

**University of Toronto**  
**Department of Sociology**  
**New Topics in Sociology**  
**Debates in Contemporary Theory (SOC353H1F)**  
**LEC0101 (LA341); LEC9101 (Online synchronous)**

**Fall 2020 (Mondays from 3:10 to 6 p.m.)**  
**Professor J. Veugelers (jack.veugelers@utoronto.ca)**

**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 emerged with close reading of the primary sources and scrutiny of theorists' assumptions and arguments. Along the way, we will draw connections with sociology's classic tradition on one hand, empirical research on the other. In terms of its substantive focus, this course considers 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 (i.e., three "Pessimists" and three "Perennialists").

**RESTRICTION, PREREQUISITES & EXCLUSION**

This course is restricted to sociology majors and specialists. The prerequisites to take this course is SOC201H1, SOC202H1, SOC204H1 plus two of the following (1.0 FCE): SOC251H1, SOC252H1, SOC254H1. Students who have taken SOC376H may not take this course.

**READINGS**

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

**APPLICATIONS**

Quercus, Blackboard Collaborate, Turnitin

**EVALUATION**

The final grade depends on the grades for two position papers and two essay-style tests, weighted as follows:

1. Position paper 1 (due October 26, 2020) .....	25 %
2. Test 1 (November 2, 2020).....	25 %
3. Position paper 2 (due December 7, 2020).....	25 %
4. Test 2 (December 10, 2020).....	25 %
	=====
	100 %

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outside of the class or “published” in any way. Lectures, whether in person or online, cannot be recorded without the instructor’s permission. Posting course materials or any recordings you may make to other websites without the express permission of the instructor will constitute copyright infringement.

### **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**

#### **September 14. *Course introduction***

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

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

#### ***“Four 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 12. *Thanksgiving – no class***

#### **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* 235:18-45.

➤ **Position paper 1 due (one “Pessimist” and one classical thinker or C.W. Mills)**

#### **November 2.**

➤ **Test 1 on the “Pessimists” (U of T student i.d. card needed to write this test)**

#### ***“Four Perennialists”***

#### **November 9. *Reading Week***

**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 due (one "Perennialist" and one classical thinker or C.W. Mills)**

**December 10.**

➤ **Test 2 on the "Perennialists" (U of T student i.d. card needed to write this test)**

**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

In this course, the main criteria for good writing 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

**COMMUNICATION**

Students cannot submit their work by fax or to the receptionist at the Department of Sociology. Emails with questions pertaining to matters already set forth in the syllabus will not receive a response.

**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.

**DEADLINES**

Whether submitted in person or online, work is due at the start of class on the due date.

## MAKE-UP TESTS

If you are unable to turn in an assignment/or miss the test you will need to email the TA and also declare your absence on ACORN. If you miss a test and the subsequent make-up test for a valid reason, you 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 unless you have followed the steps described here. Telling the professor why you missed a deadline or a test probably will not help.

- If a **personal or family crisis** prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must have your college registrar (it is a good idea anyway to advise your college registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies) email me directly. This email must specify the length of the extension that is justified under the circumstances.
- If you are registered with Accessibility Services, your counselor will send an email message on your behalf if you ask them to (with a one-week extension the norm).

## POSITION PAPERS

**Position paper length:** 2 to 3 pages (excluding 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 and test must be submitted 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 %) unless a student instead provides, along with their position paper, 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.

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). 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.

## HOW NOT TO PLAGIARIZE

By Margaret Procter, former Coordinator of Writing Support, University of Toronto

*From the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters:*

It shall be an offence for a student knowingly:

(d) to represent as one's own any idea or expression of an idea or work of another in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work, i.e. to commit plagiarism. Wherever in the Code an offence is described as depending on "knowing", the offence shall likewise be deemed to have been committed if the person ought reasonably to have known.

You've already heard the warnings about plagiarism. Obviously it's against the rules to buy essays or copy from your friends' homework, and it's also plagiarism to borrow passages from books or articles or websites without identifying them. You know that the purpose of any paper is to show your own thinking, not create a patchwork of borrowed ideas. But you may still be wondering how you're supposed to give proper references to all the reading you've done and all the ideas you've encountered.

The point of documenting sources in academic papers is not just to avoid unpleasant visits to the Dean's office, but to demonstrate that you know what is going on in your field of study. It's also a courtesy to your readers because it helps them consult the material you've found. The different systems for typing up references are admittedly a nuisance. But the real challenge is establishing the relationship of your thinking to the reading you've done (yes, that includes the Internet). Here are some common questions and basic answers.

**1. *Can't I avoid problems just by listing every source in the reference list?*** No, you need to integrate your acknowledgements into your own writing. Give the reference as soon as you've mentioned the idea you're using, not just at the end of the paragraph. It's often a good idea to name the authors ("X states" and "Y argues against X") and then indicate your own stand ("A more inclusive perspective, however . . ."). Have a look at journal articles in your discipline to see how experts refer to their sources.

