Course Description

This course focuses on both 20th and 21st c. classics of social theory that have particular resonance in the present along with recent breakthrough statements in the four most vibrant areas of contemporary theory: Marxism, Psychoanalysis, Critical Theory, and Postcolonial Theory. After taking this course students will have a better understanding of the most cited and talked about works of theory in the contemporary Continental tradition along with a deeper understanding of their influences, genealogies, tensions, and contradictions. Students will not only come out of this course with a better understanding of the theories and debates in contemporary sociology in a global perspective but also with an inter- and post-disciplinary approach to theory through which they can engage across the social sciences and humanities across the globe.

There is much precedent in Canadian sociology for looking to critical theory for theoretical inspiration instead of to the more parochial theoretical conversation within sociology in the United States. Canadian Francophone social theory was initially inspired by Marx, Lenin and Mao but also Gramsci, Althusser, and Poulantzas. But beyond this, Canadian sociology has historically blurred distinctions between social theory and Continental philosophy (See Dumas 1987; Laurin 2006). Looking more to the European tradition instead of the American better fits our local Canadian context as part of the British and French Empires. While US influence is ever-present in Canada, we also have the inheritances of both the UK tradition and the French tradition, along with our own traditions such as the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist traditions in Canadian francophone sociology, and the central place of Political Economy in Canadian anglophone sociology, both of which have a long history of being oriented towards Europe and shaped by continental philosophy.
But because these theoretical traditions are central to the way social thought has been articulated in the British and French Empires beyond Canada, these theories and their traditions have resonance well beyond Europe and North America and are similarly central to theoretical conversation and debates in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, particularly in places that are former British and French colonies.

Session Topics & Readings

I understand that because this is a required course, not all of you enrolled are would-be theorists. Even for those of you who intend to become theorists you may not be interested in taking a deep dive into each one of these theorists’ work every single week. To accommodate a range of ability and interest, each week there are three options for what to read in preparation for that week’s discussion. If you are just interested in doing the bare minimum read the first option which will be limited to the most important essay or book chapter by that theorist. For those of you with moderate interest read the first plus the second options which will allow you to get a bit further into concepts and ideas of that theorist. However, for those of you interested in specializing in theory I suggest you attempt the first, second and third options which will give you a very deep, intense dive into that theorist, their work, along with some of the important secondary literature on that theorist.

Course Requirements

Essay

The final assessment in this course will be an essay assignment. In attempts to accommodate those very interested in theory along with those who have less interest in theory there are two options:

**Option 1** will entail a literature review putting every one of the theoretical schools (Marxism, Psychoanalysis, Critical theory, and Postcolonial theory) in conversation examining how each theorist we have read builds on previous theorists in both a critical and complimentary way.

**Option 2**, for those of you interested in specializing in theory, entails doing the critical lit review in option 1 but then taking it a step further by reading a contemporary theorist of your choosing that was not included on the syllabus and incorporating them into the discussion of the theorists we have read in
this course. This assignment will give you an opportunity to delve deeper into a theorist who you are planning on engaging in your work and locating them within the conversation in contemporary theory.

The paper should be 8-12 pages double spaced, 12pt times new roman font, with standard margins. The essay is due on 20th December at noon EST. The late penalty is 10% marks per 24 hours late. Work will not be accepted more than 7 days after the deadline without an extension. This final assessment is worth 60% of your mark.

In order to stay on track with this final assessment regardless of which option you choose, I recommend that you take notes each week or write up a brief summary of the readings to aid you in writing your final papers. You are certainly welcome to ask questions of the instructor and teaching assistant about the readings (in class, office hours, via email and other opportunities) but we will not be marking your notes or summaries.

**Participation**
The remainder of your mark will be assessed based on class attendance and participation in weeks 2-11. For class during weeks 1 and 12 attendance is optional but recommended. Attendance and participation in the conversation is worth 4% per class for a total of 40% over the course of the term.

**Evaluation (including Penalty for Lateness Clause)**

For both undergraduate and graduate courses, instructors are not obliged to accept late work, except where there are legitimate, documented reasons beyond a student’s control. In such cases, a late penalty is normally not appropriate. For pre-approved reasons, the late penalty for this course is 10% marks per 24 hours late. Work will not be accepted more than 7 days after the deadline without an extension.

