

University of Toronto – Department of Sociology
SOC388H1S: Sociology of Everyday Life
Winter 2021, Wednesdays: 12:10-2pm

Instructor: Mohita Bhatia

email: mohita.bhatia@toronto.ca

Office Hours: Fridays 11:30 - 12:30 via Quercus zoom (or by appointment)

Teaching Assistant: Gordon Brett

email: gordon.brett@mail.utoronto.ca

Course Delivery

Due to the pandemic, all components of this course will be delivered online. Live lectures will be held during the class hours listed above. Students are expected to attend lectures online and participate in the class discussions. We will work with each other using Quercus zoom.

Course Description

This course will provide an overview of the sociological concepts and theories to understand the elusive social experience of everyday life - the routine, quotidian, and micro-level facets of social life. It will introduce students to some of the key interpretive sociological theories - such as symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology and phenomenology - that bring our attention to the ways in which the seemingly private and individual self is constituted by social structures. Rather than essentializing the influence of social forces as absolute in shaping individual lives, these theories also offer possibilities to explore the creative meaning-making potentialities of the individuals and groups as they negotiate their daily life engagements. Do humans and groups have any autonomy? In what ways are they shaped by and in turn, influence social forces? This course will examine the complex interplay between social structure, groups and individual agency, and enable comprehending issues of social order, resistance, and social change in everyday lives.

Using these sociological concepts and theories, this course will facilitate analyzing and grasping the commonplace experiences as diverse as shopping and wearing particular brands, walking on streets, talking on the phone, posting on Facebook, dating, presenting a conference paper or, attending an online zoom class. The course will enable you to use your sociological imagination to think about unspoken norms and values that govern our daily social lives and behaviour. It will encourage you to critically examine and interrogate the taken for granted, common-sense assumptions of the 'everyday' so as to unravel the underlying patterns, power asymmetries, and processes of social construction. The aim of the course is also to encourage students to use the concepts and topics of the course and apply them to their everyday lives.

Prerequisites/Exclusions: The prerequisite to take this course is 1.0 SOC credits at the 200 or higher level. Students without this requirement or with the exclusion (SOC344H1), will be removed from the course without notice.

Course Assessment and Grading

1. Class participation (Live and Discussion Board) 15%
2. Class Attendance 10%
3. Short Essay 20%. Due February 6.
4. Social media and formation of 'self' 25 %. Due March 6.
5. Research Essay and Class Discussion 30% (Written 20%; Oral 10%). Written essay due by April 6.

Class Participation (Live and Discussion Board)

Every week, students will respond to online discussion topics corresponding to the assigned readings for class. These topics will be posted on the discussion board. You are expected to respond and post your comments on the discussion board. Your comments should be analytical, original, and creative, and reflective of key concepts, core arguments, and other insightful details of the assigned readings. You can also give examples from everyday life to substantiate your argument. You must also select an interesting question or comment from the discussion board thread to share during our online class.

Each student will initiate discussion in the class at least once in the term. Students will be assigned to weeks during the first class. There will be 2-3 students leading discussion each week, so students leading the discussion for the same week should meet virtually ahead of time to divide up their work.

Short Essay

In this written assignment, you will choose any one aspect of your everyday life as the topic for the essay. It can be related to any personal realm of your life that you are comfortable sharing—for example, your admission to the University, your relationships, food habits, shopping and consumption, anxiety issues, personal achievements or failures, fascination for gadgets, leisure activities and so on. You do not have to choose from these examples and are free to come up with your own ideas. Elaborate on your chosen personal facet of life, and then see if you can relate it to broader social structures, forces, and institutions. These might be structures of privilege, inequality, capitalism, cultural capital, gender, patriarchy, beauty norms, and so on. Next, use the readings we have done till now to discuss how they enable you to think differently about your personal aspect. What sociological tools, concepts, and ideas helped you to think differently? In what ways, the insights of Durkheim and Mills facilitated your inquiry in different ways? Do you think it is helpful to place your everyday personal issues in a wider structural context? Conclude by forming an original argument about the assignment experience, and your critical views on linking private lives with the broader structural realms. Word limit 600-800 words, 1.5 spaced. Assignment is due February 6, 6pm via Quercus.

