

University of Toronto
Department of Sociology
Theories of Public and Private Life (SOC376H)
Winter 2013
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 two themes: (1) gender relations; (2) the public sphere.

PREREQUISITES

The prerequisite for this course is SOC203Y, or both SOC201H and SOC203H. Students without this prerequisite may be removed from the class list at any time without notice.

READINGS (available at the University of Toronto Bookstore)

1. De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*, translated by C. Borde and S. Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage, 2011) NOTE: Do not purchase the older translation of this work by H.M Parshley (also published by Vintage).
2. Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).

EVALUATION

The final grade will be based on: participation in class discussions; one presentation; two position papers; one essay-style, in-class test. These will be weighted as follows:

1. Participation.....	10 %
2. Presentation	15 %
3. 2 position papers (due February 15 & March 29).....	50 %
4. 1 term test	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.

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

January 7. *Introduction to the course; the notion of scientific paradigm*

January 14. *Marxism on the family, private property and gender inequality*

- De Beauvoir, "[The Point of View of Historical Materialism](#)" (pp. 53-65)

January 21. *Gender relations in pre-modern Europe*

- De Beauvoir, "[Patriarchal Times and Classical Antiquity](#)" & "[Through the Middle Ages to Eighteenth-century France](#)" (pp. 82-108)

January 28. *Gender relations in modern societies*

- De Beauvoir, "[Since the French Revolution: the Job and the Vote](#)" (pp. 109-138)

February 4. *Prospects*

- De Beauvoir, "[Toward Liberation](#)" (pp. 679-732)

February 11. *Review*

➔ **Position paper 1 due by 4 p.m. on February 15 (with Comment & Mark Sheet)**

February 25. *Social foundations of the bourgeois public sphere*

- Habermas, pp. 27-56

March 4. *Political functions of the public sphere*

- Habermas, pp. 57-88

March 11. *The public sphere in social and political philosophy*

- Habermas, pp. 89-140

March 18. *The transformation of the public sphere*

- Habermas, pp. 141-180

March 25. *Review*

➔ **Position paper 2 due by 4 p.m. on March 29 (with Comment & Mark Sheet)**

April 1. **Test**

➔ **Term test**

POSITION PAPER GUIDELINES

A position paper will contrast and compare a selected aspect of the thought of De Beauvoir (for position paper 1) or Habermas (for position paper 2) with that of one classical sociologist (e.g., Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Simmel or Tocqueville). 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.

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

Deadlines: late work will not be accepted unless submitted with proper documentation from a student's physician or college registrar. A student who misses a test or presentation and wishes to take the make-up test or schedule another presentation **must supply within three** days a letter from their college registrar or a duly completed Faculty of Arts and Science medical certificate (a blank certificate may be found in the Faculty of Arts and Science timetable; your doctor **must** see you while you are ill and should write down on the Certificate the duration of your illness).

Communication: students cannot submit their position papers by fax or email. Papers will not be accepted by the receptionist in the Department of Sociology.

Each position paper must be submitted twice:

(1) as hard copy by the due date (use the date/time stamp and then place in the mailbox marked "3" in room 225 at 725 Spadina Avenue – this room is open Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.);

(2) online at <http://www.turnitin.com>, by the due date/time

A grade of zero (0 %) will be given to assignments not submitted through Turnitin.com. Go to <http://www.turnitin.com> to submit your paper online. For access, enter the **class ID** and **enrolment password** (you will receive these a few weeks before your 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. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the **Turnitin.com** reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the **Turnitin.com** service are described on the **Turnitin.com** web site.

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

Plagiarism: cheating and misrepresentation will not be tolerated. Students who commit an academic offence face serious penalties. Avoid plagiarism by citing properly: practices accepted by teachers in high school may prove unacceptable at 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 much more is involved, so visit www.utoronto.ca/writing/advice and read “HOW NOT TO PLAGIARIZE”.

Web writing resources:

- (1) visit www.utoronto.ca/writing/ for tips on:
 - writing (style, research, organization, grammar, punctuation)
 - proper citation and how to avoid plagiarism
 - writing when English is a second language
 - critical reading
 - writing instruction and support at the University of Toronto
- (2) visit <http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~nscharer/plagmain.htm> for *Plagiarism and How to Avoid It*.

PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

The goal of a presentation is not to summarize the reading. Assume that all have done the reading; now the task is to make sense of the text through discussion and debate. An effective presentation will stimulate a worthwhile exchange of ideas, as well as enhancing participants' understanding of the text. The best way to do this is by making a strong argument that provokes a response.

During the weeks when we are reading De Beauvoir, presenters must answer question A or B from the term test. During the weeks when we are reading Habermas, presenters must answer question C or D from the final test (please refer to page 7 of this syllabus).

The caveat clause: “caveat” comes from a Latin word meaning “beware.” In this course, it will be understood that most presenters will be drawing on incomplete knowledge of the text. In no way will they be penalized for ignoring material not yet read in the course. Instead, they will be expected to put forth the best argument possible, given the reading assigned so far. So, remember that in-class presentations come with a caveat: **what the presenter says is based only on the readings for which the class is responsible to date.**

Here are some questions to bear in mind while trying to make sense of a theoretical text:

- What are the main questions or issues? What is the significance of the main questions or issues? Who (or what intellectual school) is the writer arguing against? Is the writer addressing a controversy, and taking sides? Is the writer identifying a problem that was previously unseen? Is the writer offering a solution to an already-recognized problem, or simply criticizing earlier solutions?
- What is the logic of the argument? What assumptions does the writer make? Are these assumptions tacit or explicit? Do the conclusions flow logically from the assumptions? What kind of evidence, principle or other premise is marshalled to make the argument stand up?
- What are the important concepts? How are they defined? What biases are built into the choice of concepts and definitions? How do different thinkers tackle the same concept?
- Relate the text to others, either classics (e.g., by Marx, Weber or Durkheim) or readings from this seminar. Does this text contradict others? Does a common theme recur in these texts? If so, how does the text you are presenting fit in?
- What is the writer's vision of historical change and social inequality? Does the text seem anachronistic, or does it say something important that transcends its time and place?
- What are the implications for empirical research? What kind of study would test the writer's assertions? Indeed, are the writer's assertions at all verifiable?

To repeat, do not base your presentation on a summary of the reading. Whichever question or questions you choose to address, your presentation should make a strong argument. If you have questions about how to proceed, do not hesitate to get advice from the instructor before it is your turn to present. A handout can also help the discussion if it makes the details and logic of your argument clear.

TEST QUESTIONS

Answer one of questions A, B, C or D below.

Question A

It has been asserted that "the gender of the researcher, the audience, or those studied or written about" affects "the circumstances in which knowledge is created." Evaluate this claim, drawing on De Beauvoir to support your position.

Question B

On p. 57 of *The Second Sex*, De Beauvoir writes "it is impossible to *deduce* the oppression of woman from the institution of private property." Explain and evaluate this statement by locating it within De Beauvoir's larger treatment of the relationship between property and gender inequality.

Question C

A scientific paradigm is an exemplar in that it specifies the key problems, concepts and relationships to be investigated by researchers, as well as the method to follow (see Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*). Extract a paradigm (i.e., a model of how to do sociology) from *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

Question D

As an ideal, the public sphere entails "power-free communication" over matters of collective interest. For a sociologist, what are the possibilities of realizing this ideal? What makes it possible, and what stands in its way? Is it fair to dismiss the ideal of the public sphere as hopelessly utopian?

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.

