SOCIOLOGY 2271b: Survey of Contemporary Theory
Winter 2020
Dr Scott Schaffer
Course Meetings: Wednesdays 2:30pm to 4:30pm, NSC 1

Office Hours: Wednesdays 10am to 12pm and 4:45pm to 6pm, or by Skype
Office: Social Science Centre 5411
Email: scott.schaffer@uwo.ca
Skype: prof_schaffer

FORMALITIES

Short Course Description: Continuities in Sociological thinking will be stressed by building upon the insights of the discipline's founding thinkers, while simultaneously exposing students to the rich variety that characterizes contemporary theorizing. Among other approaches, structural functionalism, symbolic interactionism, Marxism, critical theory, feminist theory, and post-modernism will be discussed. 2 hours lecture, 1 hour tutorial, 0.5 course.

Antirequisites: Sociology 2240E.
Prerequisites: Sociology 2270A/B.

Note: Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to provide you with an in-depth study of theories of society and social life in the twentieth century. Social theory may appear to be the most abstract part of your studies in sociology; however, social theory plays a number of roles in our everyday life: theory has helped in the development of our political system, our society, and our culture; theory helps us to understand some of the strange things people do in social settings; and theory attempts to show us how some of the wrongs done to others in the social world can be rectified. Sociological theory is also the foundation of the entire field of sociology; the best way to understand what goes on in sociology as a whole (and your other classes in particular) is through understanding social theory. But more importantly, social theory is a way of seeing and thinking about the world and approaching whatever data set you deal with – and this is the primary skill you will develop throughout the year.

There are a number of tasks you will be asked to engage in this term. First, the obvious – you must read all of the assigned readings before coming to class. Many of the readings are difficult, and the lectures are intended to illuminate the issues discussed in them. You should not – and this is your second task – presume that the ideas put forth in lecture are “the answers to the
questions.” One of the toughest parts of studying social theory is the realization that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers, only better or worse ones, and it is your job to come up with those answers and to defend them. Third, you will be asked to engage the readings in a variety of ways – papers, written discussion questions, online group discussions, and in class. Fourth, much of this course will be dedicated to thinking abstractly about some of the key sociological concepts with which we work every day. Part of the task before you is to work through the different ways in which these concepts are thought of, analyzed, seen in relation to others, and defined, and know that they all represent legitimate and coherent views of society. Fifth, you are not only expected to know what the various theorists we’ll be reading have to say; rather, you need to think about how they see the world and how you would utilize what they have to say to analyze sociological phenomena. Finally, you are expected to open yourself up to the materials in this course. They are, as are most university courses, intended to bend your mind, and your task this year is not to regurgitate what I tell you about these theorists, but to figure out what you believe and what you can do with what these theorists have to offer you.

Your continual preparation during the year will be crucial to your success. Do not rely on the class discussions to substitute for the readings (and vice versa) – they can’t. Do not just “read” (i.e., turn pages and highlight randomly); read carefully, critically, and deeply, and think about why the author is saying what they’re saying. Ultimately, what you have to say about these texts will be up to you, making this your journey to a better understanding of the world in which you exist.

**COURSE TEXTS**

Course readings are available for download and printing from the OWL site. You are required to purchase one of the books listed below in the book review essay description (p. 3); these are available from the UWO University Bookstore. Do not buy all of them — you will only need to purchase one of them.

Links to sociological dictionaries and to sociology student writers’ manuals will be posted on OWL. I can suggest print versions if you wish to pursue this route.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**Midterm Examination** 15% of course mark

There will be one midterm examinations for this course on W Feb 26 (15% of course mark). It will be an in-class examination consisting of written exam questions. The possible questions for these examinations will be provided to you two weeks in advance of the due date in order to give you time to prepare for them and to consult with me and your teaching assistants.

