COURSE OUTLINE

SOCIOLOGY 9005B 650 (CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORY)

TERM: Winter Term 2021

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Michael E. Gardiner

OFFICE: SSC 5424 (661-2111, ex. 85139; e-mail: megardin@uwo.ca)

CLASS TIME & LOCATION: Mon 1:30-4:30 pm (online)

OFFICE HOURS: Online 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, particularly those inspired by what has come to be known as postmodernism. 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'. The merits of this 'postmodern turn', and the prospects for future social theory, will constitute the central focus of this course.

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


METHODS OF EVALUATION

This course is seminar-based, and hence reading and writing intensive. The required readings are intended to give students as broad a comprehension of the key debates and issues in each area of social theory as possible. Each student will be expected to give one oral presentation based on class readings (whenever possible on primary texts), and submit in written form a week after the presentation (2000-2200 words; 8-10 pages, double-spaced, 12-scale font), worth 20% of the final grade. Students will also be expected to write one term paper (20-25 pages, 5-6000 words, double-spaced, 12-scale font), worth 45% of the total grade, which will be due Weds. 21st April by 12 noon. Students are advised to develop a term paper outline by around mid-term and discuss it with the instructor. 15% is awarded for online class participation. (Students missing more than three seminars run the risk of failing the course outright.) The final 20% is awarded to online forum postings. All papers submitted may 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 licensing agreement, currently between the University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com). (The only acceptable excuses for missed deadlines will be for documented medical reasons or family bereavement/illness; late papers will otherwise be docked 5% per day.)

**EVALUATION BREAKDOWN:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation (online)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online forum responses</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
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**REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

1. **Synchronous virtual meetings (15% participation)**

These being Covid times, 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 (1:30 - 2:30 pm), the other half in the second hour (3:00 – 4:00 pm). Each will 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.

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. Ten should directly address questions posed by the instructor; ten responding to other student posts. Such postings cannot involve questions or readings student 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 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 of the talk for grading (20% of final grade).

4. **Final Term Paper (45%)**

The final term paper (5-6000 words, 12-15 pages, double-spaced 12-scale font Times New Roman), worth 45% of the final grade, will be due Weds. 21st April by 12 noon.

**Course Schedule and Readings**

**Sociology 9005 001 – Winter 2021 – Readings**

**Jan. 18th - The Legacy of Classical Theory**


**Jan. 25th - Rethinking the Classical Tradition**

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


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

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


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

CK, Chap. 10 (140-53).


**Feb. 22nd - Poststructuralism: Lyotard & Foucault**

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


**March 1st - The Sociology of Postmodernism: Bauman**

CK, Chap. 13 (188-99)


**March 8th - Identity Theory I: Feminism**

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


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

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


**March 22nd - Colonialism, Empire, Nation**

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


March 29th – Ethnography, Dialogism, Textuality


April 5th - The Future of Social Theory


April 12th – Term Paper session

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION


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