

SOCY901 SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

FALL 2022

On Campus

Thursdays 11.30am - 2.30pm WATSON 207

Instructor

Prof. Martin Hand

handm@queensu.ca

M/C D426

Office Hours: Thursdays 3pm – 4pm, or email for an appointment

INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY AND CLASS ENGAGEMENT

This is an in-person class that combines short lectures, small group work, and plenty of discussion.

In each session, I will provide an overview of the key ideas concerning the week's material. We will then have general questions, followed by small break out groups to focus on specific questions and issues in the reading. After a short break, we will reconvene for a full class discussion. I will explain the rationale for this approach in the first class.

I generally have an open-door policy, or you can make an appointment via email.

We have an MS Teams group that can be used for additional discussion or if office hours need to be via a platform on some occasions.

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

This course critically examines the main tenets of contemporary sociological theory. Key sociological concepts are studied in a variety of contexts spanning from the micro to macro levels of social action. Although heavily reliant on the main historical developments in sociology (Marx, Weber and Durkheim), emphasis is placed on post-war developments in sociological theory.

AIMS

This course enables students to critically engage with some of the core positions and debates within contemporary sociological theory. It aims to provide an advanced forum for the examination and discussion of several varieties of theorizing in Sociology, the philosophical issues and problems intrinsic to the social sciences, the continued salience of classical traditions and the plurality of responses to them. Students will be encouraged to situate their own work within these positions, and most importantly be open to exploring the very different ways in which theory conceptualizes the social world and the possibilities of inquiry.

ORGANIZATION

The course does not claim to be comprehensive. It will place broad theoretical approaches into some context (e.g. 'what problem or puzzle is this theorist/tradition seeking to understand, and why?'), examine a combination of primary and secondary texts, and concentrate on critically examining these in terms of their internal coherence and relationship to the social world. To do this, each session will begin with the instructor providing a recorded overview of the essential background and development of key ideas. We will then concentrate on discussing the texts and the questions that arise in small groups and then the large synchronous group format. The emphasis in this course is with theoretical interventions that have been relatively transformative at a broad level, as opposed to those directed toward very specific phenomena.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this course students should be able to do the following:

- Understand some of the key directions in sociological thought in the post-war period.
- Identify significant ontological and epistemological differences in sociological theorizing.
- Clearly articulate and discuss core sociological concepts verbally and in written form.
- Develop clearly expressed, critical questions about how different theories are constructed.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how theoretical orientations relate to objects of social research.

ASSESSMENT

The assessment for the course is as follows:

- **In-Class Engagement** (knowledge of reading and clarity of communication): **30%**
- **Reading Reflections** (500-word reflections, weekly, submitted via email each Tuesday by 6pm): **20%**
- **Final Paper** (15-page comparative essay): **50%** Due December 10th

More detail on these assessments will be provided in the first session.

GRADING

All components of this course will receive numerical percentage marks. The final grade you receive for the course will be derived by converting your numerical course average to a letter grade according to Queen's Official Grade Conversion Scale:

Grade	Numerical Course Average (Range)
A+	90-100
A	85-89
A-	80-84
B+	77-79
B	73-76
B-	70-72
C+	67-69
C	63-66
C-	60-62
D+	57-59
D	53-56
D-	50-52
F	49 and below

SUBMISSION

Weekly reflections to be submitted via email, and essay assignments are to be submitted in OnQ. **There will be a penalty of 5% per day on all late assignments, where the following do not apply:**

EXTENSIONS

The Senate Policy for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities was approved at Senate in November 2017 (<https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.uslcwww/files/files/policies/senateandtrustees/Academic%20Considerations%20for%20Extenuating%20Circumstances%20Policy%20Final.pdf>). Graduate students can request special consideration for extenuating circumstances that will have or have had an impact on an academic requirement or requirements.

Graduate students request short term academic accommodation by **completing one of two forms** (pdf 163KB) and submitting the form and any required additional documentation to the Graduate Coordinator (or delegate).

- For consideration for a brief absence of up to 48 hours, the student shall complete and submit the **Self-Declaration of Brief Absence (up to 48 hours)** form.
- For academic consideration (for up to 3 months) for extenuating circumstances the student shall complete and submit the **Request for Academic Consideration for Extenuating Circumstances** form. The student shall submit additional documentation if/as requested by the Graduate Coordinator.

If you need to request academic consideration for this course, you will be required to provide the name and email address of the instructor/coordinator. Please use the following:

Instructor/Coordinator Name: Dr. Martin Hand
Instructor/Coordinator email address: handm@queensu.ca

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic Integrity is constituted by the six core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage (see www.academicintegrity.org). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the "freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas" essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities <http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/report-principles-and-priorities>).

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts and Science Calendar (see Academic Regulation 1 <http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academic-calendars/regulations/academic-regulations/regulation-1>), on the Arts and Science website (see <http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/academic-integrity>), and from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen's. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

READING

The required readings are in OnQ. It is essential that you are completely familiar with them prior to each session.

I would encourage you – as graduate students – to read widely and use every resource at your disposal. This might be by using secondary texts or similar resources to familiarize yourself with concepts, theoretical approaches, and ideas that might be completely unfamiliar and just plain difficult!

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COURSE STRUCTURE

September 8th

Orientation: expectations, structure, assessments

Lecture:

What is the course about and how will it work?

Discussion:

Introduce yourself!

No Readings

September 15th

Varieties of Theorizing

Lecture:

What are we doing when 'theorizing'?

Group Activity:

Which approach to theory do I find most convincing, or familiar, and why?