**Final Examination** 35% of course mark

We will have an in-person final examination during the Winter term examination period. This cumulative examination will be an essay examination, and questions will be provided to you two weeks in advance of the exam date in order to give you time to prepare for them and to consult with me and your teaching assistants.
Book Review Essay

For this course, you will be asked to write a book review essay discussing one book you’ll choose from the list below. This essay is meant to enable you to draw topical and theoretical linkages between “outside” reading and your course readings. Details for the assignment will be released after the midterm examination; however, you need to get a preliminary sense of each of these books and choose one to commit to as early as possible in the term. Reviews of each work can be found on OWL.

The choices for this assignment are as follows. These books are available for purchase in the UWO University Bookstore. Other books may be entertained; please discuss this with Professor Schaffer as early as possible in the assignment.

- Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included*
- Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion*
- Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*
- Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*
- Manning Marable, *Beyond Black and White*
- Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*
- Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism*

Quizzes

In order to ensure that you are keeping up with the readings, there will be six quizzes each term in tutorial. These quizzes will be scheduled and occur at the discretion of the teaching assistants. We will drop your two lowest quiz marks — one from before the midterm, and one from the second half of the term. There are no makeups for missed quizzes; any quiz that is missed without prior notification will result in a zero. Quiz marks will be posted before the midterm (7.5% of course mark) and at the end of the term (7.5% of course mark).

Tutorials

Once a week you will meet in a smaller group tutorial setting to discuss the readings, themes, and issues that this course will engage. Your tutorial leader will provide you with assistance in figuring out what’s going on in class, and in doing so will engage you in a variety of ways. The teaching assistants for this course will be discussing their assignments and evaluation criteria with you in the first tutorial session. You will receive tutorial marks before the midterm (7.5% of course mark) and before the final exam (7.5% of course mark).
Lecture Attendance and Course Engagement  

-3 to +3% of course mark

Lecture attendance is mandatory in this course, and attendance will be taken in each session. I can assure you that your success in this course depends greatly on your attendance and engagement in class. At the end of the year, I will adjust your calculated course mark based upon your attendance in class as well as other elements of participation in the course in order to ensure that your final mark reflects your overall performance in the course. Please note that failing to attend lectures regularly and to engage in the course in other ways will result in a reduction of the calculated mark.

I take “participation” as anything that indicates your commitment to doing the best work you are capable of doing – ranging from attentively listening to the contributions of your peers, to thoughtfully contributing to the in-class discussion, to posing questions to me during office hours or via email. This also includes continuing course-related discussions on OWL, which will be beneficial for your participation grade and for the work you do elsewhere in the course. 

Merely showing up for class does not constitute “course participation,” and merely talking off the top of your head does not equal “discussion.”

GRADING POLICIES

In order to pass this course, you must submit all assigned work in a timely manner and in accordance with commonly accepted University guidelines. Except in the case of a severe, catastrophic, and well-documented misfortune that befalls you, no late work will be accepted except with academic accommodation as issued by the Social Science Counselling Centre. You should understand that academic accommodations will not be granted automatically on request.

If you have a conflict with one of the listed examination or assignment due dates, it is your responsibility to discuss it with the Academic Counselling office as soon as possible, but no later than one week before the regularly-scheduled exam or due date.

If you miss an examination, including any makeup exam, due to illness or for any other unforeseen reason, you must notify me within 24 hours of the missed exam. You must then provide notification and documentation to your Academic Counsellor within 48 hours.

There will be one makeup date set by the Department of Sociology for students who have approved accommodation to write a makeup exam. This makeup exam may or may not be in the same format as the original exam. If a student misses a makeup exam due to sickness or another documented reason, then the weight of the exam will be added to the weight of the final examination. In cases where there is no justification for the absence, the student will receive a zero (0) for the exam.

The Department of Sociology mandates a particular course mark distribution. As much as possible, the mark you earn in this course will be the mark you will receive. For 2200-level courses, the course mean should be between 69% and 73%, and there are to be more Bs than As.

Evaluation guidelines for written work, as well as other policies pertaining to the course, are listed in the Course FAQ handout, which is available on OWL. You should read them thoroughly, both at the start of the term and prior to submitting assignments as they will provide you with a comprehensive checklist for your work.

