

*THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY*

*SOCIOLOGY 77.456 – "ADVANCED SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY"
WINTER TERM, SECTION S01, 3 CREDIT HOURS*

Meeting Location: 335 Isbister Building
Meeting Times: Wednesdays, 2:30-5:30
Instructor: Chris Powell
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**COURSE SUMMARY:
STRUCTURE AND SOCIOLOGY**

What is the point of sociology? What makes sociological research a worthwhile activity? Since the 1960s, sociologists have tended to provide three somewhat incompatible answers to this question: first, that sociology produces true knowledge about objective social reality; second, that sociology produces new interpretations of (inter-)subjective social phenomena; third, that sociology promotes positive social change. The loose assemblage of theoretical writings by Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and others that for the sake of convenience is called 'post-structuralism', problematizes all three of these answers in challenging and provocative ways. This course traces a path through the great upheavals of late twentieth-century social thought, to sketch the possibilities open to sociology in the new millennium.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to do two somewhat contradictory things: to engage students with a relatively narrow and focused set of questions in a way that develops their theoretical skill and sophistication, and to expose students to a broad range of concrete research topics that stimulate their sociological imagination. In keeping with the first objective, the course is united around certain themes: knowledge, power, the body, and subjectivity. In keeping with the second, the readings address a wide range of empirical topics, including: wrestling, food, sex, table manners, writing, education, fashion, globalization, and of course race, class, and gender.

I hope that students will:

- a) learn the basics of some of the most important theoretical developments from the past thirty years;
- b) sharpen their ability to understand, analyze, and critique the theoretical positions of major authors;
- c) develop their ability to do research and to write in a theoretical mode, by doing research into a question or topic of particular interest to them;
- d) build up their skills in, and comfort with, face-to-face verbal discussion of abstract theoretical issues.

REQUIRED READINGS

All readings for the course are placed in the 77.456 reserved slot in the Sociology mail room (320A Isbister). Students are expected to make copies of each week's readings at their own expense. The readings are not to be removed from the mail room. Please be respectful of other students by leaving the readings in good condition for the next person to use.

FORMAT AND ASSESSMENT

A. SEMINAR CLASSES

Each week we will meet for a three-hour seminar session. The seminars are an opportunity for students to discuss the assigned readings, in depth and critically, and to develop their own ideas. *They are not lectures.* Although I will probably say a few introductory words at the beginning of each class to frame the issues, my chief role as instructor will be to facilitate student discussion. Inevitably, some students are more comfortable with speaking up in class than others, but my goal is to create a safe, welcoming environment that invites you to participate freely in an ongoing conversation about these readings and about social theory in general.

B. ASSESSMENT

Formal evaluation for this course is organized in the following manner:

1. Participation – 15 % of final grade

This has several elements. Completion of written assignments is, naturally, the most important way of participating in the course. In addition, however,

1. Students will be expected to participate, on an ongoing basis, in classroom discussion of the assigned readings.
2. Each week, on a rotating basis, some students will act as discussants by preparing a brief summary of part of the assigned readings, along with one or two questions to help start discussion of the reading.
3. Each week, students will prepare three questions on the assigned readings and submit them to me by email, *by 1:30 each Monday afternoon*. I will then assemble these questions and post them to the course website. Students should read each week's list of questions before Wednesday's class.

I will assign the participation grade at the end of term, on the combined basis of all aspects of each student's involvement in the course.

2. Review Essay – 30% of final grade.

Students will write an essay of between 8 and 12 pages in length, which will take one of two forms:

1. Book Review – a review essay that summarizes and critiques one book-length work of social theory.
2. Literature Review – a review essay that summarizes and critiques a small collection of journal articles, book sections, and/or other works of social theory.

A more detailed description of this assignment will be distributed once classes begin.

3. Annotated Bibliography – 5% of final grade.

Students will prepare a list of at least ten works (journal articles, book chapters, books, etc.) relating to the topic of their final research essay. For each item listed, the student will provide complete bibliographic information, and an abstract (usually 100 to 150 words in length) summarizing the main arguments presented in the work.

4. Final Research Essay – 50% of final grade.

A research essay between 15 and 20 pages in length addressing an empirical or theoretical question relating to the course material. In order to prompt students to begin thinking about this assignment early, and to give ample time for research, consultation, and feedback, the assignment has several intermediate stages:

- First Stage: Brainstorming. Students will submit a list of three or more possible research questions, each described in one sentence (50 words or less).
- Second Stage: Adding substance. Students will hand in a list of three or more possible research questions, this time providing a short (about 150 words) description of how they might approach each topic.
- Third Stage: Narrowing in. Students will write a detailed abstract (about 250 words) describing one research question and how they intend to approach it.
- Fourth Stage: Completion. Students will write and submit a complete research essay.