Social media and formation of self

Step 1: Choose a partner for this project, form a group of 2. In the first part, analyze your social media account, preferably Facebook. Look at your profile, posts, profile picture, pictures, comments, thoughts, interactions, emoticons, videos, and other content you posted. What thoughts come to your mind when you examine your 'Facebook Self'? How would you define your Facebook Self? Why do you engage in Facebook interactions? How is your 'self' through social media activity? What do you think is looking at your posts, profile, and pictures? Do you think that

you engage in impression management on Facebook? What kind of things do you post and why? Do you look for likes and comments? What happens to your sense of self when some of your Facebook friends appreciate you, and when they express a difference of opinion or maybe reject your thoughts? Is your real-life sense different from your online self, and in what ways? Use Mead, Blumer, and Goffman's insights to analyze this process in detail.

Step 2: Have your team partner take a look at your Facebook profile, and vice-versa. See what impressions you form of them. Write 10 facts or impressions you have of one another, and quiz each other to find out how many of these facts are true. Using both the steps write an individual paper on self and Facebook. Use ideas of self, looking glass self, reflections, interpretations, and impression management to analyze and interpret your Facebook exercise. Reflect on how this new form of social media incorporates itself into everyday life. World limit 2-3 pages, 1.5 spaced. Assignment is due March 6, 6pm via Quercus.

Students will be individually assessed, not in groups.

Research Essay and Class Discussion

This assignment has two components: written and oral (class discussion). For this assignment, you will work in small groups. Choose a topic that fits the category of the 'unmarked' or everyday life - for example, body image, everyday gender performances, diet and food, fashion, and so on. You would need to do the literature review on the topic, discuss, analyze, and interpret the literature in a critical fashion. Rather than individual summaries, you are expected to reflect insightfully on the literature. In what ways do these studies depart from macro-studies and offer concepts and tools to understand the mundane and the ordinary? What aspects of everyday life are overtly or covertly covered in these studies - self, social construction, impression management meaning-making, power, inequalities, resistance, or other aspects? Is 'self' with the social, or is there any tension? In what ways is a social reality being constructed and negotiated? Does the social reality assume a fixed form, or is it shifting over time? What power asymmetries do you notice? Use your own understanding of the concepts and theories of everyday life to extend the argument proposed in the literature as well as to highlight any gaps.

The essay should not be a mechanical review of the literature. The idea is to critically analyze the existing studies to reflect on the topic, formulate an argument, and form your own explanations. How can you use your knowledge of the course to go beyond the literature, add your insights, and interpret the topic? Can you relate it to your personal experiences and everyday life? Give examples (Word limit: 4-6 pages 1.5 spaced).

Your group will need to prepare in advance for class discussion. One of you will facilitate the discussion for others to join in and present their viewpoints. Each one of you can have different viewpoints, however, there should be some coherency in group argument and discussion.

The written essay is due April 6, 6 pm. Discussion in class will be held on April 7.

Students will be individually assessed, not in groups.

Deadlines: Work more than 10 days late will not be accepted without supporting documentation. Medical notes will not be required; instead, students will need to declare their absence on ACORN on the day of the missed test or due date of assignment, and email the instructor (not the TA), directly.

If a personal or family crisis prevents you from meeting a deadline, you are to contact your College registrar and have the college registrar email the instructor directly. It is a good idea to proactively contact your college registrar if you are dealing with a crisis that is interfering with your studies. College registrars can help you negotiate solutions with the instructors of all the classes you are taking in a given semester. The letter must be sent from either the registrar or the student's university of Toronto e-mail address directly to the instructor's university of Toronto e-mail address.

Readings and Course Webpage

The course syllabus, links to all the readings, handouts, assignment submission links and course announcements will be posted on Quercus. You are responsible for all course content posted to Quercus. Please make sure to check your official utoronto.ca email addresses, Quercus Messages as well as the course Quercus page regularly.

I understand that given the current pandemic situation, students may be struggling with anxiety and other difficulties situations. In case you are struggling with the coursework due to any such situation, I would encourage you to contact me so that we can find the best way out.

Plagiarism: Be careful to avoid plagiarism. It is a serious academic offense with serious penalties (see the "Code of Behavior on Academic Matters"). If you are using somebody else's ideas, do not present them as your own. Give proper references if you are using somebody else's ideas, and use quotation marks if you are quoting. When in doubt, it is always safer to over-reference --you are not going to be punished for that. Please also be aware that turning in an old paper, or large parts thereof, for credit in a second (or third etc.) course, is considered an academic offense that results in students being referred off to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Accessibility Needs:

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>.