I do my best to ensure that the evaluation of your work is as impartial as possible and reflects the quality of what you submit at the due date and time as measured against the
evaluation guidelines. If you have issues with that evaluation, you may submit to the person who evaluated your work a one-page statement of how it is that you think your work as submitted was wrongly evaluated no sooner than 24 hours after we return the work to you. We will then meet to discuss the issue. Please note that I reserve the right to elevate your mark, maintain the mark as applied, or to lower the mark depending on that re-evaluation.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Below is the preliminary schedule of readings and lectures for the course. Generally speaking, we will endeavour to hold to this schedule, so you should plan your time accordingly.

You will note, I’m sure, that there is a great deal of reading at various points during the term. My expectation is that you will do your best to get through all of it — and in general, if you read a bit each day, five days a week, you will get through it all with a minimum of suffering. (Note that the standard expectation for a second-year course is that you will spend 2-3 hours outside of class for every hour of class time; thus, 6-9 hours per week is to be expected.)

As you are reading, be sure that you do not attempt to simply turn pages or skim to get through the texts as quickly as possible. “The answers” are “not there”; they require careful reading, careful thinking, note-taking, idea-jotting, mind-mapping, doodles, and any other number of possible ways for you to sort out your ideas about them. They are here to provoke you, to get inside your head and rattle around until they mesh together with some other thing to create A New Idea. Let that happen.

You need to be sure to bring the printed readings with you to lecture and tutorial each week. As a significant portion of this course involves learning how to read theoretical texts, we will be workshopping a number of passages each week. Having your readings with you will make that an easier task.

Lecture outlines will be distributed before class each week. Please print these out and bring them with you to class, as they provide signposts for where we are in our discussions.

All readings are available on OWL. They are all required except as noted, and you should print them in order to bring them to lectures and tutorials.

Now that you’ve gotten to this point in reading the course outline, send me a picture of an owl to signify that you have read and agreed to the terms in this course outline.

**WINTER TERM**

Week 1: Weds Jan 8
Introduction to the Course; the Late Twentieth; the Enlightenment Project.

Miranda Fricker, selections from *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*
Week 2: Weds Jan 15
Sociality, its components, and its breakdowns.

*Georg Simmel*

Georg Simmel, "The Poor" (150-179)
Georg Simmel, "Group Expansion and the Development of Individuality" (251-294)
Georg Simmel, "Prostitution" (121-127)
Georg Simmel, "Social Forms and Inner Needs" (351-352)

Week 3: Weds Jan 22
The dark side of modernity, part I. Racialization and its effects.

*W.E.B. DuBois, Anna Julian Cooper, Walter Mignolo*

W.E.B. DuBois, "The Souls of Black Folk"
W.E.B. DuBois, "The Souls of White Folk”
W.E.B. DuBois, “The Concept of Race”
W.E.B. DuBois, “To the Nations of the World”
Anna Julia Cooper, selections from *Voices from the South*
Walter Mignolo, selections from *Local Histories/Global Designs*

Week 4: Weds Jan 29
The dark side of modernity, part II. Colonialism and racialization.

*Anténor Firmin, Frantz Fanon*

Anténor Firmin, selections from *On the Equality of Human Races*
Frantz Fanon, selections from *Black Skin, White Masks* and *Towards the African Revolution*

Week 5: Weds Feb 5
Reclaiming humanity, part I. Reconceptualizing the colonized.