The grade for the research essay is based on the quality of the completed final paper; no specific grade is attached to Stages 1-3. However, lateness on any one of these stages will contribute, cumulatively, to the late penalty for the entire assignment.

A more detailed description of the requirements for the final research essay will be distributed once classes begin.

Note: All of the stages of the research essay process, and indeed all the assignments for this course, are designed so that they could be cumulative, i.e. so that *all of the student's work for this course can be integrated into the final paper*. At the same time, each stage of the research essay process does not commit the student to sticking with the same topic or approach for later stages. *The student may change their mind at any time* as to what their final paper will involve. However, students who do wish to write their final paper on a new topic not addressed in their detailed abstract should consult me before doing so.

Schedule of Due Dates:

- January 25th (Week Three) – Research essay, first stage: brainstorming list of topics.
- February 8th (Week Five) – Research essay, second stage: list of topics with descriptions.
- March 1st (Week Seven) – Review Essay due.
- March 15th (Week Nine) – Research essay, third stage: single topic with abstract.
- March 29th (Week Eleven) – Annotated bibliography due.
- April 19th (Exam Period) – Research essay fourth stage: completed essay due.

Note: that assignments delivered by e-mail or in other electronic format will not be accepted; you must submit a paper copy.

C. LATE PENALTY

Please be advised that a late penalty of 2% per day, including days on weekends and holidays, will be applied to any assignment submitted after its due date. Medical documentation will normally be required to waive this penalty. However, if you know before the due date that a paper will be late *for any reason*, you should *contact me immediately*. In some cases, entirely at my discretion, it may be possible to arrange an extension.

It is the student's responsibility to approach me as early as possible to make arrangements for an extension. No extension will be given for any assignment after its due date, except for documented medical reasons. No extension will be given under any conditions more than two weeks after the due date.

D. GRADING SCHEME

Generally speaking, the following letter/percentage/GPA/descriptive scale will be used.

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>GPA</u>	<u>Description</u>
A+	90-100%	4.5	Exceptional
A	80-89%	4.0	Excellent
B+	75-79%	3.5	Very Good
B	70-74%	3.0	Good
C+	65-69%	2.5	Satisfactory
C	60-64%	2.0	Adequate
D	50-59%	1.0	Marginal
F	49% or less	0	Failure

E. SPECIAL NEEDS

Students with special learning needs who may require special accommodation with respect to the course assessment should meet with me at the beginning of the term so that we can arrange suitable accommodation.

F. RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

The university recognizes the right of all students to observe recognized holidays of their faith that fall within the academic year. If you will have to miss any classes or will require an extension for an assignment due to a religious holiday, *please notify me* at the beginning of the term or at least three weeks in advance of the relevant date.

G. FINAL DROP DATE

Although I hope that no one will want to drop out of this course, please be advised that the last day for voluntary withdrawal from second term courses is Friday, March 17th.

INSTRUCTIONAL OFFENCES

Academic dishonesty is a serious offense, with grave consequences. University's policy on 'Examinations: Personations'(p.25) and 'Plagiarism and Cheating' (p.26) found in the Undergraduate Calendar. Penalties for plagiarism and academic dishonesty are severe.

The common penalty in Arts for plagiarism in a written assignment, test or examination is "F" on the paper and "F" for the course. For the most serious acts of plagiarism, such as the purchase of an essay or cheating on a test or examination, the penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five years from registration in courses taught in a particular department in Arts or from all courses taught in the Faculty. The Faculty of Arts also reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism.

AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism can be defined as passing off someone else's work as your own. Plagiarism involves taking another person's words (written or spoken), ideas, theories, facts (that are not considered general knowledge), statistics, art work, etc. and presenting them as your own. Simply changing the wording of the information you are using still constitutes plagiarism if you do not acknowledge your source.

