

**University of Toronto**  
**Department of Sociology**  
**Contemporary Sociological Theory (SOC376H)**  
**Fall 2015 (Mondays from 10 a.m. to noon)**  
**Location: LM155**  
**Professor J. Veugelers**

**COURSE AIMS AND SCOPE**

Partly a selective introduction to the work of postwar social thinkers whose ideas have achieved wide influence, partly an inquiry into the nature and purposes of sociological analysis, this course combines attention to the historical context in which ideas were formed with close reading of the primary sources and scrutiny of theorists' assumptions and arguments. Along the way, connections will be drawn with sociology's classic tradition on one hand, empirical research on the other. In terms of its substantive focus, this course is organized around contrasting outlooks on historical development and social change: "Pessimists" vs. "Perennialists." Taken together, position papers and tests for this course assess knowledge of at least six of the thinkers considered: three "pessimists" and three "perennialists".

**RESTRICTION AND PREREQUISITES**

This course is restricted to Specialists in the Sociology program. The prerequisite is SOC203Y, or both SOC201H and SOC203H. Non-specialists or students without the prerequisite may be removed from the class list at any time without notice.

**READINGS**

The course pack for SOC376H is available from the U of T Bookstore (214 College Street)

**EVALUATION**

The final grade will be based on two position papers and two one essay-style, in-class tests, weighted as follows:

1. Position paper 1 (due October 26).....	25 %
2. Test 1 (November 2).....	25 %
3. Position paper 2 (due December 7).....	25 %
4. Test 2 (December 9).....	25 %
	=====
	100 %

**ATTENDANCE**

Responsibility for being aware of what the professor says in lectures (including administrative announcements) rests with students. As a precaution in case they miss a lecture, students should have a "buddy" who is willing to share their lecture notes. Attendance at tutorials will be optional.

**ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS**

If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.

## WEEKLY TOPICS AND REQUIRED READINGS

September 14. *Introduction to the course*

September 21. *Grand theory, abstracted empiricism and problem formulation*

- C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), Chapters 2, 3, 6 and 8

### “Pessimists”

September 28. *Social capital*

- Robert Putnam (1995), "Bowling alone: America's declining social capital," *Journal of democracy* 6(1): 65-78.

October 5. *Economy, culture and personality*

- Daniel Bell (1976), *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, Part 1, Chapter 1, (“The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism”)

October 19. *The bourgeois public sphere*

- Jürgen Habermas (1962), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Part 2 (“Social Structures of the Public Sphere”)

October 26. *Democracy and exclusion*

- Michael Mann (1999), “The Dark Side of Democracy: The Modern Tradition of Ethnic and Political Cleansing,” *New Left Review* 1/235:18-45.

**Position paper 1 (on one “Pessimist” and one classical thinker) due**

November 2.

**Test 1 on the “Pessimists”**

### “Perennialists”

November 16. *Structure and agency*

- Anthony Giddens (1976), "Functionalism: Après la lutte." *Social Research* 43(2): 325-366.

November 23. *Gender*

- Simone de Beauvoir (1949), *The Second Sex*: i. The Point of View of Historical Materialism; ii. Modern History; iii. The Independent Woman; iv. Conclusion.

November 30. *Social control*

- Michel Foucault (1975), *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Part 1, Chapter 1 (“The body of the condemned”) and Part 3, Chapter 3 (“Panopticism”)

December 7. *Cultural capital and taste*

- Pierre Bourdieu (1979), *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Part 2, Chapter 3 (“The Habitus and the Space of Life-Styles”)

**Position paper 2 (on one “Perennialist” and one classical thinker) due**

December 9.

**Test 2 on the “Perennialists”**

## ONLINE WRITING RESOURCES

Visit [www.writing.utoronto.ca](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca) for tips on:

- writing (style, research, organization, grammar, punctuation)
- citing and how to avoid plagiarism
- writing when English is a second language
- reading
- writing instruction and support at the University of Toronto

Visit <http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~nscharer/plagmain.htm> for “Plagiarism & How to Avoid It.”

## HELP FROM YOUR TEACHING ASSISTANT

Your T.A. will conduct tutorials, hold scheduled office hours and respond to your emails. Please be judicious in your use of email. Use it only for questions that are brief and specific. Before sending a question by email, be sure to check the course outline to see if an answer is already available. Emails should not be seen as an alternative to doing the assigned reading or attending lectures. Expect to receive a response from your T.A. within three working days. For more in-depth discussions of the lectures, readings, tests and position papers, take advantage of your T.A.’s tutorials.

## COMMUNICATION

Students cannot submit their work by fax, email or to the receptionist at the Department of Sociology. Emails should be sent to your TA, not the professor.

## ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN THE CLASSROOM

Laptops are permitted, but only for taking notes. Using laptops for other purposes will be treated as a breach of courtesy toward others. Texting, photography, cellphone use and audio or video recording are also forbidden. Offenders will be asked to leave the classroom immediately.

