

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
COURSE OUTLINE
SOCIOLOGY 9005B 001 (CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORY)

TERM:	Winter Term 2023
INSTRUCTOR	Dr. Michael E. Gardiner
OFFICE:	SSC 5424 (661-2111, ex. 85139; e-mail: megardin@uwo.ca)
CLASS TIME & LOCATION	Wed 1:30-4:30 (SSC 5235) (online)
OFFICE HOURS:	By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The main theme of this course is the transformation that has occurred in social theory during the post-war era in Europe and North America. This period has been marked by the disintegration of such predominant institutionalized paradigms in social theory as functionalism and positivism, and their replacement by a plurality of alternative approaches. The result of this transformation has been a shift away from the scientific and functionalist analysis of social structure or institutions towards the interpretive exploration of such phenomena as language and cultural forms, gender oppression and the body, ethics and 'micro-politics'.

COURSE OUTCOMES

*If you attend to your responsibilities in this course, you will be able to do the following:

*Understand some of the key theoretical texts in sociology and how they influence the sociological work we do.

*Develop clear, well-thought, and increasingly sophisticated responses to questions posed about contemporary society.

*Display facility in and fluency with core sociological concepts and utilize them in the development of oral and written arguments.

*Demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which theory is constructed and the role it plays in the research process.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Online

REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

1. Synchronous virtual meetings (15% participation)

Seminars will be synchronous sessions via Zoom scheduled during the allotted time above, between 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm weekly. Half the class will participate in the first hour and 15 minutes (1:30 - 2:45 pm), the other half in the second hour and 15 minutes (3:00 – 4:15 pm). Each group/class will typically be organized around one oral presentation by a student (more on this below), followed by discussion. The goal is to try to overcome the limitations of the technology as much as possible and emulate a face-to-face seminar by having dual smaller groups. A maximum of 15 marks will be awarded for participation.

2. Asynchronous responses to readings (20%)

20% of the final grade will be allotted to written responses to *one* of the class discussion questions pertaining to the readings posted each week (2 marks each, ten per term), 200-250 words each post. Part marks may be given. Five should directly address questions posed by the instructor; five responding to other student posts. Such postings cannot involve questions or readings students base their oral presentation on (see below). All posts should be done in a respectful and scholarly manner.

3. Class presentation (20%)

Each student will be required to present orally on one of the readings assigned in a given week. This will be a critical précis that raises questions for class discussion. Prepare for a 12-15 minute presentation. The use of (very) short video clips or other materials is acceptable, but has to be approved by the Professor in advance. A week after the presentation, the student will submit a written version, 7-8 pgs., double-spaced, 12 scale font Times New Roman (20% of final grade).

4. Final Term Paper (45%)

The final term paper (20-25 pgs., double-spaced 12-scale font Times New Roman), worth 45% of the final grade, will be due Friday 21st April by 12 noon.

EVALUATION BREAKDOWN:

Participation:	15%
Asynchronous posts	20%
Class presentation:	20%
Final paper:	45%

Total: 100%

Course Schedule and Readings

Jan. 11th – Orientation

Jan. 18th - The Legacy of Classical Theory

CK, 'Preface'; 'Introduction'; Chaps. 1-4 (vii-ix; 1-63)

Jan. 25th - Rethinking the Classical Tradition

CK, Chaps. 5-7 (67-114).

C. W. Mills, 'The Promise', *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Grove Press, 1961, 3-24).

Feb. 1st - Critical theory I: Habermas & Hall

CK, Chaps. 8-9 (117-39).

Jürgen Habermas, 'The Tasks of a Critical Theory of Society', *Jürgen Habermas on Politics and Society*, ed. by Steven Seidman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989, 77-103).

Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies', *Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies*, *Cultural Studies*, ed. by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (London: Routledge, 1992, 277-294).

Feb. 8th - Critical Theory II: Giddens & Bourdieu

CK, Chap. 10 (140-53).

Anthony Giddens, 'The Emergence of Life-Politics', 'The Emergence of Life-Politics', *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990, 10-34).

Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Practice of Reflexive Sociology', *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, 218-60).

Feb. 15th - Poststructuralism: Lyotard & Foucault

CK, Chaps. 11-12 (157-87).

Jean-François Lyotard, 'The Postmodern Condition', *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984, 1-23).

Michel Foucault, 'Two Lectures', *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980, 78-108).

Feb. 22nd – Spring Reading Break (no classes)

Mar. 1st - The Sociology of Postmodernism/Liquid Modernity: Bauman

CK, Chap. 13 (188-99).

Zygmunt Bauman, 'On Writing, On Writing Sociology', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2000, Vol. 17(1): 79-90.

Zygmunt Bauman, 'On Fashion, Liquid identity and Utopia for Today – Some Cultural Tendencies in the Twenty-First Century', *Culture in a Liquid Modern World* (Cambridge, Polity, 2011, 18-31).