**Academic Integrity Clause**

Copying, plagiarizing, falsifying medical certificates, or other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Any student caught engaging in such activities will be referred to the Dean’s office for adjudication. Any student abetting or
otherwise assisting in such misconduct will also be subject to academic penalties. Students are expected to cite sources in all written work and presentations. See this link for tips for how to use sources well: (http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize).

According to Section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters 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."

By enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by the university’s rules regarding academic conduct, as outlined in the Calendar. You are expected to be familiar with the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules/code/the-code-of-behaviour-on-academic-matters) and Code of Student Conduct (http://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/publicationsandpolicies/codeofstudentconduct.htm) which spell out your rights, your duties and provide all the details on grading regulations and academic offences at the University of Toronto.

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.

Accessiblity Services

It is the University of Toronto's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons. Please see the University of Toronto Governing Council “Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities” at http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppnov012004.pdf.

In working toward this goal, the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share
the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community. We take seriously our obligation to make this course as welcoming and accessible as feasible for students with diverse needs. We also understand that disabilities can change over time and will do our best to accommodate you.

Students seeking support must have an intake interview with a disability advisor to discuss their individual needs. In many instances it is easier to arrange certain accommodations with more advance notice, so we strongly encourage you to act as quickly as possible. To schedule a registration appointment with a disability advisor, please visit Accessibility Services at http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as, call at 416-978-8060, or email at: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca. The office is located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4th Floor, Suite 400.

Additional student resources for distressed or emergency situations can be located at distressedstudent.utoronto.ca; Health & Wellness Centre, 416-978-8030, http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc, or Student Crisis Response, 416-946-7111.

Equity and Diversity Statement

Equity and Diversity

The University of Toronto is committed to equity and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated.

Additional information and reports on Equity and Diversity at the University of Toronto is available at http://equity.hrandequity.utoronto.ca.

Reading list

Required Books:
Fanon, Frantz (1965 [1959]). *A Dying Colonialism* New York: Grove Press.

**Required articles:**

**Supplemental Books:**

**Supplemental articles + book chapters:**


**Course Schedule and Class Lecture Details**

16th September

**WEEK 1:** Introduction to Contemporary Theory [online via Zoom]

*Marxism*

23rd September
WEEK 2: Antonio Gramsci [online via Zoom]


Option 1 (beginner): If you can’t stand Gramsci just read “State and Society”

Option 2 (intermediate): If you want a bit more Gramsci than the bare minimum also read part of “The Intellectuals” (pp. 5-14); and part of “Notes on Italian History” (pp. 52-90 make sure not to miss footnotes #5 + #49)


30th September

WEEK 3: Louis Althusser [in-person, should conditions allow]


Option 1 (beginner): If you can’t stand Althusser just read “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” in *Lenin and Philosophy*

Option 2 (intermediate): If you want a bit more Althusser than the bare minimum also read “Contradiction and Overdetermination” in *For Marx*; “Marxism is not a Historicism”, “The Epistemological Propositions of Capital (Marx, Engels)”, “The Object of Political Economy” and “Marx's Immense Theoretical Revolution” in *Reading Capital*

Option 3 (advanced): If you’re loving Althusser also read “Philosophy as a Revolutionary Weapon” and the appendix in *Lenin and Philosophy*, all of "Part 4: The Object of Capital” in *Reading Capital*, “On the Materialist Dialectic” in *For Marx,*

**Psychoanalysis**

7th October

**WEEK 4:** Jacques Lacan [in-person, should conditions allow]


Option 1 (beginner): If you can’t stand Lacan just read “Mirror Stage” and “Subversion of the Subject”

Option 2 (intermediate): If you want a bit more Lacan than the bare minimum also read “The Function and Field of Speech”, “The Freudian Thing” and “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious”

Option 3 (advanced): If you’re absolutely loving Lacan read the whole book and flag these for future reading:


14th October

**WEEK 5:** Frantz Fanon [in-person, should conditions allow]

Frantz Fanon (1965 [1959]). *A Dying Colonialism* New York: Grove Press.

