

**SOC251H1S**  
**Contemporary Sociological Theory**  
**University of Toronto**  
**Class hours: Wednesdays, 18:10-21:00**  
**Location: SS2118**

**Instructor:** Sébastien Parker

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**Office Hours:** By appointment, please refer to Quercus calendar

**Webpage:** [q.utoronto.ca](http://q.utoronto.ca)

**Teaching Assistants:**

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### **Statement of Acknowledgement**

We acknowledge this sacred land on which the University of Toronto operates. It has been a site of human activity for 15,000 years. This land is the territory of the Huron Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. The territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Today, the meeting place of Toronto is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in the community, on this territory. [*Council of Aboriginal Initiatives, 2014*]

### **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. Restricted to sociology majors and specialists.

### **Prerequisites**

The prerequisite to take SOC251H1FS is SOC201H. Students without the prerequisite can be removed at any time discovered, and without notice.

### **Learning Objectives**

There are 5 learning objectives in this course:

- 1) Evaluate and discuss a number of approaches central to contemporary sociological theory.
- 2) Identify and assess key theoretical concepts and arguments.
- 3) Write analytically and critically about contemporary theory.
- 4) Forward an academic argument and support this argument through the use of evidence, both in discussion and in writing.
- 5) Draw connections between contemporary theory and current events.

**Evaluation Components**

Type	Due Dates	Weight
First reflection piece	January 26	5%
First paper	February 9	25%
First test	February 16	20%
Second reflection piece	March 16	5%
Second paper	March 30	25%
Second test	April 6	20%

**Grading Description**

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**Reflection pieces**

Twice (2) during the term, students will have to answer a reflection question based on the week's reading (worth 5% each, 1 page, single-spaced). Reflection prompts will be assigned at the end of the lecture before the stated due date.

**Papers**

Twice (2) during the term, students will have to write application papers (worth 25% each, 2 to 3 pages, single-spaced). In your paper, you must forward an argument relative to a key idea or concept covered in a course reading and support it with evidence based on a contemporary case, event, or phenomenon. More detailed guidelines will be provided on Quercus.

**Take-home tests**

Twice (2) during the term, students will have to have to respond to test questions (worth 20% each). The first take-home assesses comprehension for the first part of the course, while the second take-home assesses comprehension for material covered in the second part. Students will receive the test prompt during the lecture before the stated due date. For both tests, students will have to answer one essay-type question (2 pages, single-spaced) and two short-answer questions (1 page, single-spaced, each).

**Late and Missed Test Policies**

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**Handing in assignments**

All assignments must be submitted electronically via Quercus.

**Deadlines**

The assignments are due online via Quercus by 18:00 EST (6:00 p.m. EST) for the stated date. Please refer to the due dates stated on page 1 of the Syllabus and the Course Schedule.

**Late tests and assignments**

If a student misses a test or submit assignments later for medical reasons, the student must contact me (not the TA) within 2 days of the missed test or assignment. For other reasons, such as family emergencies or personal reasons, they must have the college registrar email me.

**Accessibility**

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

**Student Responsibilities and Expectations**

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**Email Policy**

I will respond to your email within two business days (48 hours, except weekends and holidays). In an email exchanges, you must use your official University of Toronto email. Please also include the course code (e.g. SOC251) in the subject line and your full name and student number in your message. Please do not send a repeat email (e.g., “did you get my email?”).

In general, please treat emails as you would any other professional communication. You should be respectful in the way you address the instructor and the TA. Email is most suitable for questions that are clear, concise, and easily answerable. If you need help on course material, I strongly encourage you to attend office hours or make an appointment. For all general inquiries, please refer to the course syllabus.

**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. Expect to receive a response from your T.A. within two working days. For more in-depth discussions of the lectures, readings, tests and position papers, take advantage of your T.A.’s office hours.

**Grade Appeals**

The instructor and teaching assistants do their best to mark work fairly, consistently, and accurately. Nevertheless, one of us may unintentionally err in our marking duties. For basic mathematical errors, simply alert the TA of the error. In the case of more substantive appeals, you must wait at least 24 hours after receiving your mark. If you wish to appeal, please submit a thorough written explanation to your Instructor of why you think your mark should be altered. If your appeal is deemed appropriate, the entirety of your test/assignment will be re-graded. Please note that upon re-grade your mark may go down, stay the same, or go up. You have 7 days after receiving a mark to appeal it.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

Familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>). It is the rule book for academic behaviour at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules.

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the Code. The consequences for academic misconduct can be severe, including a failure in the course and a notation on your transcript. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, seek out additional information from me, or from other available campus resources like the [U of T Writing Website](#). If you are experiencing personal challenges that are having an impact on your academic work, please speak to me or seek the advice of your college registrar.

## Course Schedule

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### Readings:

All course readings will be available on the course website. Students are solely responsible for reading all required materials before class. Please give yourself enough time to come to class prepared to discuss the materials.

### Please note:

**\*an asterisk** indicates that there is a scheduled tutorial between 20:00 and 21:00 (8 to 9 p.m. EST) on that particular day.

### Week 1 (January 12)

*Outline of course and expectations*

## **Part 1. Continuity and Change**

### Week 2 (January 19)\*

Mannheim, Karl (1952 [1927]). The problem of generations. In *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. P. Kecskemeti, pp. 163-195. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

### Week 3 (January 26)\*

**\*First reflection piece (5%) due at 18:00 EST\***

Lipset, Seymour M., and Stein Rokkan (1967). Cleavage structures, party systems, and voter alignments: an introduction. In *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*, ed. S.M. Lipset, S. Rokkan, pp. 1-64. New York: Free Press.

**Week 4 (February 2)\***

Bourdieu, Pierre (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press [selection].

[optional\*]. Sewell Jr, W.H. (1992). A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 98(1), pp.1-29.

**Week 5 (February 9)**

**\*First application paper (25%) due at 18:00\***

Swidler, Ann (1986). Culture in action: Symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review*, 51(2), 273-286.

Archer, Margaret S. (1982). Morphogenesis versus structuration: on combining structure and action. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 33(4), 455-483.

**Week 6 (February 16)**

**\*First take-home test (20%) due at 18:00\***

*No lecture*

**Week 7 (February 23)**

**Reading Week**

**Part 2. Integration and Differentiation****Week 8 (March 2)\***

Blau, Peter M. (1977). A macrosociological theory of social structure. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(1), 26-54.

**Week 9 (March 9)\***

Collins, Patricia Hill (2019). *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*. Durham: Duke University Press [selection].

**Week 10 (March 16)\***

**\*Second reflection piece (5%) due at 18:00\***

Fraser, Nancy (1990). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. *Social Text*, (25/26), 56-80.

Habermas, Jürgen (1984). *Theory of Communicative Action*. Vol. 1. Boston: Beacon Press [selection].

**Week 11 (March 23)\***

Emirbayer, Mustafa, and Matthew Desmond. (2015). *The Racial Order*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press [selection].

[optional\*]. Prasad, Monica (2021). Pragmatism as problem solving. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*.

**Week 12 (March 30)**

**\*Second application paper (25%) due at 18:00\***

Bauman, Zygmunt (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Polity: Cambridge [selection].

**Week 13 (April 6)**

**\*Second take-home test (20%) due at 18:00 \***

*No lecture*