## T.A. OFFICE HOURS

Information about the office hours scheduled by your TA will be communicated on a handout to be distributed in class.

## DEADLINES

Work is due at the start of class on the due date. **Late work will never be accepted without proper documentation from a student’s physician or college registrar (see below).**

## MAKE-UP TESTS

Students who miss a test will receive a mark of zero for that test unless reasons beyond their control prevent them from taking it. **Within three days** of the missed test, students who wish to write the make-up test must give the Professor, the TA or the Undergraduate Advisor in the Sociology Department a written request for special consideration which explains why the test was missed, accompanied by **proper documentation from a physician or college registrar** (see below). A request should be accompanied by contact information (the student’s telephone number and email address) so the date, time and place

of the make-up test can be communicated to the student. A student who misses a test and the subsequent make-up test for a valid reason will not have a third chance to take the test. Instead, the grade assigned for the missed test will be the same as the grade the student earns for the other test in this course.

## **DOCUMENTATION FROM YOUR PHYSICIAN, COLLEGE REGISTRAR OR ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES**

If you miss a test or a paper deadline, **do not** contact the instructor or a TA unless you have followed the steps described here. Telling the professor or TA why you missed a deadline or a test probably will not help.

- In case of **illness**, you must supply a duly completed Verification of Student Illness or Injury form (available at [www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca](http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca)). A doctor's note is not acceptable.
- If a **personal or family crisis** prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must get a letter from your college registrar (it is a good idea anyway to advise your college registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies). This letter must specify the length of the extension that is justified under the circumstances.

Place your supporting documentation in a sealed envelope addressed to Professor Veugelers. Submit this envelope along with your work at a class lecture, to your TA during their office hours, or using the drop box for third-year courses in room 225 at 725 Spadina Avenue (if using the drop box, please send your TA an email message to notify them).

If documentation is to be provided by Accessibility Services, have them send an email message to the professor, and then use the drop box in room 225 at 725 Spadina Avenue (if using the drop box, please send your TA an email message to notify them as soon as your work has been submitted).

## **POSITION PAPERS**

**Position paper length:** 2 to 3 pages (excluding references/bibliography) in 12-point font, double-spaced.

**Plagiarism:** cheating and misrepresentation will not be tolerated. Students who commit an academic offence face serious penalties. Avoid plagiarism by citing properly: practices acceptable in high school may prove unacceptable in university. Know where you stand by reading the "Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters" in the Calendar of the Faculty of Arts and Science. A first rule of thumb: each time you use a sequence of three or more words written by someone else, use quotation marks and give the source. But more than this is involved in citing properly -- read "HOW NOT TO PLAGIARIZE" below.

**Submitting the same work for more than one course:** Section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters says it is an offence "*to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere.*"

**Each position paper must be submitted twice:**

- (1) as hard copy, at the start of class on the due date;

(2) online at <http://www.turnitin.com>, by the start of class on the due date.

Assignments not submitted through Turnitin will receive a grade of zero (0 %).

Go to <http://www.turnitin.com> to submit your paper online. For access, enter the **class ID** and **enrolment password** (you will receive these before your first position paper is due). Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to **Turnitin.com** for the detection of plagiarism. Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to *Turnitin.com* for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the *Turnitin.com* reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the *Turnitin.com* web site. If you cannot submit your paper in class, go to room 225 at 725 Spadina Avenue by 10 a.m. on the due date, put a date/time stamp on the top page of your paper, put it into the drop box for 200-level courses, **then notify your TA that your paper is there.**

## **POSITION PAPER GUIDELINES**

### **Position paper 1: choose (a) or (b)**

(a) *Contrast and compare a selected aspect of the thought of one "Pessimist" with that of one classical sociologist (e.g., Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Simmel or Tocqueville).*

(b) *Apply Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, to the ideas of one of the four thinkers studied in this part of the course (Putnam, Bell, Habermas or Mann).*

### **Position paper 2: choose (a) or (b)**

(a) *Contrast and compare a selected aspect of the thought of one "Perennialist" with that of one classical sociologist (e.g., Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Simmel or Tocqueville).*

(b) *Apply Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, to the ideas of one of the four thinkers studied in this part of the course (Giddens, De Beauvoir, Foucault or Bourdieu).*

The main objective of a position paper is to **make an argument, not to summarize the course material.** Your paper might be structured as follows:

- **Introduction:** state the question you are addressing, why it is significant, what your answer to it is, and how you will make your case
- **Exposition:** briefly but clearly set forth the ideas you are analysing
- **Analysis:** present your own views on these ideas
- **Conclusion:** re-state what you have demonstrated in this paper but also present some implications (given what you have argued, the implications for sociological analysis are...)

