



The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 3404F-001
Modern Sociological Theory
Fall 2023
In-Person

Instructor: Dr. Robert Nonomura

Email: rnomur@uwo.ca

Official Course Description:

This course will survey major trends in modern sociological theory.

Prerequisite(s): 0.5 courses from Sociology 2263A/B, Sociology 2270A/B, Sociology 2271A/B OR 1.0 Sociology 2240E.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The 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.

Anti-requisite(s): Sociology 4404F/G

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

The course is designed to refine your understanding of key theoretical ideas, problems, and debates within contemporary sociology. In addition to developing a more in-depth understanding of the theories of influential social researchers, we will explore the ways that sociological thinking can help us engage more incisively with the “big” social and political issues of our time. Tensions between theory and practice, power and knowledge, structure and agency, oppression and resistance, will be recurring topics we’ll explore throughout the semester, as will the emphasis on cultivating a “reflexive” understanding of sociological inquiry itself.

Please note that open student-led class discussion will comprise a significant portion of our weekly meetings. Consistent preparation, focus, and participation will therefore be crucial to your success throughout the semester, and to the effectiveness of the course itself. Class time will generally be divided between presentations led by a designated team of “discussion leaders” for the week, and a segment of direct instruction by me. Through our collective efforts, we will synthesize key insights from the readings and draw broader connections to the course, the discipline, and society at large.

The course is geared toward achieving the following learning outcomes. You may interpret these as both a reference point for “where we’re headed” with the material in the course, as well as a broad rubric for the knowledge, understanding, and ability I expect of students in a “3000-level” course. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate the role that theory plays in social scientific inquiry and compare the relative strengths and weaknesses of various theoretical perspectives for particular kinds of sociological research.
- Understand key theoretical concepts (e.g. reflexivity, criticism, structure/agency, power/knowledge, intersectionality) in contemporary social theory.
- Identify a sociological topic of interest, and use scholarly sources to develop an essay-length theoretical examination of this topic.
- Apply social-theoretical ideas and concepts in verbal discussions about current social issues and problems.
- Critically discuss key theoretical contributions made by influential figures in modern sociological thought.
- Lead a small group discussion that generates scholarly conversation about the work of a particular theorist or theoretical tradition in sociology.

Course Material:

Mid-way through the term, we will be reading the book *Feminism for the 99%* by Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya, and Nancy Fraser. I recommend waiting until the course has started before ordering a copy.

Other reading assignments will consist of journal articles, book chapters, and knowledge mobilization resources. Course materials will be accessed via Perusall and/or OWL. Some copyright costs may be involved in using this platform, but efforts have been made to keep these at a minimum.

Communication:

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<http://owl.uwo.ca>) on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

When emailing the course instructor or teaching assistants, please include our course code, **Soc 3404F** in the subject heading. In doing so, you can expect a response within two business days.

Method of Evaluation:

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

Essay Proposal (10%) — October 20, 11:59pm

Essay (30%) — December 3, 11:59pm

Online Quiz (7.5%) — Opens: Oct. 1; Due: Oct. 10

Online Quiz (7.5%) — Opens: Nov. 9 – Due: Nov. 19

Discussion Facilitation and Report (15%) — Sign-up in class Week 2

Participation (30% — 10% in-class discussions, 20% Perusall forum contributions) — Ongoing

Evaluation Breakdown:

Essay Proposal — 10%

Prior to submitting the Final Paper, you will submit a Term Paper Proposal worth 10% of your final mark in this course. Your task for this assignment will be to demonstrate to me that your paper: (1) Takes on a topic that is relevant to the course and can be manageably addressed in the page length allotted; (2) Will progress in a sensible way, using logical arguments to build support for its main point; and (3) Will be grounded in academic literature that is pertinent to the subject matter.

This assignment will be evaluated based on the viability of the proposed project—that is, the degree to which your plans have been well thought-out, your ideas and understanding of the subject matter are “on the right track,” and the proposed topic and analysis are relevant and appropriate to the Final Paper Assignment and to the course in general. For further details concerning my expectations for the Final Paper, consult the “Final Paper Assignment” document on OWL.

This assignment must be uploaded to OWL (Assignments>Term Paper Proposal) by **Friday October 20, 11:59pm ET**. Late submissions will be penalized 5% per day.

Full instructions and rubric are available on OWL: Resources>Assignments

Essay — 30%

The purpose of this assignment is to provide you an opportunity to conceptualize, research, and develop a theoretically grounded discussion of a sociological topic that you’re interested in. This assignment must be uploaded to OWL (Assignments>Term Paper) no later than **Sunday, December 3, 11:59pm**. Late submissions will be penalized 5% per day.

Full instructions and rubric are available on OWL: Resources>Assignments

Quizzes — 20% (10% each)

Quizzes will be conducted using the Tests & Quizzes page on OWL. They may consist of a variety of question formats, such as Multiple Choice, Concept Definitions, and Short Answer questions.

Quiz 1 opens October 1 and closes October 10, 11:59pm. It covers weeks 1–5.

Quiz 2 opens November 9 and closes November 19, 11:59pm. It covers weeks 6–10.

These Quizzes are not time-limited (except for the due date). I encourage you to open the quiz once it has been released, review the questions, and take your time to develop your answers throughout the week.

Discussion Facilitation and Report — 15%

Date and group selection takes place in class by random draw on Week 2. Facilitators will lead breakout group discussions of the week’s materials. They will prepare a summary of key takeaways from the week’s readings, as well as discussion questions designed to elicit discussions on the sociological implications of the theories being examined. Facilitators will lead a debrief session in which they summarize the main conclusions drawn by the breakout group.

Within one week of the facilitation, Facilitators will submit a report that synthesizes the ideas raised during the breakout discussion into a well-developed scholarly response to one of their discussion questions.

Full instructions and rubric available on OWL: Resources>Assignments

Participation — 30% (10% class meetings; 20% Perusall contributions)

Participation in class meetings is assessed cumulatively throughout the term. Evaluation for this mark comprises all forms of interaction and communication (in class and in office hours) that contribute to the accomplishment of our course objectives and that also uphold the class code of ethics.

Perusall forum participation comprises engagement on the class's Perusall tool on OWL. During each week's readings, you will have the opportunity to use the platform to comment on key passages, pose questions about the readings, and interact with peers who are doing the same. Of the eleven (11) eligible weeks in which to participate on the platform, you will be required to participate during at least seven (7) of your choice. Your grade in this section of the course will be based on the consistency, quality, depth, and completeness of your engagement with the week's materials (and with classmates who will also be commenting on these works).

Student Absences:

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

Assessments worth less than 10% of the overall course grade: For work worth less than 10% of the total course grade, I have the capacity to grant academic considerations without referring you to academic counsellors. Come and speak to me and we can likely reach a fair and reasonable arrangement.

Assessments worth 10% or more of the overall course grade: For work totaling 10% or more of the final course grade, students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to their Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office as soon as possible. Once the documentation is complete, we can discuss an appropriate extension on quizzes and written assignments or a rescheduling of your Discussion Facilitation to a later date.

Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or exam will be required to write a makeup exam. Course professor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test.

Academic Policies:

Please review the Department of Sociology "[Important Academic Policies](https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf)" document https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf for additional information regarding:

- Scholastic Offences
- Plagiarism
- Copyright
- Academic Accommodation
- Accessibility Options
- Mental Health