The University of Western Ontario

SOCIOLOGY 4405G

Section 001 Spring 2015

The Sociology of Reality

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Office Hours (5432 SSC): Mon. 1:30-3:30 or by appointment

Class Sessions:
Mondays, 9:30-12:20, 5406

Important: Unless you have the prerequisites for this course (either Soc. 3404 or Soc 4404) or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites. Restricted to those with honours specializations in sociology. If space is available, those with an honours double majors in sociology and scholars electives may enrol.

Learning Outcomes

1. Develop a complex cognitive understanding of the concept of reality.
2. Learn to apply social constructionism within various reality milieus.
3. Distinguish objective, subjective, and everyday understandings of reality.
4. Develop a facility in writing short reflections on weekly readings.
5. Enhance academic oral speaking skills through seminar participation.
6. Get a preview of graduate-level education.

Attendance Requirements

This is a seminar course. The expectation is that every student will attend every class and will actively participate in each week's class which is essential to the learning process at this level. With the exception of legitimate and documented medical or compassionate circumstances which will be evaluated on a case by case basis, all students are required to attend no less than 80 percent of weekly seminars. That is, if you miss more than two seminars throughout the course, you will not obtain a passing grade regardless of any other work submitted.

How this Seminar Course Works

Now that you are a more advanced student, seminars offer a unique and mature learning experience. Instead of listening to professors give lectures, seminars offer students an opportunity to be more actively engaged in their own learning. This is both exciting and challenging.
In this course, you will each be responsible for facilitating a discussion of the material for one week of the course. You will not be doing presentations of the material so much as building on the questions that other students have submitted through their weekly reflections (see below). You will review these reflections, and then attempt to organize the material thematically so that you are addressing as many questions as possible. You will then pull this material together into Powerpoint slides which will allow your classmates to see the questions you want them to discuss. The essential idea is to encourage as many of your fellow students to participate in the discussion as follows. You will also play a moderating function by ensuring that the discussion moves among students and is not monopolized by just a few voices.

**Soc. 4405 Reflections & Facilitated Seminars**

The documents titled Soc 4405 Reflections and Facilitated Seminars are posted under Course Materials under Resources in Sakai, and are very important. Please read both documents carefully. **Misunderstanding requirements will not alleviate consequences.** So if you are still unsure after reading these documents, please ask me as soon as possible so that you do understand your responsibilities.

**The Essay**

In addition to the seminar, each student will write a 15+ page paper on some aspect of the sociology of reality with a due date of Wednesday, April 17th at midnight. **Full details will be available on the Sakai site.**

**Evaluation**

- Seminar Facilitation: 10%
- Best 8 reflections @ 5% each: 40%
- Class Participation: 10%
- Essay Proposal (due March 18th): 5%
- Major Essay (due April 17th): 35%

**Readings and Text**

The only text for the course is a paperback by Berger and Luckman titled *The Social Construction of Reality* which is available in the Bookstore. This is the book we will be using for the first three seminars, and which establishes the sociological foundations for the course.

All other readings for all weeks are or will be posted or linked on the Sakai site from UWO licenced scholarly sources. But be prepared for some interesting reading!!
The Sociology of Reality

Weekly Topics

The specific readings for each week are or will be posted under the Unit heading on the Sakai site. There are in general two or three readings per week, which will total somewhere around 60 to 80 pages. My suggestion is to try to get the reading completed by Friday so that you have sufficient time to write and submit a quality reflection for posting by Saturday at midnight. This will give the person facilitating all day Sunday to read your reflections and prepare a powerpoint presentation for Monday morning.

Unit 0  Jan 5  Introduction and Orientation
Unit 1  Jan 12  Reality and Everyday Life
Unit 2  Jan 19  Society as Objective Reality
Unit 3  Jan 26  Society as Subjective Reality
Unit 4  Feb 2  Consciousness and Reality
Unit 5  Feb 9  (Intentional) Altered States of Reality
Unit 6  Feb 23  Losing Touch with Reality
Unit 7  Mar 2  Modernity and Hyperreality
Unit 8  Mar 9  Magic, Illusion, and the Paranormal
Unit 9  Mar 16  Computers and Virtual Reality
Unit 10 Mar 23  Deep Politics: Ideology vs Reality
Unit 11 Mar 30  Religion: Faith vs Reality
Unit 12 April 6  Reality TV: Reality vs Reality

The allocation of seminars will be done on January 12th.
Important University Regulations which you should be familiar with:

**Laptops**
Laptops are not permitted to be used in this class except by the seminar facilitators. There is no need for note taking as this is not a lecture course and there is no exam.

**Cellphones, Blackberries, i-Pads, and similar devices**
Cellphones, Blackberries, i-Pads, and similar devices, must be turned OFF (not just vibrate) during class time unless specific permission is sought for emergency purposes in a given class. Text messaging and Twittering are not permitted during class. Anyone caught doing so will be required to hand in their phones at the beginning of each class for the remainder of the semester.

**Plagiarism**
Students must write their essays and assignments and Sakai postings in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

**Plagiarism Checking**
All required papers, including Sakai postings, may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com).

**Late Assignments**
You should understand that academic accommodation will not be granted automatically on request. Penalties will be applied for all late reflections and the essay. If, due to medical illness, you cannot submit an assignment by the due date, it is your responsibility to follow the University's new "Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness". This policy can be accessed at: [https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm](https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm)

**Compassionate Grounds**
In case of the serious illness of a family member, inform your instructor as soon as possible and submit a medical certificate from the family member's physician to your home faculty's Academic Counselling office.

In case of a death of a family member, inform your instructor as soon as possible and submit a copy of the newspaper notice, death certificate or documentation provided by the funeral director to your home faculty’s Academic Counselling office.