*José Vasconcelos, Aimé Césaire, Achille Mbembe*

José Vasconcelos, selections from *The Cosmic Race*
Aimé Césaire, selections from *Discourse on Colonialism*
Achille Mbembe, selections from *On the Post-Colony* and
Week 6: Weds Feb 12
Reclaiming humanity, part II. Gender and sociality.
*Marianne Weber, Simone de Beauvoir, Xinyan Jiang, Judith Butler*

Marianne Weber, selections from “Authority and Autonomy in Marriage”
Simone de Beauvoir, "From The Second Sex," pp. 199-207 in Susan Bordo and María Cristina Alcalde (eds.), *Provocations: A Transnational Reader in the History of Feminist Thought*
Xinyan Jiang, “Confucianism, women, and social contexts”
Judith Butler, selections from *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*

Weds Feb 19: Winter Reading Week. No class. Get ready for…

**Week 7: Weds Feb 26: Midterm Examination in Class**

Week 8: Weds Mar 4
Theorizing systems. The Frankfurt School.
*Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse*

Max Horkheimer, "Materialism and Morality," pp. 15-48 in Horkheimer, *Between Philosophy and Social Science*
Theodor Adorno, Lectures 15-16 (pp. 127-144) from *Introduction to Sociology*
Herbert Marcuse, "One-Dimensional Man"

Week 9: Weds Mar 11
Systems I: (De)formations of individuals.
*Theodor Adorno, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, Betty Friedan*

Theodor Adorno, selections from *The Authoritarian Personality*
Michel Foucault, selections from *Discipline and Punish*
Jean Baudrillard, selections from *The System of Objects*
Betty Friedan, selections from *The Feminine Mystique*

Week 10: Weds Mar 18
Systems II: Lifeworld, fields, and inequalities.
*Jürgen Habermas, Pierre Bourdieu, John Porter*

Jürgen Habermas, selections from
Pierre Bourdieu, selections from
John Porter, selections from *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada*
Week 11: Weds Mar 25
Systems III: Globality, coloniality, and inequality, part I.
*Immanuel Wallerstein, Vivek Chibber, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Arjun Appadurai*

Immanuel Wallerstein, selections from *The World-System*
Vivek Chibber, selections from *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”
Arjun Appadurai, selections from *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*

Week 12: Weds Apr 1
Systems IV: Globality, coloniality, and inequality, part II.
*Gloria Anzáldua, Chandra Mohanty, Maria Lugones, Uma Narayan*

Gloría Anzáldua, selections from *Borderlands/La Frontera*
Chandra Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes”
Maria Lugones, “On the logic of pluralist feminism”
Uma Narayan, “Contesting Cultures: ‘Westernization,’ Respect for Cultures, and Third-World Feminists”

Week 13: Weds Apr 8
Closure Discussion: Toward more just futures.
*Ato Sekyi-Otu*

Ato Sekyi-Otu, selections from *Left Universalisms, Africacentric Essays*

**Final Examination Date (TBD): Cumulative Final Examination**

**COURSE POLICIES**

It is crucial that you read, understand, and agree to these policies. Your continued enrolment in the course constitutes acceptance of these policies and expectations of you during the term. Note that additional information on these policies and other things that might come up during the year can be found in the Course FAQ on OWL. By Sep 18, you need to email Professor Schaffer a picture of a dragon. This signifies that you have read and understood all the requirements listed in this course outline.

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:** UWO promotes the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect for other students, and help maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts. Violations of academic integrity will be treated very seriously.

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage 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 academic offence (see the Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar), and I take it very seriously.
All required papers will 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 for such checking 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 UWO and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com).

Students who submit work found to be substantially plagiarised (i.e., work in which plagiarism can be demonstrated in substance) will be subject to the procedures outlined in the Scholastic Discipline for Undergraduate Students section of the Western Academic Calendar. This referral will be done without exception.

Accessibility. Please contact me if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519/661.2111 x82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

Attendance and Accommodation for Medical Illness. Your attendance in class sessions is expected and constitutes part of your mark. If you are unable to attend a class session for medical or compassionate reasons, you must inform me as soon as possible.

The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf. Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html.

Communications: Email is my preferred method of contact. Any professor should tell you this: Write your emails to me as you would want any letter of recommendation I might write on your behalf written for you. They should be professionally prepared, spell- and grammar-checked, and not written in “text message” format. They should account for the highest degree the person has (hence, I am “Dr Schaffer” or “Professor Schaffer,” or even “Schaffer,” not “Mr Schaffer”), and they should be respectful of the recipient. Be sure to always sign them; if your email address is “HotKitty642@aol.com” and you don’t sign it, I will presume it is spam and treat it accordingly.

