SHORT COURSE OUTLINE — full outline to be posted in Aug 2019

SOCIOLOGY 9002a: Classical Sociology
Fall 2019
Dr Scott Schaffer

Class meetings: Weds 130pm to 430pm, SSC 5235
Office hours: Weds 10am to 12pm or by Skype appointment
Email: scott.schaffer@uwo.ca

Brief Course Description:

This course is dedicated to fostering a greater understanding of the importance of sociological theory in the pursuit of sociological research. Rather than dedicating ourselves to the intellectual history of sociology — what a traditional “classical theory” course might be seen to be doing — we will instead be turning to the classical canon as a way of helping us think through what is needed in order to do the best kind of sociological research we can.

This course is a workshop course, which means that rather than listening (or sometimes granting civil attention) to your fellow students in a seminar format, it will require all of us, from the professor to the quietest among us, to actively contribute to the answering of the questions posed during the term. This is not meant to suggest a high-pressure, call-out kind of space, but rather to suggest that our collective best work will be done when we all work together on these problems.

Required Texts:

In addition to a number of required readings that will be posted on OWL, there are two required texts that can be purchased from the UWO Bookstore or from online booksellers. Used copies should be readily available and strongly considered.


Course Assignments:

Weekly Memos: Each week, you will be asked to write a maximum two-page memo discussing a particular issue posed by that week’s readings — one that you find interesting, intriguing, infuriating, or crucial for developing an idea of what sociological research ought to do. These memos will be sent to the entire class no later than 12pm on the Monday before each class meeting. (This holds even if you are unable to attend a class session.) Everyone is expected to read the memos prior to our workshop so that we can have a baseline understanding of where everyone is at with regard to that week’s work.

Memos will be reviewed and assessed on a full-credit/half-credit/no-credit basis. 25% of course mark.

Workshop Engagement: The memos will provide you with the basis to participate in that week’s workshop. Workshops will generally have three parts: a broad discussion on the readings and any questions lingering after the memos; an in-depth workshop where we will hash out how to read these texts and gain insights into the craft of sociological work; and a deeper discussion of the readings on the basis of the work we have done. I will provide you with the materials you’ll need to be fully ready to engage in
Showing up and giving civil attention, though, is only half the battle (and half your mark). 25% of course mark.

Examinations: There will be two take-home examinations in this course. The questions for these will be provided to you two weeks in advance. The midterm exam will be due on Oct 19/2019; the final exam will be due at a point to be decided during the undergraduate exam period in December. Midterm: 20% of course mark; Final exam: 30% of course mark.

Course Topic Schedule:

This is provided to give you a sense of what we will be doing during the course. A fuller reading schedule, detailing what is expected each week, will be provided with the full course outline in August.

W4. W Oct 2. What is the social? Where do we find it? How can we study it? Objects, concepts, and constructs.
W5. W Oct 9. What are we able to actually say about the things we study? Ontology and statements about “things.”


RW. W Nov 6. Reading week — no class.

W9. W Nov 13. How do we know when we “know something”? Verification and falsification of claims to knowledge.
W11. W Nov 27. What approach to the social is appropriate, either scientifically or ethically? The responsibilities of the sociologist.