

SOC389H1S - Winter 2023
Sociology of Scandals
Professor Ronit Dinovitzer
Department of Sociology
Monday 10:10-12:00, SS 1073

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dinovitzer, Ronit
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Office hours: TBA via ZOOM
Course web site: q.utoronto.ca

Teaching Assistants

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Course Description:

“We live,” Jeffrey Alexander argues, “in an age of scandal.” Scandals – corporate, political, or bureaucratic – pervade media reporting and public debate. This course takes up scandals as sociological events: what are the causes of scandals? How are scandals ‘made’? How are scandals represented? And what are the consequences of scandals: do they discredit some actors, and lead to cultural, institutional, and organizational change? Do they lead to reform, used for new professional mobilization, new forms of regulation and oversight, targeted for legal intervention, or do they generate new political shifts, or new memories or narratives? Or are they ignored? The course will also pay attention to how scandals are made public: leaks, investigations, whistleblowers, and media reporting, and the framing of events as scandals worthy of public condemnation. Finally, with scandals often thought of as singular, this course allows students to consider what is in common between these events.

To do so, this course will focus on scandals in the private corporate sector and in government (including political and bureaucratic scandals). Canvassing sociological research on scandal, on the media, on organizations, and on the public sphere, this course will include a wide array of scandals over time, domestically, and worldwide. These scandals cover an array of fields, including professions, finance, health, the environment, science, and politics.

Goals and Learning Objectives

Studying scandals sociologically provides students with a range of skills. It allows them analytical skills to engage in nuanced fashion with current events in the media, and with new leaks. It also allows them, in future careers, to pay attention to wrongdoing and potential scandals. And finally, by understanding scandals as sociological events, students

will learn to trace how scandals may lead to new organizational, professional, social, cultural, and political responses.

At the end of the course, students will be able:

- to critically read, analyze and write about sociological (both theoretical and empirical) literature on scandals
- to apply course material to real world and daily life examples
- to synthesize course materials from various weeks and demonstrate an understanding of the issue across various contexts

Prerequisite:

The prerequisite to take this course is completion of 1.0 SOC credits at the 200 or higher level. Students without this requirement will be removed from the course without notice.

Textbooks and Other Materials

The course relies on a collection of readings compiled by the instructor and available on Quercus.

Evaluation Components:

Type	Date(s) Due	Weight
Engagement	Ongoing	10%
Applied Essay	Feb 13	30%
Essay Proposal	Feb 27	5%
Essay	March 27	35%
Take home test (three days)	April 5	20%

Engagement (10%)

Our class readings and discussions do not live purely in the realm of the theoretical. Every week's lecture and readings can be connected to current events. In order to encourage you to make these connections, you will have 10 opportunities to post a link to a current event that connects to the week's readings. In addition to posting the link, you need to write a short comment about how they are related (50-70 words). These short writing exercises will be graded on a pass/fail basis, 1% per submission. There are no make-up opportunities for these assignments.

Posts are due by the start of each class, starting with Class #2. The post is meant to help you prepare for each upcoming lecture, so you will be posting based on the material we are covering that day before the class lecture for that topic.

Applied Essay (30%)

The applied essay will ask you to apply material from the course to a current scandal. Detail will be posted on Q.

Essay Proposal (5%)

You will write a 250-word proposal outlining your essay topic (which scandal have you chosen, why you have chosen it). You will ALSO include short summaries of 4 peer-reviewed sources (journal articles or book chapters) not listed in the course syllabus. Each summary should be about 100 words (so a total of 400 words for the summaries).

Essay (35%)

Details of the essay will be provided later in the term. The essay will require some library research and will be 2,500-3000 words (not counting bibliography).

All assignments must be handed to the instructor electronically via Quercus. Do not use the Quercus mobile app to submit your assignments. You are responsible for ensuring your essay was successfully submitted to Quercus; if it is not there, we cannot grade it. This link explains how to double check that you submitted your assignment successfully: <https://qstudents.utoronto.ca/submitting-assignments-to-your-course/>

The essay must be handed to the instructor electronically via Quercus. The instructor and TA will NOT accept electronic copies of assignments via email. Do not put submissions under the office door of the instructor. The instructor is not responsible for student assignments submitted in this way. Students must always keep an extra hard copy of their assignment for their own records.