Laptop Policy: Laptops are generally prohibited in this course. This course is not a dictation course, and you cannot expect to learn what this course has to offer simply by taking down every word that is said (or checking your Facebook during lectures). Research has shown that students who take “paper notes” generally perform better in courses than those who take notes with laptops; and laptop usage can be distracting for those seated behind you, reducing their attention in class as well. However, if you believe that your academic performance will be unduly disadvantaged by not being able to use a laptop and can provide a compelling reason for this, please come discuss the matter with me. All students granted leave to use a laptop in class will be required to sit in the last row or in a location to be arranged so as not to distract others. iPads and other tablets, when used for handwritten notes in a horizontal position, are allowed, as is making audio recordings of my lectures for later note-taking.
Mental Health. Students who are in emotional or mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western (http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health) for a complete list of options for how to obtain help.

Mobile Phone Policy: All phones are to be shut off at the start of class, except if you have a dire emergency that you are having to attend to (such as an immediate family member’s illness or hospitalization, or your spouse’s/domestic partner’s impending delivery), in which case you need to let me know at the start of class. Phones that go off in class will have messages taken and delivered publicly. Text messaging is absolutely prohibited during class times, whether on smart phones or smart watches.

Other Important Issues: My Pedagogical Prime Directive is No BS. This course outline details what I require of my students, and should you meet those requirements, you can expect an intellectually fulfilling class session and course. If you fail to meet those requirements, I reserve the right to excuse you from the class session, either individually or collectively, as I firmly believe that you cannot adequately benefit from what goes on in my classroom without having put in the necessary preparation before class and the necessary engagement in class. I also have nearly twenty years’ evidence for this belief, should you need it. I hope that you will not.

I will actively work to respond to issues that come up in class, either during the term or on a daily basis. To that end, I reserve the right to change, adapt, or amend this course outline, the reading schedule, and other policy issues at any time in order to make possible the improvement of the course; however, I will only do so with the consent of and input from the class as a whole. Finally, any issues that you feel are impacting on your ability to do well in the course, whether they are issues inside or outside the classroom, should be brought to me directly and firstly as soon as possible. If the issue is not adequately resolved through the discussion with me, you need to follow the Sociology department’s protocols for addressing a grievance. I take what goes on in this course very seriously and personally; I hope you will as well.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS & LEARNING OUTCOMES

As with any university course, you are expected to be fully engaged in this course and able to be responsible for your own learning. In order to do that, you should be prepared to meet the following expectations:

- Consistent attendance in class sessions, with you having read the materials prior to class, being prepared to discuss the materials, to pose any questions that you have, and to engage yourself and others in the learning process;
- Attendance in my office hours whenever you have a question or need help in understanding the materials or issues under discussion;
- Thoughtful reflection on the course materials and issues prior to coming to class, thoughtful discussion of these materials and issues during class sessions, and further reflection and engagement with them after class;
- The diligent pursuit of all assignments, with you committed to doing your best work on each one and dedicated to improving the quality of that “best work” throughout the term;
- And, overall, your commitment to giving us your best work in every class session and throughout the term.
If you engage with and meet these expectations, you can expect that by the end of this term, you will be able to do the following (among other things that you’ll be surprised you’ve learned how to do and discovered about yourself):

- Understand some of the key theoretical texts in sociology and how they underpin the discipline of sociology;
- Develop clear, well-thought, and increasingly sophisticated responses to questions posed;
- Display facility in and fluency with core sociological and theoretical concepts and utilise them in the development of oral and written arguments;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which theory is constructed, operates as a basis for sociological analysis, is refined, and relates to the research process;
- And understand and discuss the continuing relevance of contemporary sociological theory for sociological research and living in Canadian society today.