It is a normal and inevitable part of scholarly writing that you will present other people's ideas in your work. However, to avoid plagiarizing, you must cite your sources diligently. You should provide an in-text citation in each of the following cases:

- all direct quotations of other authors
- close paraphrases of statements by other authors
- important ideas or points taken from another author's work

To copy the exact words of another author is to quote them. All quotations must be indicated, either by quotation marks, by block indentation, or by some other device, and the source of the quotation must be indicated. However, note that you do not have to quote someone directly in order to cite them! Your papers should be littered with citations even if they do not contain a single direct quotation.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN WORK

1. All written work is to be typed in 12-point Times or Times Roman (or equivalent font). Please do not use sans serif fonts such as Helvetica or Arial; these fonts are for titles and headings only.
2. Your work should have one inch margins and be double-spaced.
3. Each assignment should have a title page that includes your name, student number, my name, and the number of the course. No binders or assignment covers please.
4. Please use in-text citations, e.g. (Weber 1978: 83) to cite your work. Each assignment should include a bibliography that lists your references alphabetically by author. Full bibliographic information should still be provided for sources in the course pack. Your bibliography should follow this format or something similar:

Gleick, James, 1987. *Chaos: Making A New Science*. New York: Penguin Books.

Law, John, 1992. *Notes on the theory of the Actor Network: Ordering, Strategy and heterogeneity*. Website: <http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/soc054jl.html>. Last updated: 16 June 2001. Last accessed: 13 March 2003.

Rip, Arie, 1986. "Mobilising Resources Through Texts." pp. 84-99 in *Mapping the Dynamics of Science and Technology: Sociology of Science in the Real World*, edited by M. Callon, J. Law, and A. Rip. London: MacMillan Press.

Ward, Steven, 1996. "Filling the world with Self-Esteem: A Social History of Truth-Making." *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, v.21(1), pp. 1-23.

5. Please use gender-inclusive language in your written assignments, even if your sources do not. For tips on gender-inclusive language, see the course website.

However, please note that when quoting directly from other authors, you should not 'correct' their language to make it gender-inclusive.

6. The recommended lengths indicated for each assignment do not include the title page or the bibliography.
7. Please retain a clean hard copy of each assignment that you submit. I will not be responsible for misplaced assignments.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The University of Manitoba provides a number of support services to students that can help you to write your term paper, develop your study skills, or get through a stressful situation. Many of these services are described online at:

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/student>

If you're not already familiar with these services, I encourage you to spend some time getting to know about them; they can help you improve your academic performance and get the most out of your time at university. Some key resources include:

- **Student Counselling and Career Centre**
474 University Centre
(204) 474-8592
<http://www.umanitoba.ca/student/counselling>
- **Disability Services**
155 University Centre
(204) 474-6213/TTY: 204 474-9790/Fax: 204 261-7732
Email: disability_services@umanitoba.ca
http://www.umanitoba.ca/student/resource/disability_services/index.shtml
- **Learning Assistance Centre**
520 University Centre
(204) 474-9251
<http://www.umanitoba.ca/student/resource/learning>

ADVANCE READING

Students who wish to get an advance start on the course without doing any actual work should repair to a coffee shop with a copy of *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino (Vintage Books, 2001, available at McNally Robinson for less than \$20). This short novel, a series of anecdotes told by Marco Polo to Kublai Kahn, will get you thinking about the kinds of ideas that we will cover in this course, in a way that will take you completely by surprise. If you can't find *Invisible Cities*, then *CosmiComics* (also by Italo Calvino) will do, as will almost anything by Jorge Luis Borges.

Sociology 77.456 – "Advanced Sociological Theory"
Schedule of Readings

STRUCTURALISMS

STRUCTURES

WEEK 1, JAN 10TH

The concept of social structure and its importance in sociology, and the related project of formal analysis. Classic sociological readings by Durkheim and Simmel. We also consider the structuralist anthropology of Marcel Mauss and Claude Lévi-Strauss, and the insights it offers into the social formation of cognition, the body, and subjectivity.

IDEOLOGY

WEEK 2, JAN 17TH

The materialist concept of social structure and the relation between material social relations and forms of thought, consciousness, and subjectivity. The role of intellectuals in reproducing or challenging the existing social order; the question of science as a passive reflection of the world or an active intervention into it. Readings by Marx, Gramsci, and Althusser.

IDENTITY

WEEK 3, JAN 24TH

The relationship between social structure, social identity, and our knowledge of the social is explored further, mostly through the matrix of feminist theorizing. Readings in standpoint epistemology (Smith), radical feminist theory (de Beauvoir, MacKinnon), and anti-racist feminism (hooks, Collins).