Quercus test (20%)

The class test will be take home, from April 3-5. There will be no class April 3 in order to give you time to write the test.

Procedures and Rules

1. Missed tests

Students who miss a test will receive a mark of zero; UNLESS within 48 hours (two days) of the missed test, students who wish to write the make-up test give the instructor an emailed request for special consideration which explains why the test was missed. A request should be accompanied by contact information (the student's telephone number and email address) so the date and time of the make-up test can be communicated to the student. A student who misses a test and the subsequent make-up test for a valid reason will not have a third chance to take the test. Instead, the grade assigned for the missed test will be the same as the grade the student earns for the other test in this course.

1. If a student misses tests for **medical reasons**, you will need to email the instructor, not the TA, and also declare your absence on ACORN.
2. If a **personal or family crisis** prevents you from meeting a deadline, have your college registrar email me directly (it is a good idea anyway to advise your college registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies).

2. Missed/Late Assignments

Time bank: In this course, we will be using time banks. Our time bank is made up of three days. This means that you each have a three-day grace period for one assignment or distributed across different assignments. If you are using your time bank credit for a particular assignment, you must inform us by using the assignment comment box on Quercus when you submit the assignment for which you are applying the time bank. You do not need to ask in advance. You cannot use the time bank for tests. The time bank will be calculated using 6 hour time blocks.

Late penalties: Late assignments without the required steps in case of delays (see below) and outside of the time bank limits — will be penalized 5% of the assignment marks per day. The penalty will run from the day the assignment was due until the day it is submitted via Quercus.

1. If a student misses tests or submit assignments beyond the time bank for **medical reasons**, you will need to email me the instructor, not the TA, and also declare your absence on ACORN.
2. If a **personal or family crisis** prevents you from meeting a deadline, have your college registrar email me directly (it is a good idea anyway to advise your college registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies).

Students who have been approved by me to submit a late paper (beyond the time bank) must do so within 2 days after receiving my permission.

- You are expected to keep a back-up, digital copy of your assignment.

Grade appeals

Instructors and teaching assistants take the marking of assignments very seriously, and will work diligently to be fair, consistent, and accurate. Nonetheless, mistakes and oversights occasionally happen. If you believe that to be the case, you must adhere to the following rules:

- If it is a mathematical error simply alert the TA of the error.
- In the case of more substantive appeals, you must:
 1. Wait at least 24 hours after receiving your mark.
 2. Carefully re-read your assignment, all assignment guidelines and marking schemes and the grader's comments.
 3. You have up to one month from the date of return of the item to inquire about the mark beyond the course instructor. In order to meet this deadline, you must inquire about the mark with your instructor no longer than 15 days after receiving your mark. If you are not satisfied with the instructor's re-evaluation, you may appeal to the Associate Chair, if the term work is worth at least 20% of the course mark. If your work is remarked, you must accept the resulting mark.

If you wish to appeal:

A. You must submit to the instructor a written explanation of why you think your mark should be altered. Please note statements such as "I need a higher grade to apply to X" are not compelling. Also, please note that upon re-grade your mark may go down, stay the same, or go up.

B. Attach to your written explanation your original assignment, including all of the original comments. Scan all documents and submit via email to your TA.

Communication

Email communication is rapid, convenient, and efficient—and you are encouraged to use it to enhance your learning and experience in the course. With that said, it is essential that you follow a few rules:

- All course communication should be conducted through Quercus or your utoronto account.
- All emails must include the course code (e.g., SOC 305) in the subject line.
- All emails should be signed with the student's full name and student number.
- Emails from students will generally be answered within 72 hours of receipt.
- Treat emails as you would any other professional communication.
- Emails that ask questions that are answered in the course syllabus or website (e.g., "how much is assignment X worth") will not receive a response.

Emails that do not follow these guidelines will not receive a response.

Academic integrity

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.

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>).

