

**SOC251H1S**  
**CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY**  
**Winter 2019**

**University of Toronto, St. George**  
**Thursdays, 10am – 1pm, AH 400**

**Instructor:** Prof. Christian Caron

**Class Time and Location:** Thursdays, 10am – 1pm Location: AH 400

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**Office Hours:** Thursdays 1-2pm, 725 Spadina, Rm 286

**Teaching Assistants**

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**Course Description**

A selective introduction to major contemporary thinkers and approaches whose ideas have achieved wide influence, as well as an on-going inquiry into the nature and role of sociological analysis.

**Teaching Methods**

My teaching philosophy is organized around three key principles, collaborative learning, transparency, and choice. We do not learn alone, we learn in conversation with others. We learn by listening, by asking questions, by explaining. The classroom will be organized in such a way as to foster this collaborative learning environment through an emphasis more on discussion and interactive learning than on simply delivery content. Students will also have opportunities to pursue this collaborative learning approach in more depth through certain assignments. Learning is also a process and you should receive continual feedback on your thoughts and application of the material in assignments in order to know where you are doing well, where you are falling a little short and most importantly have the opportunity to make changes and improve. Finally, you will have ample and different ways to demonstrate your knowledge and comprehension of the material since not every student excels in the same kind of assignment. The course will allow every student to build their own individualized learning plan that best suits their interests and learning style.

The course is organized in such a way that it privileges the development and deployment of various skills, namely critical reading, critical writing and effective and inquisitive discussion and their relationship with one another. Writing notes while reading, organizing and synthesizing the material and one's own thoughts, communicating this effectively to colleagues, and asking probing questions are all part of this course's teaching approach. It is essential for you to keep up with the reading and to read actively. Active reading means taking notes as you read, making a list of questions you have as you read, and ideally reading far enough ahead that you have a chance not only to read but to think about what you have read. The expectation is that you will have read each class's readings by our class meeting. The goal is to foster a community of

learners who will help each other make their way through the material, topics and issues, in collaboration with one another.

### **Prerequisites**

The prerequisite to take SOC251H1S is SOC201H. Students without the prerequisite can be removed at any time discovered, and without notice.

### **Communication**

This course will rely heavily on Quercus to facilitate this community of learners. It will act as the 'nervous system' of this course. On the Quercus page you will find this syllabus, assignments, announcements, grades and student-generated content on a series of discussion boards. You should check the Announcement tab on a regular basis as it will be the main mechanism to communicate about course related matters. Treat the Announcement tab as a series of appendices to this syllabus. While the Quercus page will start relatively small, it will grow slowly in size over the course of the semester. One element present at launch is a discussion board called Questions about the Course. This discussion is to be used for all course-related questions of a non-personal nature this semester, question about the course content, activities, assignments, exams, deadlines, and in the first week of class, the best place to ask clarifications about the ILP system. This way all clarifications provided are available to every student in the course. Of course, feel free to contact me by e-mail for any questions of a more personal nature regarding illness, special accommodations, grade review or anything else you might want to discuss with me privately. All e-mails are answered within 48h unless explicitly stated otherwise.

### **Required Course Material**

All course readings will be made available as pdf on the course Quercus page

### **Evaluation - Individual Learning Plan**

Every student has their own learning style, set of interests, and schedule. To reflect this fact, this course offers a variety of options from which students can choose to build their own individual learning plan. 60% of your final grade will come from a midterm and a final exam, but you get to choose where the other 40% will come from.

### **Midterm (20%) – February 14th**

A 2h midterm on the content from the first half of the course held in our regular classroom at our regularly scheduled time

### **Final exam (40%) – in April, scheduled by the University**

A 3h cumulative exam on the content of the entire course scheduled at a time and location TBD

Every student must submit their proposed learning plan (to me by e-mail) no later than Jan 18th. This will be a working document with an updated version due Feb 15th and Mar 22nd), so three versions in total. The individual learning plan must include a description of what course material the student commits to produce and how it adds up to 50%. In further updates, the student must clearly lay out what they have done so far and what remains to be done to complete their semester. Students can choose any combination from the following four type of opportunities to build their own individual learning plan as long as it adds up to 50%. *Note: You will submit your*

*ILP as a series of four digits, for example (20-10-0-30) which represents 20% in in-class activities, 10% in online peer contributions, 0% on term paper and presentation and 30% in critical reflection papers. 16-0-20-24 would represent 16% in in-class activities, 0% in online peer contributions, 20% in paper and presentation, and 24% in critical reflection papers.*

**Option 1: In-Class Activities (2%/activity for up to 20%)**

Except for the first class on Jan 10th and the midterm on Feb 14th, in-class activities will take place during each lecture. They will involve collaboratively discussing, and then answering a series of questions related to the week's course material, either the readings for that week or the lecture content, or both. They make take place at the beginning, middle or near the end of lecture, but there will be 10 of these in-class activities, each worth 2%. You can select to do anywhere from none to ten of them.

**Option 2: Peer Contributions (0.25%/contribution for up to 10%)**

Up to 10% of your grade can come from making forty 'significant contributions' to the online forum for this course on Quercus. Significant contributions include (1) helping other students with their questions; (2) offering clarification or additional thoughts and information on some aspect of the readings or course material; (3) submitting a link to a web site containing documents or video clips with a few sentences describing its relevance to course material; (4) linking something students saw in the mass media, a news article, or content from another course to some relevant aspect of course material; or (5) fostering or participating in discussions that highlight an issue touched upon in the readings or course material. Contributions are credited as significant if they are deemed useful to their fellow students by meeting one of these criteria. All posts, other than answering colleagues' questions, including all links to other sources, should be well annotated with no less than 150 words discussing their relevance to course material. Contributions of less than 150 words, or contributions not furthering the understanding of course material, will not be credited as significant. No more than five contributions can come from a single discussion board. Students will be updated on the status of their significant contributions on a regular basis so they can keep track of their progress.