March 8th - Identity Theory I: Feminism

CK, Chaps. 14 & 23 (203-25; 331-40)

Nina Power, *One-Dimensional Woman*, (Alresford: Zero Books, 2009, 17-38).

Patricia Hill Collins, 'Intersectionality's Definitional Dilemmas', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2015, 41(1), 1–20.

March 15th – Identity Theory II: Multiculturalism & Queer theory

CK, Chaps. 15-16 (226-53)

Ali Meghji, 'Introduction: Critical Race Theory as Social Theory', *The Racialized Social System: Critical Race Theory as Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2022).

Steven Seidman, 'Critique of Compulsory Heterosexuality', *Sexuality Research & Social Policy*, 2009, 6(1), 18-28.

March 22nd - Colonialism, Empire, Nation

CK, Chaps. 17-20 (254-301).

Ali Meghji, 'Conclusion: Sociology and the Decolonial Option', *Decolonizing the Curriculum: An Introduction* (Polity, 2020).

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, 'Empire, Twenty Years On', *New Left Review*, 2019, 120, 67-92.

March 29th – The Future of Social Theory I (Climate Change, Pandemics, Planetary Social Thought)

James Bridle, 'Climate', *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future* (London: Verso, 2018, 47-76).

Nigel Clark & Bronislaw Szerszynski, 'What is Planetary Social Thought?', *Planetary Social Thought: The Anthropocene Challenge to the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Polity, 2020, 77-99).

Kari Marie Norgaard, 'The Sociological Imagination in a Time of Climate Change', *Global and Planetary Change*, 163 (April), 2018, 171-76.

Scott Schaffer, 'Necroethics in the Time of COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter', *COVID-19 Volume I: Global Pandemic, Societal Responses, Ideological Solutions*, ed. by Michael J. Ryan (London: Routledge, 2021, pgs. 43-53).

April 5th - The Future of Social Theory II (Algorithms, AI, Automation, Big Data)

David Beer, 'Coda: Metric Power and the Production of Uncertainty (How Does Metric Power Make Us Feel?)', in *Metric Power* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016, 189-215).

Gavin Mueller, 'Against Automation', in *Breaking Things at Work: The Luddites Were Right About Why You Hate Your Job* (London: Verso, 2021, 57-91; 146-50).

Mike Zajko, 'Artificial Intelligence, Algorithms, and Social Inequality: Sociological Contributions to Contemporary Debates', *Sociology Compass*. 2022, 16(3), 1-16.

IMPORTANT POLICIES

A Note on Plagiarism

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea 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 scholastic offence. See Scholastic Offences (below) for the link to Scholastic Discipline regulations.

Plagiarism Checking

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. 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>

Scholastic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Accommodation

Only in exceptional circumstances may a student be provided special accommodation in the completion of a course requirement (i.e., exams, papers). To request a one-time accommodation (brief illness, family emergency), the student should inform the professor when they are able so accommodation can be made. To request other accommodation(s), the student must first meet with the Graduate Chair to discuss options. Medical documentation, where required, will be kept on file in the Sociology graduate program office.

Completion of Course Requirements

Course requirements must be completed by the end of the term in which the course is offered (Fall-December 31; Winter-April 30, Summer-August 31). Only in exceptional circumstances may a student take additional time to complete the course requirements. In such a case, the student must first meet with the Graduate Chair to request permission to carry the incomplete. Medical documentation, where required, will be kept on file in the Sociology graduate program office. More details regarding incompletes are outlined in the Graduate Handbook:

http://www.sociology.uwo.ca/graduate_handbook/course_information.html

Mental Health

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Health and Wellness Western for a complete list of options to obtain help: http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/

Health and Wellness

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. The [Wellness Education Centre](#) (lower level UCC) assists students in finding mental health and other related resources best suited to their needs: <http://se.uwo.ca/wec.html> Western's School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies' [Living Well](#) website provides tips for thriving at grad school and other helpful information:

http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/living_well/index.html

Western provides several on-campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in [Western's Campus Recreation Centre](#): <http://www.westernmustangs.ca/index.aspx?path=ims#> Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. Also, we encourage you to check out the Faculty of Music web page <http://www.music.uwo.ca/>, and our own McIntosh Gallery <http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/>.

Standards of Professional Behaviour

It is the responsibility of all members of the Department of Sociology to adhere to and promote standards of professional behaviour that support an effective learning environment. These include:

- respect for others both in and out of the classroom through words and actions (be professional, fair, and respectful in interactions with people on-line and in-person; understand and respect differences among classmates and colleagues; avoid disrupting the learning environment; respect others' expectations of confidentiality and privacy)
- active engagement in learning and commitment to quality (being prepared for classes; participating and listening actively to other; using technology and social media appropriately, striving to do your best)
- personal integrity (following through on commitments; doing own work)

Students should also be aware of the UWO Student Code of Conduct found at <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>