In a concise and creative fashion, your paper may raise new questions, point out gaps or hidden contradictions, or draw connections with other issues and theoretical approaches. Here are some questions that might guide or stimulate the formulation of your argument:

- What are the main questions or issues? What is their significance? Who (or what intellectual school) are thinkers arguing against? Are thinkers addressing a controversy and taking sides? Are they identifying a problem that was previously unseen? Are offering a solution to an already-recognized problem, or simply criticizing earlier solutions?
- What is the logic of the thinkers' arguments? What assumptions do the thinkers make? Are these assumptions tacit or explicit? Do the conclusions flow logically from their assumptions? What kind of evidence, first principle, or other understanding is marshalled to make their arguments persuasive?
- What are the important concepts? How are they defined? What biases are built into them? How do different thinkers tackle the same concept?
- What are the thinkers' visions of historical change? Do the texts seem anachronistic, or do they say something important that transcends their time and place?
- What are the implications for research? What kind of study would test the different thinkers' assertions? Indeed, are those assertions at all verifiable through research?

Whichever the direction you take, make sure your paper is well-written. The Comment and Mark sheet lists some of the criteria for good writing. When writing about sociological theory it is always best to use both primary and secondary sources. And when you use these sources, always refer to them according to an accepted academic style.

### **COMMENT AND MARK SHEET**

When you turn in written work it should be accompanied by a blank Comment and Mark Sheet (attached to this syllabus). This will be completed by your TA when they read and grade your paper. The Comment and Mark Sheet makes explicit the qualities associated with good writing. Thus it gives you sure guidelines for self-assessment and targets for achievement.

Some students may fear that a standard form like the Comment and Mark Sheet cannot be tailored to particular strengths and weaknesses. However, experienced graders find much of what they scribble in the margins when reading student work is not new: they have written the same notes before for other students. With the Comment and Mark Sheet, comments pertinent to a particular piece of work but not unusual given undergraduate writing are easily made. After checking off such items, the TA is free to focus on personalized commentary. Our goal, then, is to respond in an efficient way to both the common **and** the unique aspects of your writing.

The main criteria of good writing for this course are:

- originality of argument
- adequacy of evidence used to support argument
- appropriate use of primary and secondary sources
- coherence of ideas (concise expression, smooth transitions, logical organization)
- engaging style (tone, stance toward audience, level of formality)
- correct grammar, punctuation, citation form

The order of these criteria does not reflect their importance for good writing or their weight in calculating your grade: all are important.

## TEST QUESTIONS

### Test 1 on the “Pessimists”

*Contrast and compare the ideas of two of the four thinkers studied in this part of the course (Putnam, Bell, Habermas and Mann). Do not select the contemporary thinker examined in your first position paper.*

### Test 2 on the “Perennialists”

*Contrast and compare the ideas of two of the four thinkers studied in this part of the course (Giddens, De Beauvoir, Foucault and Bourdieu). Do not select the contemporary thinker examined in your second position paper.*

## TEST TIPS AND GUIDELINES

- Please read the University's policy on plagiarism (see the "Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters" in the Calendar of the Faculty of Arts and Science).
- No aids (e.g., notes or books) will be allowed for writing the tests.
- Ensure your answer is logical and well-organized.
- Back up assertions with arguments and examples.
- A longer answer is not necessarily a better answer.
- We are interested in your reasoning as well as your intellectual creativity. So, make your assessment *fair* (consider the positive as well as the negative), *insightful* (do not state the obvious), and *comprehensive* (do not miss the forest for the trees).
- Strengthen your argument by raising – and responding *honestly* to – possible criticisms of it.
- A stimulating conclusion provides not just a summary of the argument, but also a discussion of its sociological implications (“If what I have argued about X is true, these are some of the inferences we can draw for Y.”).
- You do not need to cite non-course material in order to do well on tests. At the same time, material from other courses (in sociology or otherwise) may help to illustrate or support your arguments.



**Coherence of ideas (concise expression, smooth transitions and logical organization)**

Strong

Average

Weak

Comments:

**Style (tone, stance toward audience and level of formality)**

Strong

Average

Weak

Comments:

**Grammar, punctuation and citation form**

Strong

Average

Weak

Comments:

=====  
**Additional comments**

**NOTE: the order of the criteria on this form does not reflect their importance for good**

writing or their weight in calculating your grade.

**COMMENT AND MARK SHEET**

**SOC376H**

**Department of Sociology, University of Toronto**

**Professor J. Veugelers**

Student name \_\_\_\_\_

Student number \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_ T.A.'s initials \_\_\_\_\_

**Originality of argument**

Strong

Average

Weak

Comments:

**Adequate evidence to support argument**

Strong

Average

Weak

Comments:

**Appropriate use of primary and secondary sources**

Strong

Average

Weak

Comments:

**Coherence of ideas (concise expression, smooth transitions and logical organization)**

Strong

Average

Weak

Comments:

**Style (tone, stance toward audience and level of formality)**

Strong

Average

Weak

Comments:

**Grammar, punctuation and citation form**

Strong

Average

Weak

Comments:

=====  
**Additional comments**

**NOTE: the order of the criteria on this form does not reflect their importance for good**

**writing or their weight in calculating your grade.**