



Sociology UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

SOC6101 – Contemporary Sociological Theory – Fall 2020

Instructor: Professor Sida Liu (Email: sd.liu@utoronto.ca)

Time: 9:00-11:00am, Thursday (September 17 – December 3)

Office Hours: 11:00am-12:00pm, Thursday (by Quercus appointment)

Course Website: Quercus (online synchronous)

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to contemporary sociological theory. It is not intended to provide a bird's-eye view of all major theories in contemporary sociology. Instead, it focuses on a few sociological traditions and gives you an opportunity to explore different ways of developing theoretical approaches for understanding the social world. The goal is to help you become not only a consumer of sociological theory but also a producer. To achieve this goal, the course is designed as a reading and writing-intensive experience. It requires not only in-depth reading and thoughtful writing throughout the term but also the sociological imagination to critically engage with social theorists in different times and places.

Readings

The readings for this course consist of several books, many journal articles, and an introductory volume, *Social Theory: Twenty Introductory Lectures* (by Hans Joas and Wolfgang Knöbl, Cambridge University Press, 2009), which serves as a “roadmap” for your learning.

Given the covid-19 situation, all the selected reading materials (including books) are available electronically through the U of T library website. As a new Ph.D. student, it is important for you to develop the basic skills of finding academic sources through the library. Therefore, no material accessible through the U of T library will be posted on Quercus and you are expected to find them by searching the library catalogue. If you experience any difficulty finding a specific course reading, please email the instructor and it will be made available to you.

Course Requirements

Quercus Weekly Essays

You are required to write and post to Quercus eight 500-word reflective essays on eight weeks of the course readings during Weeks 2-12. Please note that these essays are NOT summaries or reading responses. Instead, you are expected to focus on *one key concept* from that week's readings and *critically* reflect upon how the theorists approach that concept in their writings. You may choose

which eight weeks (out of eleven weeks) to write your essays – in other words, you have three “free tickets” not to write a weekly essay during the term. Each essay must be posted to the discussion board on Quercus by **5:00pm on the Tuesday of that week** to give your classmates enough time to respond to it. These eight essays account for 40% of your final mark.

Quercus Weekly Responses

In addition to your original essays, you are also required to post to Quercus eight 200-word responses to other students’ reflective essays during Weeks 2-12. A good response can either elaborate on or argue against the essay, but it must make a substantive argument on the same concept. You may choose which eight weeks (out of eleven weeks) to write your responses – in other words, you have three “free tickets” not to write a weekly response during the term. Each response must be posted to the discussion board on Quercus by **5:00pm on the Wednesday of that week** to give everyone enough time to read it before the Thursday class. These eight responses account for 20% of your final mark.

Reading and Class Participation

Reading is at the heart of this course (or any course on sociological theory). Please make sure to complete all the assigned readings before every class. In each week, the readings should be read and discussed as a whole body of texts, regardless of the specific combination of books, articles, or book chapters. For the assigned books, you are expected to skim all the major chapters and carefully read selected chapters (TBD).

Seminar is the basic format of the classes, i.e., no lecture or in-class student presentation, but a group discussion of the assigned readings and Quercus essays/responses of that week. You are expected to actively participate in class discussions (virtually or in person). Given the covid-19 pandemic, the course is currently planned to be in a dual-delivery format and the majority (possibly all) of the classes will be held online. We will be flexible and adjust the specific format according to provincial and university guidelines as the covid-19 situation evolves. Class participation accounts for 10% of your final mark.

Final Paper

The final paper of this course is a short, 1,000-word paper on a selected topic based on course materials. Specific instructions will be given later in the term. The due date is **December 14, 2020 (Monday) at 5:00pm**. The final paper accounts for 30% of your final mark.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (September 17) What Is Theory?

Joas, Hans, and Wolfgang Knöbl. 2009. “What Is Theory?” *Social Theory: Twenty Introductory Lectures* (hereinafter “ST”). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1, pp. 1-19.

Levine, Donald N. 1997. “Social Theory as a Vocation.” *Perspectives* 19(2): 1-16.

Krause, Monika. 2016. “The Meanings of Theorizing.” *British Journal of Sociology* 67: 23-29.

Week 2 (September 24) Function and System

ST, Chapters 2-4, 11, pp. 20-93, 249-280.