Discussion:

What are the most significant problems for 'theory'?

Readings:

Abend, Gabriel (2008) 'The Meaning of "Theory"', *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 26:2: 173-199.

Swedberg, Richard (2014) *The Art of Social Theory*. Princeton: PUP. Chapters 1 & 2.

September 22nd

Contemporary Critical Theory

Lecture:

What is 'critical' about critical theory?

Group Activity:

Should sociological theory be concerned with 'justice'?

Discussion:

Reflections on the readings

Readings:

Rosa, Hartmut. (2019) *Resonance*. Cambridge: Polity. Introduction and Chapter V.

Honneth, Axel (2001) 'Recognition or Redistribution? Changing perspectives on the moral order of society', *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 18(2-3): 43-55.

Background:

Joas, Hans & Knobl, Wolfgang (2009) *Social Theory: twenty introductory lectures*. Cambridge: CUP. Chapter X.

September 29th

Structure, Routine, Reflexivity

Lecture: Macro social change and personal life
Group Activity: Is 'reflexivity' now an imperative?
Discussion: Reflections on the readings

Readings:

Giddens, Anthony (1991) *Modernity & Self-Identity*. Stanford: SUP. Chapters 1 and 7.
 Bourdieu, Pierre (1990[1980]) *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford: SUP. PP. 52-97.
 Adkins L. (2003) 'Reflexivity: Freedom or Habit of Gender?' *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 20(6):21-42.

October 6th

Structuralism and Poststructuralism

Lecture: Power, bodies, language
Group Activity: What is a 'subject'?
Discussion: Reflections on the readings

Readings:

Rabinow, P. (ed.) (1984) *The Foucault Reader*. London: Penguin. Pp. 3-29; 170-187; 258-289.
 Butler, Judith (2002[1990]) *Gender Trouble*. 2nd Edition. London: Routledge. Chapter 1.

Background:

Joas, Hans & Knobl, Wolfgang (2009) *Social Theory: twenty introductory lectures*. Cambridge: CUP. Chapter XIV.

October 13th

No Class: fall term break

October 20th

Anti-Structuralism and Contemporary Pragmatism

Lecture: Interpretive sociology and neo-pragmatism
Group Activity: How does capitalism survive?
Discussion: Reflections on the readings

Readings:

Boltanski, Luc & Chiapello, Eve (2007[1999]) *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London & New York: Verso. Pp. 1-54.
 Atkinson, W. (2020) 'Luc Boltanski's pragmatic sociology: A Bourdieusian critique', *European Journal of Social Theory* Vol. 23(3): 310-327.

October 27th**Interactionism and Emotions**

Lecture: *The social production of the self*
Group Activity: *What is sociological about emotions?*
Discussion: *Reflections on the readings*

Readings:

Hochschild, Arlie (2012 [1985]) *The Managed Heart*. Berkeley: CUP. Ch. 6 & Appendix A.
 Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo (2019) 'Feeling Race: theorizing the racial economy of emotions', *American Sociological Review*, Vol 84(1): 1-25.

Background:

Goffman, Erving (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Anchor Doubleday. Chapter 1.

November 3rd**Phenomenological Sociology**

Lecture: *The primacy of experience*
Group Activity: *What does 'socially constructed' really mean?*
Discussion: *Reflections on the readings*

Readings:

Berger, Peter & Luckman, Thomas (1991[1966]) *The Social Construction of Reality*. London: Penguin. P. 33-62.
 Meer, Nasar (2019) 'W.E.B. Du Bois, double consciousness, and the 'spirit' of recognition', *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 67(1): 47-62.
 Crossley, Nick (1995) 'Merleau-Ponty, the Elusive Body, and Carnal Sociology', *Body & Society*, Vol 1. (1): 43-63.

Background:

Joas, Hans & Knobl, Wolfgang (2009) *Social Theory: twenty introductory lectures*. Cambridge: CUP. Chapter VII.

November 10th**Standpoints and Intersectionality**

Lecture: *Developments in feminist theorizing*
Group Activity: *What is a 'standpoint' and how can we recognize it?*
Discussion: *Reflections on the readings*

Readings:

Ahmed, Sara (2017) *Living a Feminist Life*. Durham: Duke. Introduction and Ch. 1 & 2.
 Collins, Patricia Hill & Bilge, Silma (2016) *Intersectionality*. Cambridge: Polity. Ch. 1 & 2.
 Smith, Dorothy (1987) *The Everyday World as Problematic*. Boston: NUP. Chapter 2.

November 17th

Post-Colonialism and Global Sociology

Lecture:

Reorienting social theory

Group Activity:

What are the relations between sociological theories and colonialism?

Discussion:

Reflections on the readings

Readings:

Meghji, Ali. (2021) *Decolonizing Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity. Chapter 1.

Bhambra, Gurminder K. (2007) 'Sociology and Postcolonialism: another "missing" revolution'? *Sociology*, Vol 41(5): 871-884.

November 24th

New directions: Indigenous Futurisms, Planetary Thought, Geo-Social Classes

Lecture:

Theories of post-traditional societies

Group Activity:

What should we retain in sociological theory?

Discussion:

Reflections on the readings

Readings:

Carlson, B. Frazer, R. (2021) *Indigenous Digital Life*. Chapter 11: Futures. London: Palgrave.

Clark, N. Szerszynski, B. (2021) *Planetary Social Thought: the anthropocene challenge to the social sciences*. Chapters 1 and 8. Cambridge: Polity.

Pederson, J. Latour, B. Schultz, N. (2019) 'Reassembling the Geo-Social', *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol.36(7-8): 215-230