Assignments not submitted through Ouriginal will receive a grade of zero (0 %), unless a student instead provides, along with their position paper, 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 Ouriginal) is in place because, strictly speaking, using Ouriginal is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

Attendance

Students are responsible for all material covered in class and in the assignment readings.

Student resources

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

If required, the link for the Accommodated Testing Services (ATS):

<https://lsm.utoronto.ca/ats/>

The University of Toronto is committed to equity and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated.

Weekly Schedule

Every attempt will be made to follow this schedule, but it is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. All readings are linked electronically through Quercus. There is nothing to purchase.

1. Jan 9: What is a Scandal?

- a. Adut, Ari. "A Theory of Scandal: Victorians, Homosexuality, and the Fall of Oscar Wilde." *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 111, no. 1, 2005, pp. 213–248.
 - i. <http://www.jstor.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/stable/10.1086/428816>
- b. Bayle, Emmanuel, and Hervé Rayner. "Sociology of a scandal: the emergence of 'FIFAgate'." *Soccer & Society* (2016): 1-19
https://journals-scholarsportal-info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/details/14660970/v19i0004/593_soasteo.xml
- c. **RECOMMENDED:** de Blic, Damien, et Cyril Lemieux. « Le scandale comme épreuve. Éléments de sociologie pragmatique », *Politix*, vol. 71, no. 3, 2005, pp. 9-38.
https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_POX_071_0009--the-scandal-as-test.htm
- d. Examples:
 - i. Bill Cosby: https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/21/upshot/bill-cosbys-sudden-fall-explained-sociologically.html?_r=0
 - ii. Donald Trump: <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/05/donald-trump-presidential-scandals/522468/>

2. Jan 16: Scandals, Moral Boundaries, and Social Solidarity

- a. Alexander, J. (1988) 'Culture and Political Crisis: "Watergate" and Durkheimian Sociology', in J. Alexander (ed.) *Durkheimian Sociology: Cultural Studies*, pp. 187-224. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.
 - i. <http://books.scholarsportal.info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/viewdoc.html?id=/ebooks/ebooks1/cambridgeonline/2012-11-08/1/9780511598258> (scroll down until you see the listed chapter)
- b. Jacobsson, K., & Löfmarck, E. (2008). A Sociology of Scandal and Moral Transgression: The Swedish 'Nannygate' Scandal. *Acta Sociologica*, 51(3), 203-216.
 - i. <http://journals.sagepub.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/doi/pdf/10.1177/0001699308094166>

3. Jan 23: Media: Role in Creating Scandals

- a. Chen, G. M. (2019). Social media and scandal. *The Routledge companion to media and scandal*, 165-173. <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781351173001-17/social-media-scandal-gina-masullo-chen>
- b. Clemente, M., & Gabbioneta, C. (2017). How Does the Media Frame Corporate Scandals? The Case of German Newspapers and the Volkswagen Diesel Scandal. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 26(3), 287–302. <https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1177/1056492616689304>
- c. Moritz, Brian. "Evolution of a Modern Sports Scandal." *Scandal in a Digital Age*. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016. 185-199.
 - i. https://link-springer-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/chapter/10.1057%2F978-1-137-59545-4_15

- d. *Highly Recommended*: Gamson, J. (2001). Normal sins: Sex scandal narratives as institutional morality tales. *Social problems* 48(2), 185-205.
 - i. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/552c55ebe4b0c230032dbd3e/t/55351749e4b0c759b38f4c8f/1429542729531/normal+sins.pdf>
- e. Media
 - i. <https://hbr.org/2016/09/what-100000-tweets-about-the-volkswagen-scandal-tell-us-about-angry-customers>

