools as they work through the term paper assignment or critical reflection papers in this course; this use must be documented 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. Any content produced by an artificial intelligence tool must be cited appropriately. Many organizations that publish standard citation formats are now providing information on citing generative AI (e.g., MLA: <https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/>). Failure to disclose the use of generative AI in the submission of course work will be treated as an academic offense.

While some generative AI tools are currently available for free in Canada, please be warned that these tools have not been vetted by the University of Toronto and might not meet University guidelines or requirements for privacy, intellectual property, security, accessibility, and records

retention. Generative AI may produce content which is incorrect or misleading, or inconsistent with the expectations of this course. These tools may even provide citations to sources that don't exist—and submitting work with false citations is an academic offense. These tools may be subject to service interruptions, software modifications, and pricing changes during the semester.

Generative AI is not required to complete any aspect of this course. We recommend treating generative AI as a supplementary tool only for exploration. Ultimately, you (and not any AI tool) are responsible for your own learning in this course, and for all the work you submit for credit. It is your responsibility to critically evaluate the content generated, and to regularly assess your own learning independent of generative AI tools. Overreliance on generative AI may give you a false sense of how much you've actually learned, which can lead to poor performance on the midterm test or final exam, in later courses, or in future work or studies after graduation.

### **Ouriginal**

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool 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 tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

### **Class recordings**

Students may not create audio or video recordings of classes with the exception of those students requiring an accommodation for a disability, who should speak to the instructor prior to beginning to record lectures.

### **Accessibility and Student Accommodations**

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me or contact me and visit the Accessibility Services Office (<http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>) as soon as possible.

### **Resources**

#### **Department of Sociology – University of Toronto**

Course offerings, programs, faculty, old syllabi, etc

[www.sociology.utoronto.ca](http://www.sociology.utoronto.ca)

#### **Writing Support in Faculty of Arts and Science**

Writing is a key part of a university education. The Faculty of Arts and Science at UofT has several initiatives which every students could benefit from looking into. Here is a series of writing-related resources available in Arts and Science.



1. Writing Centre will offer a mix of in-person, online, and asynchronous appointments. Students can find information about the offerings of specific college writing centres at <http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science>.

2. More than 60 Advice files on all aspects of academic writing are available at <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca>. Printable PDF versions are listed at <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/student-pdfs>.

Students will want to check out the "How Not to Plagiarize" and other advice on documentation format and methods of integrating sources. Visit <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources>.

For general information about writing resources at U of T, students can start at the home page of the site Writing at The University of Toronto: <https://writing.utoronto.ca>.

3. For group instruction on writing and study skills, please refer students to the Writing Plus workshop series at <http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-plus>.

4. Information about the English Language Learning program (ELL) is available at <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell>. Sample of activities:

- the Communication Cafe, which meets weekly at four different times and locations for the first five weeks of each term for practice with oral skills such as class discussion and presentations
- Reading eWriting, an online program that helps students engage course readings more effectively.

For more information, contact [ell.newcollege@utoronto.ca](mailto:ell.newcollege@utoronto.ca)

### **Other University Student Services:**

**Academic Success Centre:** Workshops and individual support for learning skills including time management, memorization, exam preparation, note-taking, stress management.

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/departments/academic-success/>

**Campus Safety:** For security and safety concerns. Emergencies requiring immediate response from Metro Police should go through 911, but Campus Police can respond promptly to less extreme situations. The officers are experienced in dealing with students.

Non-urgent: 416-978-2323 & **Campus Urgent: 416-978-2222 or 911**

**Career Centre:** Research tools, workshops, & advice on choosing and preparing for careers; on-campus employment and work study listings.

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/career-exploration-education/>

**Centre for International Experience:** Logistical and social support for international students; information and support for international student exchange students, both inbound and outbound.

<https://internationalexperience.utoronto.ca/>

**Family Care Office:** Help and support for those with dependants, either younger or older

<https://familycare.utoronto.ca/>

**First Nations House:** Culturally relevant services for Indigenous students and learning opportunities for all students to engage with Indigenous communities at UofT and beyond.

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/first-nations-house/>

**Health & Wellness:** Provide a range of health services for physical and mental health, as well as wellness programs

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/>

**Ombudsperson:** Offers confidential advice to students, faculty and staff. Assists students to engage with administrative structures, usually after all normal channels have been exhausted.

<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/ombudsperson>

**Student Crisis Response:** For student crisis situations involving disturbing behaviour or references to suicide or violence, call 416-946-7111 during business hours. For after hours emergencies, call Campus Safety at 416-978-2222 or Metro Police 911.

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/service/faculty-support-for-responding-to-distressed-students/>

**Student Housing Service:** Assistance for students in finding off-campus housing.

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/housing/>

**Student Mental Health Resources:** This is a hub for tools, strategies, and experts to meet your mental health needs

<https://mentalhealth.utoronto.ca/>