**2. *If I put the ideas into my own words, do I still have to clog up my pages with all those names and numbers?*** Sorry—yes, you do. In academic papers, you need to keep mentioning authors and pages and dates to show how your ideas are related to those of the experts. It's sensible to use your own words because that saves space and lets you connect ideas smoothly. But whether you quote a passage directly in quotation marks, paraphrase it closely in your own words, or just summarize it rapidly, you need to identify the source then and there. (That applies to Internet sources too: you still need author and date as well as title and URL.)

**3. *But I didn't know anything about the subject until I started this paper. Do I have to give an acknowledgement for every point I make?*** You're safer to over-reference than to skimp. But you can cut down the clutter by recognizing that some ideas are "common knowledge" in the field—that is, taken for granted by people knowledgeable about the topic. Facts easily found in standard reference books are considered common knowledge: the date of the Armistice for World War I, for example, or the present population of Canada. You don't need to name a specific source for them, even if you learned them only when doing your research. They're easily verified and not likely to be controversial. In some disciplines, information covered in class lectures doesn't need acknowledgement. Some interpretive ideas may also be so well accepted that you don't need to name a specific source: that Picasso is a distinguished modernist painter, for instance, or that smoking is harmful to health.

**4. How can I tell what's my own idea and what has come from somebody else?** Careful record-keeping helps. Always write down the author, title and publication information (including the URL and other identifying information for web pages) so you can attach names and dates to specific ideas. Taking good notes is also essential. Don't paste passages from web pages into your draft: that's asking for trouble. As you read any text—online or on the page—summarize useful points in your own words. If you record a phrase or sentence you might want to quote, put quotation marks around it in your notes to remind yourself that you're copying the author's exact words. And make a deliberate effort as you read to notice connections among ideas, especially contrasts and disagreements, and also to jot down questions or thoughts of your own. If you find as you write that you're following one or two of your sources too closely, deliberately look back in your notes for other sources that take different views; then write about the differences and why they exist.

**5. So what exactly do I have to document?** With experience reading academic prose, you'll soon get used to the ways writers in your field refer to their sources. Here are the main times you should give acknowledgements.

**a. Quotations, paraphrases, or summaries:** If you use the author's exact words, enclose them in quotation marks, or indent passages of more than four lines. But it's seldom worthwhile to use long quotations. Quote only when the original words are especially memorable. In most cases, use your own words to summarize the idea you want to discuss, emphasizing the points relevant to your argument. But be sure to name sources even when you are not using the exact original words. As in the examples below, it's often a good idea to mention the author's name. That gains you some reflected authority and indicates where the borrowing starts and stops.

☞ As Zeitlin (2001:194-196) argues, it would be wrong to see Weber as a thinker who set out to refute the ideas of Marx.

☞ As Zeitlin (2001:195) argues, “Weber and Marx are compatible and complementary”.

And give the following entry in the References section of your paper:

☞ Zeitlin, Irving. *Ideology and the Rise of Sociological Theory*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2001.

**b. Specific ideas used as evidence for your argument or interpretation:** First consider whether the ideas you're mentioning are “common knowledge” according to the definition in point 3 above; if so, you may not need to give a reference. But when you're relying on ideas that might be disputed by people in your discipline, establish that they're trustworthy by referring to authoritative sources.

☞ European revolutionaries of the period were united by a common enemy: absolutism.<sup>1</sup>

Or:

☞ “One accidental factor which reinforced the internationalism of 1830-48 was exile. Most political militants of the Continental left were expatriates for some time, many for decades”.<sup>2</sup>

And include the following in your footnotes or endnotes:

☞ <sup>1</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm (1962). *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848* (New York: New American Library), p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution*, p. 160.

**c. Distinctive or authoritative ideas, whether you agree with them or not:** The way you

introduce the reference can indicate your attitude and lead into your own argument.

☞ Consistent with Zeitlin's interpretation, Lewis Coser (1977) writes that for Weber an ideal type is "an analytical construct".

And include the following entry in the References section of your paper:

☞ Coser, L. (1977). "The Ideal Type." Retrieved May 20, 2011 from <http://www.bolenderinitiatives.com>

Among the referencing systems used by academics, English Canadian sociologists usually use the system found in the Zeitlin and Coser examples above. However, footnote or endnote systems are also common (see the Hobsbawm example above). For more guidance, go to [www.utoronto.ca/writing/](http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/) or refer to a guide such as Margot Northey, Lorne Tepperman and Patrizia Albanese (2009), *Making Sense: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing – Social Sciences (4<sup>th</sup> edition)*. Sociology journals like the *Canadian Journal of Sociology* also provide good examples of referencing style.

## **POSITION PAPER TOPICS AND 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 previously unseen? Are they 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?

Whatever 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. When you use these sources, always refer to them according to an accepted academic style.

## 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) 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.
- 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 support your argument.