

SOC489H1F: Sociology of Creativity

**Professor Gordon Brett
Department of Sociology
University of Toronto
Fall 2022**

Mode of Delivery: In Person, room 41; Basement of Sociology Department, 725 Spadina Avenue

Time: Friday 2:10-4pm

Office Hours: Tuesday 1-2pm, zoom.

Email: gordon.brett@utoronto.ca

Brief Overview of the Course

This course is organized as a discussion seminar. This means that you must do all the readings and come prepared to critically discuss them in class. In this seminar, you will have the opportunity to actively participate in discussions, hone your communication and analytical skills, explore, and develop your research interests, and improve your writing and research skills.

This is a theory and research seminar on Creativity. Readings are theory-oriented, and discussions will be structured around conceptual and analytical arguments. The main goal is not simply to read theory and discuss it (though we will do much of this), but to learn concepts, theories, and perspectives in order to apply them to the analysis of the social world. In particular, we will concern ourselves with understanding the social factors that shape creativity.

The value ascribed to creativity has perhaps never been greater than it is today. Creativity is seen as the key to solving global problems, improving our institutions, generating economic success, facilitating personal growth and happiness, and much more. Popular images of creativity typically involve an isolated genius toiling towards their next breakthrough - hiding the deeply social nature of creativity. In this course we ask: What is creativity, and where do we find it? Is creativity common, or rare? What is the social nature of creative work? How do different forms of social organization constrain or enable creativity? We will explore these questions through several theoretical perspectives and by examining a variety of artistic, intellectual, and scientific fields.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The prerequisite to take this course is 1.0 SOC FCE at the 300+ level. Students without this prerequisite will be removed at any time they are discovered.

Class Format, Requirements, and Grading

- 1- take home test, due October 7 30%
- 2- research proposal, due November 4 5%
- 3- paper, due December 2 35%
- 4- presentation and leading class discussion..... 15%
- 5- participation in class discussions 10%
- 6- paper presentation, December 2 5%

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Students are responsible for all material presented in class. Students who are unable to attend class are responsible for obtaining information about any announcements that may have been made in class as well as notes on the material covered from their classmates.

Readings

BOOK SELECTIONS AND JOURNAL ARTICLES

Book selections and all journal articles will be available on the Quercus course website, under “Files.”

Students are solely responsible for obtaining and reading all required materials before class. Please give yourself enough time to deal with any problems or delays accessing the readings that may arise so you can be sure to come to class prepared to discuss the materials. Problems accessing readings (online readings or the book) will not excuse failure to demonstrate having done the required readings.

Assignments

There will be a take-home test. The test will be given on September 30th, and students will have to submit their tests by the end of the day October 7th. Requests for an extension will only be granted with proper documentation – see below.

Documentation for Missed Assignments

Students who are late in submitting the test or assignment for medical reasons, need to email the instructor, and also declare their absence on the system (ACORN). (NOTE: Because of Covid-19, students do NOT need to submit the usual documentation, i.e., medical notes or the Verification of Illness forms).

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.

Research Proposal

You must submit a digital copy of a proposal for your research paper on November 4th to Quercus. This proposal should specify the kind of paper you will write (empirical paper, theoretical paper, or research proposal), the topic, and research question. It should include

information about the data, theories, and perspectives that you will use for the paper.

Paper

You may choose to write an empirical paper, a theoretical paper, or research proposal. The paper will be based on a topic of your choice that is suited to this course. The paper is due on December 2nd, and it should be no more than 20 pages (all double spaced, 12-point type, including references). A digital copy of the paper is to be submitted to Quercus by the end of the day on the due date.

Plagiarism: Be careful to avoid plagiarism. It is a serious academic offense with serious penalties (see the “Code of Behavior on Academic Matters”). If you are using somebody else’s ideas, do not present them as your own. Give proper references if you are using somebody else’s ideas, and use quotation marks if you are quoting. When in doubt, it is always safer to over-reference --you are not going to be punished for that. Please also be aware that turning in an old paper, or large parts thereof, for credit in a second (or third etc.) course, is considered an academic offense that results in students being referred off to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Presentation and Leading Class Discussion

You will be scheduled to present readings and lead discussion on an assigned day to be arranged with the instructor at the beginning of the term. On the assigned day, you are expected to give a PowerPoint presentation about the readings which includes a) a summary of the main points of the readings, b) definitions of key concepts used in the readings, and 3) between 2-4 questions related to the readings for class discussion.