Turnitin

All your assignments (tests and papers) will be checked through Turnitin, which is embedded in Quercus.

Students agree that, by taking this course, all assignments (tests and papers) may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted assignments will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of those assignments. 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 receive a grade of zero (0 %) unless students instead provide, along with their assignments, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the assignment 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.

Course Schedule

January 13 - Introduction: What is Sociology of Everyday Life?

- Susie Scott. 2002. *Making Sense of Everyday Life*. Chapter 1. (This chapter is available to read at <https://www.amazon.ca/Making-Sense-Everyday-Susie-Scott/dp/0745642683>)
- Wayne Brekhus. 1998. "A Sociology of the Unmarked: Redirecting Our Focus," *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 34-51.

January 20 - Self and Society

- Emile Durkheim: *Selected Writings*. 1972. "Forms of Social Solidarity", pp 123-140
- Matthew Hayes. Solidarity and Social Distancing: A Sociologist's perspective. <https://nbmedia-coop.org/2020/04/11/solidarity-and-social-distancing-a-sociologists-perspective/>
- Video - The Wisdom of Sociology by Sam Richards. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWD6g9CV_sc.

January 27 - Self and Society, continued

- C. Wright Mills, "The Promise", in *The Sociological Imagination*
- Jenny Justice, "How to Develop Your Sociological Imagination for Empathy and Social Justice", <https://medium.com/swlh/how-to-develop-your-sociological-imagination-for-empathy-and-social-justice-2a6068800793>

Class exercise: Bio Poem : Going beyond the familiar and obvious aspects of identity.

February 3 - Self, Social Interaction and Everyday Life

- George H. Mead, [1934] 1967. Selections from "The Self," in *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press (pp. 135-144, 152-178, 192-200).
- Class exercise to apply Mead's concepts to everyday life.

February 10 - Self, Social Interaction and Everyday Life, continued

- Herbert Blumer, 1969. Selection from "The Methodological Position of Symbolic Interactionism," in *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Berkeley: University of California Press (pp. 1-21).

- Katie Canales. "The Face Mask is a Political Symbol", <https://www.businessinsider.com/masks-political-symbol-coronavirus-covid-19-spanish-1918-flu-pandemic-2020-5>

February 17 - Reading Week

February 24 - Self, Social Interaction and Everyday Life, continued

- Erving Goffman, 1959. "Introduction," in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Anchor Books (pp. 1-16).
- Erving Goffman, *On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction*, <https://web.stanford.edu/~eckert/PDF/GoffmanFace1967.pdf>
- Peter Kaufman, "Love Is Sociological" <https://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2016/02/love-is-sociological.html>
- Karen Sternheimer, "Weddings: Front Stage Performances" <https://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2014/10/weddings-front-stage-performances.html>

March 3 - Class activities on Goffman's ideas and everyday Life

- Movie : Codes of Gender, or other
- Class exercises
- Breaching experiments

March 10 - Social Construction of Reality

- Berger, P. L. and T. Luckmann. 1991. *The Social Construction of Reality*. London: Penguin Books. Pp 31-62.
- Karen Sternheimer *The Social Construction of Time* <https://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2016/11/the-social-construction-of-time.html>

Class Activity: Masculinity and Social Construction: Photographs https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-man-today-barbican-centre/KQKi_R2sEGQNKw?hl=en

March 17: Power, Resistance and Everyday

- Foucault, Michel. 1975. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. "Panopticism" (195- 228).
- Michel Foucault: Power, Discourse and 9/11 <https://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2010/10/michel-foucault-power-discourse-and-911.html>

Class activity: Video - "The Elf on the Shelf" and the normalization of surveillance.

March 24 - Research Essay and Class Discussion Review Session

No reading required

March 31 - Power, Resistance and Everyday, continued

- James Scott Scott, James C. 1989 "Everyday Forms of Resistance", Copenhagen Papers, No. 4, pp. 33-62
- Anna Johansson and Stellan Vinthagen. 2014. "Dimensions of Everyday Resistance: An Analytical Framework", *Critical Sociology*, Vol. 42 (3), pp 417-435.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. (1990). "The Romance of Resistance. Tracing transformations of Power through Beduin Women. *American Ethnologist* , 17 (1):41-55

April 7: Research Essay Class Discussion.