Option 1 (beginner): If you can’t stand Fanon just read “This is the Voice of Algeria”

Option 2 (intermediate): If you want a bit more Fanon than the bare minimum also read “Preface”, “Algeria Unveiled” and “Conclusion”
If you’re specialising in sociology of the family also read “The Algerian Family”
If you’re specialising in medical sociology/sociology of health also read “Medicine and Colonialism”

Option 3 (advanced): If you’re absolutely loving Fanon read the whole book plus:

21st October
WEEK 6: Slavoj Žižek [in-person, should conditions allow]


Option 1 (beginner): If you can’t stand Žižek just read “Eppur Si Muove”, “Is it Still Possible to be a Hegelian Today?”, “Lacan as a Reader of Hegel”, and “The Political Suspension of the Ethical”

Option 2 (intermediate): If you want a bit more Žižek than the bare minimum also read, “Marx as a Reader of Hegel, Hegel as a Reader of Marx”, “The Limits of Hegel”, “The Foursome of Terror, Anxiety, Courage… and Enthusiasm”

Option 3 (advanced): If you’re absolutely loving Žižek, read the whole book and/or:
And flag this doc for future watching:

**Critical Theory (Post-Marxism, Post-Maoism, Poststructuralism)**

28th October
**WEEK 7:** Alain Badiou [in-person, should conditions allow]


Option 1 (beginner): If you can’t stand Badiou just read “May ’68 Revisited, 40 Years On” and “The Idea of Communism”

Option 2 (intermediate): If you want a bit more Badiou than the bare minimum also read “What is Called Failure?”, “The Cultural Revolution: The Last Revolution?”, “Letter from Alain Badiou to Slavoj Žižek: On the Work of Mao Zedong”

If you’re specializing in historical sociology consider also reading “The Paris Commune”

Option 3 (advanced): If you’re absolutely loving Badiou read the entire book and


4th November
**WEEK 8:** Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari [in-person, should conditions allow]


Option 1 (beginner): If you can’t stand D&G just read “The Urstaat” and “The Civilized Capitalist Machine”
Option 2 (intermediate): If you want a bit more D&G than the bare minimum also read “Desiring Production”, “The Body Without Organs”, “Capitalist Representation” and “Psychoanalysis and Capitalism”

Option 3 (advanced): If you’re absolutely loving D&G read the entire book plus

Flag this for future reference (or as a reading guide):

18th November
WEEK 9: Nancy Fraser [in-person, should conditions allow]


Option 1 (beginner): If you can’t stand Fraser just read, “The Old is Dying and the New Cannot Be Born” (pp. 7-40)

Option 2 (intermediate): If you want a bit more Fraser than the bare minimum read the whole book (it is very short)

Option 3 (advanced): If you’re absolutely loving Fraser, also read

Postcolonial Theory

25th November
WEEK 10: Aníbal Quijano selected articles [in-person, should conditions allow]
Option 1 (beginner): If you can’t stand Quijano, just read

Option 2 (intermediate): If you want a bit more Quijano than the bare minimum also read:

Option 3 (advanced): If you’re loving Quijano also read:
and if you read Spanish also read:
And flag the following for future reading:
Aníbal Quijano (2019). *Ensayos en torno a la colonialidad del poder*
Buenos Aires: Ediciones del signo.

2nd December
**WEEK 11:** Ania Loomba [in-person, should conditions allow]


Option 1 (beginner): If you can’t stand Loomba just read, “Love in the Time of Revolution”

Option 2 (intermediate): If you want a bit more Loomba than the bare minimum also read: “Introduction” (just the part from pp. 12-31), “Communism”, “Becoming ‘Indian’”, “Conclusion”

Option 3 (advanced): If you’re loving Loomba read the entire book plus:
9th December

**WEEK 12: wrap up discussion [in-person, should conditions allow]**

**Copyright Statement (Optional)**

Faculty may wish to post a statement on their course page to remind students of faculty rights and student responsibilities in relation to course materials provided online. Sample statements are provided below for members to use or modify as needed depending on their course delivery model(s):

Lectures and course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor’s intellectual property covered by the *Copyright Act*, RSC 1985, c C-42. Course materials such as PowerPoint slides and lecture recordings are made available to you for your own study purposes. These materials cannot be shared outside of the class or “published” in any way. Posting recordings or slides to other websites without the express permission of the instructor will constitute copyright infringement.

OR

Course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor’s intellectual property covered by the *Copyright Act*, RSC 1985, c C-42. These materials are made available to you for your own study purposes, and cannot be shared 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.