

Draft until Jan 2022

**Sociology 4405g/9612b: Seminar in Sociological Thought —
Anti/Post/Decolonial Theory
Winter 2022
Dr Scott Schaffer**

Course Meetings: Thurs 930am to 1230pm ET (UTC -4/5)

Office Hours: By appointment in person or via Zoom

Email: scott.schaffer@uwo.ca

Course Description: This course is intended to provide students with an overview of the theoretical, social, and historical responses of the peoples of the (poorly-named) “global South” to the historical conditions and forms of structural violence of the 20th and 21st centuries.

From imperialism and colonialism, to the various linkages between former colony and metropole, to the issues faced by migrants to former colonial masters, we find two key things that will be investigated during this course: first, that the “universal” foundations of the western Enlightenment have problems that have made theorists question their suitability for life in a global community; and second, that the epistemological positions and their corresponding theoretical frameworks are not necessarily relevant or even particularly useful for understanding the lives and positions of subalternized peoples — *but they’re very often the hegemonic ones that we are compelled to use to be legitimately “theorizing sociologically.”*

There are a variety of intersecting elements that we will explore in this course, for a variety of purposes. Those purposes include (and are listed in no particular order of importance): 1) the *ethical purpose* of understanding how the majority of the population of the Earth view the social order in which we find ourselves; 2) the *sociological purpose* of understanding the sociohistorical responses to the dominance of North America and Western Europe over Earth, even as they reverberate today in other social movements such as Black Lives Matter and Idle No More, as well as larger societal calls for equity, “diversity,” and inclusion; and 3) the *epistemological and analytical purpose* of developing analytic frameworks that reflect not simply our own positionality in the world, but can work toward developing a more inclusive and humanistic notion of “sociological knowledge.”

There is, of course, no way that we can cover all aspects of theorizing “from below,” nor will we be able to cover every single formerly-colonized country or situation in which these same sociopolitical formations occur (e.g., settler-colonialism). I am designing this course in order to provide participants with a sense of the *logics* and *epistemes* that have been at work since the start of the Age of Empire, and will be choosing readings that illustrate those points while ensuring as broad a global coverage as I am able.

Course Requirements: A course such as this, dealing with apparently esoteric ideas, ought to be oriented to something pragmatic or practicable. To my mind, the course ought to be oriented to producing something resembling a “theory chapter,” part of a literature review, or some other kind of publishable work, though for undergraduate students there may be a different set of concerns. The assignments for this course are intended to be flexible and account for the goals of its participants.

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Weekly memos/forum contributions	20%	Weekly work before our time together
Capstone assignment proposal	20%	Due on or around Feb 28
Course engagement	20%	Overall evaluation of your engagement
End-of-course assignment	40%	Due on or around Dec 20

Readings: Readings will be available through the course OWL site, which is also where your article contributions will be posted. You are not required to purchase any books for this course.

Course Outline: Readings will be made available on OWL in early December, if not before. A fuller course outline including those readings will appear then. Course participants are also welcome to suggest readings as they pertain to each week's discussions.

- W1 Th Jan 6.** Why we study other/Other theories.
- W2 Th Jan 13.** Conceptions of structural violence and social formations of domination.
- W3 Th Jan 20.** Anti: Colonialism, violence, and humanism.
- W4 Th Jan 27.** Anti: The logics of anti-colonial violence.
- W5 Th Feb 3.** Anti: When liberation isn't so much.
- W6 Th Feb 10.** Post: The metropole, migration, and place.
- W7 Th Feb 17.** Post: Identity, "diversity," and "equality."
- RW Th Feb 24.** Reading week — no class.

Capstone assignment proposal on/about Feb 28.

- W8 Th Mar 3.** Post: Competing contentions about post-colonies/post-colonialisms.
- W9 Th Mar 10.** De: Epistemic violence, subalternity, and the ruins of empire.
- W10 Th Mar 17.** De: Competing notions of the decolonial option.
- W11 Th Mar 24.** De: Poor theory, poor theories, and other discontents.
- W12 Th Mar 31.** On equity, inclusion, and bringing this all home.

Capstone assignment on/about Apr 30.