**Option 3: Paper & Presentation (20%)**

The term paper and presentation are a substantive engagement with a topic raised in one of the course readings, subject to approval. The term paper and presentation is a staged semi-structured assignment, with opportunities to get feedback on the way towards a final paper. The presentation is an 8 to 10 powerpoint slides summarizing your research. The final paper needs to be 3500 words in length if worked on alone. You can also take this opportunity to work in collaboration with a colleague in which case you need to write a 4500 words paper.

**Stage 1: Proposal – Feb 7th**

The first stage involves a two page proposal laying out what topic you propose on writing a term paper on, the research question you plan on answering, and a tentative title for your projected paper. This stage is completed to ascertain the suitability and feasibility of your topic and its alignment with the course objectives.

**Stage 2: Submission of presentation – March 14th**

The second stage is the submission of your powerpoint presentation. Uploaded as a .ppt, pptx, or .pdf to Quercus page. This is done both as a way for students to communicate effectively their hard work to their peers, and to receive feedback from them in order to help with the final write-up.

Stage 3: Submission of final write-up – March 28th

The final stage is the submission of the term paper. Three copies of the paper must be submitted, through Quercus, Turnitin AND as a hard copy. Note: there are no late penalties per day late because assignments will not be accepted past the due date without submission of UofT's Verification of Illness form.

Each stage is mandatory. You cannot move to the next stage without completing the previous one. While these are the only mandatory stages, you are highly encouraged to communicate with your TA several times in the semester and to sit down and chat with them at various point to get further guidance and feedback on the term paper. A specific discussion board will also be set aside to ask questions, offer comments or advice, and help one another with this assignment. Further details will be discussed in the early weeks of the semester.

#### **Option 4: Critical Reflection Papers (2%/reading for up to 30%)**

A critical reflection paper is two pages (650-700 words) that analyzes your thoughts and questions about one individual reading (not all the readings assigned on a given week). These are a chance for you to think critically about the reading, the best possible preparation for lecture and tests. Your reflection paper should have four separate sections (ie paragraphs) reflections each of these in turn:

- i) One to two *reactions* – What did you like or dislike about the content of the piece? And why?
- ii) One to two *keepers* – What were the key ideas worth remembering and making note of? What did you take away the most from the readings?
- iii) One to two annotated *questions* – What question(s) do you have for the author or after reading this piece? Why is this a good question?
- iv) One *so what* – Why does the topic matter? How does it contribute to our understanding of contemporary sociological theory and its relevance?

Do not use quotes from the readings for this, but instead use entirely your own words. Every critical reflection paper must be submitted on Quercus (using a .doc, .docx, or .rtf file format) no later than midnight Wednesday before class for which the reading was assigned. The purpose of these critical reflection papers is to have a base of knowledge on the course material before class starts so that we can build upon this foundation during lecture. Note: CRPs will never be accepted late. If you cannot submit it on time, then you can complete one(s) that is/are due the following week.

#### **Weekly Lecture Topics and Readings**

Week 1 – January 10<sup>th</sup>  
Contemporary Sociological Theory

Week 2 – January 17th

Karl Mannheim (Marx & Weber)  
Alfred Schutz (Weber)

Week 3 – January 24<sup>th</sup>  
George Herbert Mead  
Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (Weber, Schutz, and Mannheim)

Week 4 – January 31<sup>st</sup>  
Erving Goffman (Durkheim & Schutz)  
Harold Garfinkel (Durkheim & Schutz)

Week 5 – February 7<sup>th</sup>  
C. Wright Mills (Mead, Weber, Mannheim, and Marx)  
Norbert Elias (Weber & Mannheim)

Week 6 – February 14<sup>th</sup>  
Midterm

Week 7 – February 21<sup>st</sup>  
Reading Week

Week 8 – February 28<sup>th</sup>  
Michel Foucault (Marx & Goffman)

Week 9 – March 7<sup>th</sup>  
Dorothy Smith (Marx & Schutz)  
Judith Butler (Marx & Foucault)

Week 10 – March 14<sup>th</sup>  
Patricia Hill Collins  
Edward Said (Marx & Foucault)

Week 11 – March 21<sup>st</sup>  
Stuart Hall (Marx & Foucault)  
Immanuel Wallerstein (Marx)

Week 12 – March 28<sup>th</sup>  
Pierre Bourdieu (Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Elias, and Foucault)

Week 13 – April 4<sup>th</sup>  
Donna Haraway  
Bruno Latour

**Missed Deadline and/or Missed Midterm**

Note that the late penalty is 2pt out of 20 per day for the paper assignment. CRPs are not accepted late. In case of documented illness for the assignment deadline or midterm, contact the

professor within two business days and make sure to provide a copy of the UofT completed Verification of Student Illness or Injury form (available at [www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca](http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca)) or a doctor's note within a week. If a personal or family crisis prevents you from meeting the assignment deadline or causes you to miss the midterm, you must get a letter from your college registrar (it is recommended you always advise your registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies). Finally, if you miss the final exam for any reason, you will want to contact your college registrar immediately.

### **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.

### **Turnitin**

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. Assignments not submitted through *Turnitin* will not be assessed unless a student instead provides, along with their work, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own. The alternative (not submitting via *Turnitin*) is in place because, strictly speaking, using *Turnitin* is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

### **Accessibility**

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodation or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.