POST-STRUCTURALISMS

DISCIPLINARY POWER

WEEK 4, JAN 31ST

Power understood not as a substance that can be possessed or spent by a unified agent, nor as something external to society that distorts it, but as a field generated by relations of force and contestation integral to every social relationship. In the exercise of disciplinary power, the application of force to human bodies and the generation of knowledge about human subjects are intimately interconnected, as individuals are constrained even through the very exercise of their individuality. Readings from *Discipline and Punish* by Michel Foucault.

POWER/KNOWLEDGE

WEEK 5, FEB 7TH

Explores further the intimate intertwinings of the means by which we know ourselves and the means by which we are governed. Sexuality is commonly regarded as integral to the deepest truths of our selves, but "sexuality" is a recent cultural invention. Readings from *The History of Sexuality* by Michel Foucault.

SEMIOTICS***WEEK 6, FEB 21ST***

“Falsehood is never in words, it is in things.” It is generally supposed that the goal of science is to speak the truth, and that true statements are those which correspond with the objects they refer to. But what happens if the relationship between words and things is necessarily more complicated than one of mere correspondence? What happens when we treat words themselves as things, and look at their practical effects as we would any other material object? Readings from Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes, and Jean Baudrillard.

DECONSTRUCTION***WEEK 7, FEB 28TH***

‘Deconstruction’ is one of the most commonly referred to and most misunderstood theoretical projects of the late twentieth century. But then, deconstructionists say that all readings are misreadings anyway. Deconstruction has important implications for sociology: in its account of meaning-making as an inherently relational and, hence, social process, and as a technology for de-naturalizing the forms of inequality and domination built into the very concepts with which we speak and think. Readings by Jonathan Culler, Diane Elam, Christopher Norris, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and possibly even Jacques Derrida.

POSTMODERNITY***WEEK 8, MARCH 7TH***

Postmodernity is more of an ethos or an approach to things than a specific historical period. Modernity is oriented to the production of identity, in the sense of ‘being-the-same-as’: truth, justice, or the soul, are all said to be ultimately self-identity, hence singular and unary; there is only one ultimate truth, one universal justice, I am only one person. Post-modernity, by contrast, is oriented toward complexity, contradiction, and multiplicity: truth is no one thing, justice is no one thing; I am many people. Not surprisingly, postmodernism ‘itself’ is no one thing, and we will explore several versions. Readings by Jean-François Lyotard, Zygmunt Bauman, and Jean Baudrillard.

IDENTITY REVISITED***WEEK 9, MARCH 14TH***

Traditionally in Western culture, both science and politics depend on the existence of a self, or subject, who is prior to social relations: the subject who knows (or does not know) the truth; the subject who is free (or oppressed). So what happens if the self is ‘itself’ the product of social structures – and of multiple, contradictory, unstable structures at that? Readings by Monique Wittig, Judith Butler, David Theo Goldberg, and Edward Said.

THE PRACTICE TURN***SOVEREIGNTY AND TABLE MANNERS******WEEK 10, MARCH 21ST***

An oft-cited weakness of post-structuralist theory is its over-emphasis on discourse and its neglect of the practical things people do in their everyday lives to socially construct the reality they inhabit. This has led to a renewed interest in the study of *practice*. As early as the 1930s, historical sociologist Norbert Elias managed to develop a relational and non-unitary conception of subjectivity, by tracing the historical connections between the growth of the modern sovereign state and the growth of – of all things – etiquette. Readings about snot, farting, belching, and why you shouldn't urinate in closets.

THE PRACTICE OF EVERYDAY LIFE***WEEK 11, MARCH 28TH***

More readings on everyday stuff like cooking, cleaning, and walking around town, this time by Michel de Certeau. Whereas Foucault's account of the operation of power in everyday social interactions leaves little room for personal resistance and paints a bleak picture of the subtle totalitarianism of the most liberal and individualistic societies, de Certeau provides a more optimistic assessment of the tactics by which ordinary people can defend or reclaim the autonomy and integrity of their selves.

SOCIOLOGY AS A MARTIAL ART***WEEK 12, APRIL 4TH***

“Concrete human individuals make history,” says Marx, “but they do so under conditions they have not chosen.” From its inception, sociology has wrestled with this seeming paradox, that social constructions can impose themselves on us with all the inexorability of natural facts. The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu revolves around his attempts to resolve this ‘paradox of doxa’. Like Elias and de Certeau, Bourdieu connects the concrete practices of everyday life with the cleavages and inequalities that shape society as a whole. And unlike Elias, he reconciles the spirit of scientific inquiry with an engagement in social struggle.