4. Jan 30: Crises, SPIN and PR

- a. Koerber, D. (2014). Crisis Communication Response and Political Communities: The Unusual Case of Toronto Mayor Rob Ford. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 39(3).
 - i. <https://cjc.utpjournals.press/doi/full/10.22230/cjc.2014v39n3a2766>
- b. Sendroi, Ioana. "From reductive to generative crisis: businesspeople using polysemous justifications to make sense of COVID-19." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* (2022): 1-27.
 - i. <https://link-springer-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/article/10.1057/s41290-021-00147-w>
- c. Recommended: Christophe Haag, Jean-François Coget & Tessa Melkonian (2011) Top-level communication: behind the scenes with famous French spin doctor Jacques Séguéla, *Organization Management Journal*, 8:3, 167-179, DOI: 10.1057/omj.2011.28
 - i. <https://www-proquest-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/docview/897762382?accountid=14771&parentSessionId=sV5i1rSGJwpC48cPUpmCZNwoivYYYJ9915P9BHHpUOE%3D&pq-origsite=primo>
- d. Examples:
 - i. <https://www.vox.com/2017/5/16/15646286/russians-leakers-fox-news-masterclass-spin-trump-scandal>
 - ii. <http://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/dalhousie-s-dentistry-scandal-a-costly-lesson-in-communications-1.3212800>

5. Feb 6: Reputations – MOVIE TBA

- a. Alan Fine, G. (2019). Moral cultures, reputation work, and the politics of scandal. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 45, 247-264. https://www-annualreviews-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/doi/full/10.1146/annurev-soc-073018-022649#_i6

6. Feb 13: What are the causes of scandalous behaviour? Organizations or Bad Apples?

Essay Due

- a. Vaughan, Diane. (1989), Regulating Risk: Implications of the Challenger Accident. *Law & Policy*, 11: 330–349.
 - i. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9930.1989.tb00032.x/full>
- b. Greve, Henrich R., Donald Palmer, and Jo-Ellen Pozner. "Organizations gone wild: The causes, processes, and consequences of organizational misconduct." *Academy of Management Annals* 4, no. 1 (2010): 53-107. https://journals-scholarsportal-info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/details/19416520/v04i0001/53_ogwtcpacoom.xml

- c. Bad Apples? SBF and Elizabeth Holmes
 - i. <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/23458837/sam-bankman-fried-ftx-sbf-downfall-explained>
 - ii. <https://www.vox.com/2015/10/20/9576501/theranos-elizabeth-holmes>
- d. Example:
 - i. An Engineering Theory of the Volkswagen Scandal:
 - <http://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/an-engineering-theory-of-the-volkswagen-scandal>
 - <http://ideas.time.com/2012/07/17/penn-state-cover-up-group-think-in-action/>

Feb 20: READING WEEK, NO CLASS

7. Feb 27: Law as Scandal

- a. Brooke Harrington, "Panama Papers: The Real Scandal Is What's Legal."
 - i. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/04/panama-papers-crimes/477156/>
- b. Saguy, A. (2012). "French and U.S. Legal Approaches to Sexual Harassment: The Pre and Post Dsk Scandal." *Travail, genre et sociétés*, no 28,(2), 89-106.
 - i. https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_TGS_028_0089--french-and-u-s-legal-approaches-to.htm
 - ii. Recommended: Denouncing Denigration by Abigail Saguy
 - 1. <https://booksandideas.net/Denouncing-Denigration.html>
- c. Why Enron's sleazy lawyers walked while their accountants fried. By Julie Hilden:
 - http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/jurisprudence/2002/06/scummary_judgment.html

8. Mar 6: Measuring Scandals

- a. Fourcade, M. (2011). Cents and Sensibility: Economic Valuation and the Nature of "Nature". *American Journal of Sociology*, 116(6), 1721-77. doi:10.1086/659640
 - i. http://www.jstor.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/stable/10.1086/659640?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents
- b. Media:
 - i. Confusion reigns over number of missing, murdered indigenous women:
 - <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/mmiw-4000-hajdu-1.3450237>
 - ii. The Truth About Chicago's Crime Rates: <http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/May-2014/Chicago-crime-rates/>

9. Mar 13: Whistleblowers

- a. "The age of the whistleblower" (2015) *The Economist*
 - i. https://go-gale-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/ps/i.do?p=CPI&u=utoronto_main&id=GALE|A450209461&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon

- b. Olesen, T. (2022). The Birth of an Action Repertoire: On the Origins of the Concept of Whistleblowing. *J Bus Ethics* 179, 13–24 <https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1007/s10551-021-04868-3>
- c. Miethe, T. D. and Rothschild, J. (1994), Whistleblowing and the Control of Organizational Misconduct. *Sociological Inquiry*, 64: 322–347. doi:10.1111/j.1475-682X.1994.tb00395.x
 - i. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/doi/10.1111/j.1475-682X.1994.tb00395.x/abstract>
- d. Recommended:
 - i. Patrick Bergemann, Brandy Aven (2022) Whistleblowing and Group Affiliation: The Role of Group Cohesion and the Locus of the Wrongdoer in Reporting Decisions. *Organization Science* 0(0). <https://pubsonline-informs-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/doi/10.1287/orsc.2022.1617>
 - ii. Roulet, T. J., & Pichler, R. (2020). Blame Game Theory: Scapegoating, Whistleblowing and Discursive Struggles following Accusations of Organizational Misconduct. *Organization Theory*, 1(4). <https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1177/2631787720975192>
- e. Examples:
 - i. <http://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/WHO-whistleblowers/>
 - ii. <https://www.cfe.ryerson.ca/key-resources/lists/prominent-canadian-whistleblowers>
 - iii. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/brainstorm/201306/secrets-the-whistleblower>

10. Mar 20: Apologies

- a. Cerulo, K. A., & Ruane, J. M. (2014). Apologies of the Rich and Famous: Cultural, Cognitive, and Social Explanations of Why We Care and Why We Forgive. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 77(2), 123-149.
 - i. <http://journals.sagepub.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/doi/abs/10.1177/0190272514530412>
- b. Frey, E., Bernstein, E., & Rekenhaller, N. (2022). Scarlet Letters: Rehabilitation Through Transgression Transparency and Personal Narrative Control. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 67(4), 968–1011. <https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1177/00018392221115154>
- c. **Recommended:** Max Clarke and Gary Alan Fine. “‘A’ is for Apology: Slavery and the Discourse of Remonstrance in American Universities.” *History & Memory* 22, 2010, 81-112.
- d. Examples:
 - i. How to Optimize Your Apology (Ep. 353)
 - 1. <http://freakonomics.com/podcast/apologies/>
 - ii. Weinstein:
 - 1. http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2017/11/what_do_we_want_from_public_apologies_by_accused_sexual_harassers_like_louis.html
 - iii. SBF’s Apology: <https://fortune.com/crypto/2022/11/10/sam-bankman-fried-apology-ftx-wrong-meltdown-crypto-binance/>

- iv. Some Canadian Government apologies:
 - 1. <https://www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2006/06/prime-minister-harper-offers-full-apology-chinese-head-tax.html>
 - 2. <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100015644/1100100015649>
 - 3. <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/news/2016/5/statement-apology-women-the-rcmp-and-announcement-settlement>
 - 4. <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/05/18/komagata-maru-apology-house-commons>

11. Mar 27: Memories of Scandals

Final essay due

- a. Ruderman, Nick, and Neil Nevitte. 2015. "Assessing the Impact of Political Scandals on Attitudes toward Democracy: Evidence from Canada's Sponsorship Scandal." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 48.4: 885-904.
 - i. <https://www-cambridge-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/core/journals/canadian-journal-of-political-science-revue-canadienne-de-science-politique/article/assessing-the-impact-of-political-scandals-on-attitudes-toward-democracy-evidence-from-canadas-sponsorship-scandal/E97D223A5E297C1D2929D4824DEE150C/core-reader>
- b. Piazza, Alessandro, and Julien Jourdan. 2015. "A Multilevel Theory of Scandals in Organizations: Sex Abuse in the US Catholic Church, 1971-2000." *Academy of Management Proceedings*. Vol.. No. 1.
 - i. <https://journals.aom.org/doi/10.5465/ambpp.2015.10101abstract>
- c. Example: Aftermath of LIBOR:
 - i. <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/gangster-bankers-too-big-to-jail-20130214>

12. Apr 3: No class – You should use this time to work on your take home test

Apr 5: Take home test DUE