Luhmann, Niklas. 1995. "System and Function." Chapter 1, pp. 12-58 in *Social Systems*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Week 3 (October 1) Structure and Agency

ST, Chapters 12 and 14, pp. 281-307, 339-370.

Sewell, William H. Jr. 1992. "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation." *American Journal of Sociology* 98: 1-29.

Emirbayer, Mustafa, and Ann Mische. 1998. "What Is Agency?" *American Journal of Sociology* 103: 962-1023.

Fuchs, Stephan. 2001. "Beyond Agency." *Sociological Theory* 19: 24-40.

Week 4 (October 8) Interaction and Social Situation

ST, Chapter 6, pp. 123-149.

Goffman, Erving. [1961] 2017. *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. New York: Routledge.

Week 5 (October 15) Causality and Temporality

Abbott, Andrew. 1988. "Transcending General Linear Reality." *Sociological Theory* 6: 169-186.

Abbott, Andrew. 1998. "The Causal Devolution." *Sociological Methods & Research* 27: 148-181.

Abbott, Andrew. 2005. "Linked Ecologies." *Sociological Theory* 23: 245-274.

Abbott, Andrew. 2007. "Against Narrative: A Preface to Lyrical Sociology." *Sociological Theory* 25: 67-99.

Sewell, William H. Jr. 2005. "Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology." Pp. 81-123 in *Logics of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week 6 (October 22) Field and Habitus

ST, Chapter 15, pp. 371-400.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Martin, John Levi. 2003. "What Is Field Theory?" *American Journal of Sociology* 109: 1-49.

Week 7 (October 29) Pragmatism and Relational Sociology

ST, Chapter 19, pp. 500-528.

Emirbayer, Mustafa. 1997. "Manifesto for a Relational Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 103: 281-317.

Emirbayer, Mustafa, and Chad Alan Goldberg. 2005. "Pragmatism, Bourdieu, and Collective Emotions in Contentious Politics." *Theory and Society* 34: 469-518.

Gross, Neil. 2009. "A Pragmatist Theory of Social Mechanisms." *American Sociological Review* 74: 358-379.

Liu, Sida, and Mustafa Emirbayer. 2016. "Field and Ecology." *Sociological Theory* 34: 62-79.

Week 8 (November 5) Exchange and Power

ST, Chapter 5, pp. 94-122.

Blau, Peter. [1964] 2017. *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. New York: Routledge.

Week 9 (November 12) Network and Capital

Coleman, James S. 1988. "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital." *American Journal of Sociology* 94: S95-S120.

Burt, Ronald S. 1997. "The Contingent Value of Social Capital." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 42: 339-365.

Lin, Nan. 1999. "Building a Network Theory of Social Capital." *Connections* 22(1): 28-51.

Erikson, Emily. 2013. "Formalist and Relationalist Theory in Social Network Analysis." *Sociological Theory* 31: 219-242.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 2013. "Symbolic Capital and Social Classes." *Journal of Classical Sociology* 13: 292-302.

Week 10 (November 19) Discipline and Punish

Foucault, Michel. 1979. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books.

Week 11 (November 26) Feminism and Intersectionality

ST, Chapter 17, pp. 432-462.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 1986. "Learning from the Outsider within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought." *Social Problems* 33: s14-s32.

Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14: 575-599.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989: 139-167.

Choo, Hae Yeon, and Myra Marx Ferree. 2010. "Practicing Intersectionality in Sociological Research: A Critical Analysis of Inclusions, Interactions, and Institutions in the Study of Inequalities." *Sociological Theory* 28: 129-149.

Week 12 (December 3) Postmodernity and Postcolonialism

ST, Chapter 18, pp. 463-499.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2000. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.

Go, Julian. 2013. "For a Postcolonial Sociology." *Theory and Society* 42: 25-55.

(Every attempt will be made to follow this schedule, but it is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.)

Penalty for Lateness

For graduate courses, instructors are not obliged to accept late work, except where there are legitimate, documented reasons beyond a student's control. As a result, students will not be able to postpone or "make up" writing assignments or class participation. If a weekly essay or response is not submitted by the deadline, then that portion of the grade will be lost. For the final paper, papers submitted beyond the due date will receive a late penalty of 10% marks per day, including weekends and holidays. If a student has a legitimate, documented reason beyond their own control for missing classes or assignments, only then will a student be offered a different opportunity to complete that portion of the grade.

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.

Accessibility 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

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>.