Participating in Class Discussions

You will be evaluated for your contributions to class discussion over the course of the semester. I will consider both the quantity and quality of your contributions. This is a small seminar, organized around class discussions, so student participation is expected. Be sure to allow enough time to read materials closely and critically think about them prior to each class meeting so that you are prepared to participate in class. The quality of your learning experience will hinge upon what each student brings to the classroom. Students must turn their cameras on for the seminar.

Paper Presentation

You are expected to give a brief presentation about your paper on the last class of the semester, on December 2nd, when your paper is due. The presentation should cover the main ideas in your paper, describe your approach, and explain your analysis and conclusions.

Accessibility Needs

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible:

_disability.services@utoronto.ca_ or [_http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility_](http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility_).

Class Schedule

September 9

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THE SOCIOLOGY OF CREATIVITY?

September 16

CREATING NEW IDEAS

Koestler, Arthur. [1964] 1989. *The Act of Creation*. London: Arkana.

Chapter 5 “Moments of Truth.” Pp. 101-120.

Molotch, Harvey. 2003. *Where Stuff Comes From*. “Inside Stuff: How Professionals Do it.” New York: Routledge.

Chapter 2 “Inside Stuff: How Professionals Do it.” Pp. 22-51.

September 23

COGNITION AND CREATIVE ACTION

Joas, Hans. 1996. *The Creativity of Action*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Chapter 2 “Metaphors of Creativity” (selection). Pp. 70-75, 126-144.

Leschziner, Vanina. 2015. *At the Chef's Table: Culinary Creativity in Elite Restaurants*. Stanford University.

Chapter 5 “Cognitive Patterns and Work Processes in Cooking”. Pp.99-122.

September 30

CREATIVITY AND COLLABORATION

Becker, Howard. 2008. *Art Worlds*. University of California Press.

Chapter 1 “Art Worlds and Collective Activity”. Pp.1-39.

Farrell, Michael. 2003. *Collaborative Circles: Friendship Dynamics and Creative Work*. University of Chicago Press.

Chapters 1 and 2 “Collaborative Circles and Creative Work” and “The Life Course of a Collaborative Circle: The French Impressionists” Pp. 7-67.

Take home test provided at the end of class

October 7

PERFORMING CREATIVITY

Wohl, Hannah. 2021. *Bound by Creativity: How Contemporary Art is Created and Judged*. University of Chicago Press, 2021.

Chapter 2 “The Eccentric Artist: Negotiating Creative Autonomy in the Art World” Pp. 21-42.

Lee, Jooyoung. 2016. *Blowin' Up: Rap Dreams in South Central*. University of Chicago

Press

Chapters 2 and 3 “Masters of Ceremony” and “Freestyle” Pp.47-98.

Take-home test due October 7th by 11:59pm

October 14

CREATIVE PLACES

Oberlin, Kathleen C., and Thomas F. Gieryn. 2015. “Place and Culture-Making: Geographic Clumping in the Emergence of Artistic Schools.” *Poetics* 50:20-43.

Florida, Richard. 2003. "Cities and the Creative Class." *City & Community* 2(1): 3-19.

October 21

WRITING WORKSHOP – No Readings.

October 28

STATUS: ORGANIZATIONAL AND SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES

Merton, Robert. 1968. “The Matthew Effect in Science.” *Science* 159: 56-63.

Phillips, Damon J., and Ezra W. Zuckerman. 2001. “Middle-Status Conformity: Theoretical Restatement and Empirical Demonstration in Two Markets.” *American Journal of Sociology* 107: 379-429.

November 4

CREATIVITY AND NETWORKS

Collins, Randall. 2009. *The Sociology of Philosophies*. Harvard University Press
Chapters 2 “Networks across the Generations” Pp. 54-79.

Burt, Ronald. 2004. “Structural Holes and Good Ideas.” *American Journal of Sociology*. 110: 349- 399.

Research Proposal Due November 4th 11:59pm

November 11

Reading week - no class!

November 18

STRUCTURE, VALUES, AND LEGITIMACY

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1993. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Chapter 1 “The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed.”
Pp. 29-73.

November 25

INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINT AND CHANGE

DiMaggio, Paul, and Woody Powell. 1983. "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields." *American Sociological Review* 48: 147-160.

White, Harrison C., and Cynthia A. White. 1965. *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Chapter 3 "A New System Emerges." Pp.76-110.

December 2

PRESENTATION DAY

Paper Due

Paper Presentations