

University of Toronto
Department of Sociology
Contemporary Sociological Theory (SOC376H)
Winter 2015
Location: SK720

Instructor: M. Godbout

melissa.godbout@mail.utoronto.ca

Office Hours: Monday 12:30 - 1:30

Room: 397

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."

RESTRICTION AND PREREQUISITES

This course is restricted to Specialists in the Sociology program. The prerequisite is SOC203Y, or both SOC201H and SOC203H. 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 one in-class presentation, two position papers, and two essay-style, in-class tests, weighted as follows:

1. In-Class Presentation	10 %
2. Position paper 1 (due February 2).....	25 %
3. Test 1 (February 23).....	20 %
4. Position paper 2 (due March 16).....	25 %
5. Test 2 (March 30).....	20 %
	=====
	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 5. *Introduction to the course*

A. Tools for sorting and evaluating theories

January 12. *Grand theory, abstracted empiricism, and problem formulation*

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

B. “Pessimists”

January 19. *Social capital*

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

January 26. *Economy, culture and personality*

- Daniel Bell (1976), *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, Part 1, Chapter 1, (“The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism”)
- Workshop: Writing Position Papers & Developing Critical Arguments

February 2. *The bourgeois public sphere*

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

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

February 9. *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.

February 23.

➔ Test 1 on the “Pessimists”

C. “Perennialists”

March 2. *Structure and agency*

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

March 9. *Gender*

- Simone de Beauvoir (1949), *The Second Sex*, Part 1, Chapter 3 (“The Point of View of Historical Materialism”) and Part 2, Chapter 5 (“Since the French Revolution”)

March 16. *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”)

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

March 23. *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”)

March 30.

➔ **Test 2 on the “Perennialists”**

ONLINE WRITING RESOURCES

Visit 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 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. Your T.A. will not provide answers to questions pertaining to content/announcements made in class. 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 office hours.

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.

LAPTOP USE IN THE CLASSROOM

Laptops are permitted, but only for taking notes. Using them for other purposes will be treated as a breach of courtesy toward others. Offenders will be asked to leave the classroom. Please be advised this also applies to the use of cell phones and other mobile electronic devices.

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 next page).**

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 OR COLLEGE REGISTRAR

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 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). 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).

Place your supporting documentation in a sealed envelope addressed to Melissa Godbout. 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).

POSITION PAPERS

Position paper length: 2 to 3 pages (excluding references/bibliography) in 12-point font, double-spaced, 1 inch margins. Papers which do not meet formatting requirements may receive a grade penalty.

Plagiarism: cheating and misrepresentation will not be tolerated. Students who commit an academic offense 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" and the below.

Submitting the same work for more than one course or more than one assignment: Section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters says it is an offense "*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.*"

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

Position papers that fail to demonstrate adequate referencing in accordance with University of Toronto policy are at risk of committing an academic offense which may result in consequences such as the issue being brought to the Dean's office or grade penalties imposed on the assignment.

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. 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: <http://www.teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching/academicintegrity/turnitin/conditions-use.htm>

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

A position paper will contrast and compare a selected aspect of the thoughts of one "Pessimist" (for position paper 1) or of one "Perennialist" (for position paper 2) with that of one classical sociologist (e.g., Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Simmel or Tocqueville). NOTE: Students must engage with primary texts of the classical sociologists.

The main objective of a position paper is to **make an argument, not to summarize the course material.**

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 beneficial to use both primary and secondary sources. And when you use these sources, always refer to them according to an accepted academic style. For this course, students should reference utilizing ASA or APA format.

A good citation guide that can be accessed online is the OWL at Purdue writing centre:
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/583/01/>
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

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.

BREADTH REQUIREMENT

Students are required to engage with the ideas of **four different** thinkers (three contemporary thinkers, one classical thinker) **in each half of the course**. In other words, no thinker may be utilized for an assignment/test more than once (with the exception of Mills, see below). For example, if a student engages with Marx and Putnam for the first paper, the student may not utilize Putnam for the test or Marx as the classical thinker for the second position paper. Similarly, if a student decides to answer the question engaging with Mills for Test 1, then a student will not engage with the same chapter(s) of Mills' for Test 2.

CONTESTING A GRADE

Step 1: Students who wish to contest a grade should first take the time to carefully review the comments left by the TA. Students should then see the TA within **two weeks** to make an academic case for why they perceive their grade should be changed. To make a case academically means that students should provide clear reasons with supported evidence from their papers for the grade change. The TA will then re-evaluate the student's work and provide an answer and feedback to the student.

Step 2: Up to **three weeks** after the paper was first returned to the class, students who are still not satisfied with the grade received may request a re-grade from the instructor. After lecture, give the instructor the original copy of your marked paper along with a clean copy. The instructor will then compare the two to ensure they are identical in every way and retain the clean copy for assessment. The instructor will then assign a definitive mark to the paper. **NOTE:** The new mark may be higher than the original mark, but it could also be the same or even lower. This mark will stand as final.

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.
- Your test must have an argument and not just contain summary of thinkers' ideas.
- 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.

TEST QUESTIONS

Test 1 on the “Pessimists”

Answer question A or B

A. Apply the ideas of 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).

B. Contrast and compare the ideas of two of the four thinkers studied in this part of the course.

Test 2 on the “Perennialists”

Answer question A or B

A. Apply the ideas of 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).

B. Contrast and compare the ideas of two of the four thinkers studied in this part of the course.

COMMENT AND MARK SHEET
SOC376H1S – Winter 2015
Department of Sociology, University of Toronto
Instructor: M. Godbout

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.

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.