

University of Manitoba, Department of Sociology and Criminology  
Soc 4560 (CRN 56123), 3 credit hours

# Advanced Sociological Theory

Winter 2020 (Jan 6-April 7)

14.30-17.15 PM Tuesdays, Isbister 335

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Holiday/Break: Feb 17-21

Voluntary Withdrawal Deadline: March 18, 2020

## SYLLABUS

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

Conducted partially in lecture format, and partly in student-led seminar format every week, this Advanced Sociological Theory course will be focused on sociological work clarifying our historical, trans- societal context, illuminating a sample of the main macro- and meso-sociological approaches as they encounter institutional and dispositional reform and societal change in the ongoing restoration of patrimonial capitalist inequality.

The majority of the course material will contribute distinctive sociological perspectives to our course project of examining neoliberalization as the practical and discursive conservatization of liberalism and its institutions. In particular, we will focus on the sociological theory of education for democratic development in comparative social context.

We will enhance our social-theory fluency by examining how contrasting and contesting, socially-embedded theoretical approaches not only illuminate but reflect and fuel social change in our time. While lecture and discussion will contribute to building our literacy in social theory, course material will review the foundations and inner architecture of contemporary neoliberal social theory, reconstructing and interlocked with dominant institutions, orienting our social relations and dispositions, and articulated in social opposition to post-cartesian dialectical historical-materialist theories emerging from Western classical and Enlightenment movements and ideas.

Collectively, as we use comparison and sociological theory to apprehend and grapple conceptually with our era of social change, we will build our capacity to discern, theorize—to apprehend via provisional, communicable classification, to make informed judgments on ways communities and societies make and know, and

to participate knowledgeably in our social world, as members of the community of learners and scholars.

- \* Expected Pre-masters study load in a theory course is about 50 pages of rigorous reading per week, with study notes encompassing the 4 Seminar Questions, contributing to both reporting and analysis. Please commit time accordingly. At the university, “you should expect to spend two hours studying or working (on assigned papers) outside of class for every one hour in lecture or discussion...(A)n average 15-unit” schedule, “(3-4 courses) thus will require about 45 hours per week (only 15 hours of which may be class time. By the way, a full-time job is typically 40 hours per week).”—Stanford University Undergraduate Guide. Many of the theory readings will be challenging in order to propel comprehension development. As social theorist Mary Wollstonecraft as well as John Dewey and more recently Wirth & Perkins have maintained, people poised for lifelong development and democratic participation and leadership need a more rigorous education, so that they can develop *a methodological approach to knowledge, learn to generalize and analyze causation, compare their own observations with theory, and pursue a branch of learning with the discipline necessary to develop mental faculties and improve judgment*. If we will agree to approach the class in good faith as a collective intellectual adventure, the class will provide your support in this university-based intellectual growth period.

This term’s Advanced Sociology Theory course engages the question of knowledge production and reproduction in social context. The professor will lecture on background theory to the readings and metatheory, so that topics will include:

- Why do we **distinguish social science** as the collective pursuit of knowledge—description and explanation—via reflexive scientific method, including the role of normative, organizing theoretical communities?
- Given human constraints (eg. non-omniscience, obstruction of information due to social stratification) and capacities (eg. for observing our world, for agency, for communication and coordination), how is social science designed to enable knowledge development? Why does this scientific epistemology propel sociology to encompass **multiple paradigms**, and compel sociologists to lay bare and judge normative **paradigm foundations and theoretical assumptions**, to choose their scholarly subcommunity contribution?
- Using our sociological scientific approach, including historical comparison, what are the **social, institutional, and dispositional preconditions** of social science and sociology? How do they relate to social science **epistemology** and sociological **voice**?
- What distinguishes **sociological** craft, including and focusing on the role of theory in sociological inquiry?
- By identifying **constitutive assumptions and implications**, how can we recognize and interpret, and address with potency, impactful social theories,

- from those reasserting elitist abstraction to those forwarding sociological imagination and craft, from those critical of anti-democratic institutions to cooperative and accommodating strategies?
- How are **sociological and theoretical craft traditions** particularly built for reasserting the power of the **sociological imagination**? What roles do theory and method, including comparative and particularly comparative historical method, play in sociological craft?
  - How do scholarly **theory** communities, including their **assumptions**, mutually determine **methods** and **research questions**, producing specific scholarly subcommunity projects or contributions?

## Required readings

Required books (available at Amazon.ca or alternative, and/or library):

- Sapiro, Gisele. 2010. *Sociology is a Martial Art: Political Writings by Pierre Bourdieu*. The New Press. ISBN 978-1-59558-543-1.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2004. *Social Structures of the Economy*. Polity.

Required additional readings (syllabus, chapters, articles, excerpts) *will be available to copy in the mailroom, or posted on UMLearn*.

- **This syllabus**. You are expected to read and consult this syllabus throughout the term.

## Assignments

**One-page Reading Response** to each reading, due each week. Includes for each reading assigned each week: a) reading **thesis**; b) identification what is **at stake**: for the class; for Sociologists; for society; c) one extrapolative question for class on the reading. **6 points per week, for a total of 60 points**. Assignment grades will be available to the student two weeks after the professor receives the completed assignment. Failure to submit a Reading Response will result in a grade of 0.

One **Oral Secretariat Report**, worth 30 points. A sign-up sheet will be passed around. Oral report should be 20 mn – 1 hour. In addition to the oral presentation, the student should submit to the professor a Powerpoint or detailed outline. Specifications and an example for composing a Secretariat-Report will be provided. Within the Secretariat oral report, you will answer (identified questions from

within) the 4 Arts Seminar reading comprehension questions **What does the text say? What does it mean? What is at stake for the community of scholars? What is at stake for society?** Assignment grades will be available to the student two weeks after the professor receives the completed assignment. Failure to present will result in a grade of 0.

**Course Scholarly Engagement & Participation.** 10 points. This winter term course always competes with students' Honours theses for attention. Nonetheless, it is an advanced seminar, and a fundamental part of an Honours education. It can provide a terrific university experience, but that does require you to take great responsibility, reliably attending to (studying) the course material outside of class and engaging collegially with the course material and seminar in class.

### Composition specs

Generally, for submitted written material: 12 pt font, 1 inch margins, 1 or 1.5 spacing, paginated, **with your name on top**. Use **subheadings** to switch topics when you can't compose a smooth transition. Use ASA style guidelines, or similar.

### Grading Rubric

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

### Schedule: Assignment due dates

WEEK 1: Jan 7

Lecture: Course format, Secretariat Report specs

WEEK 2: Jan 14

Wollstonecraft & Dewey; Wirth & Perkins: Education for Democratic Development

WEEK 3: Jan 21

Brown, Agamben

WEEK 4: Jan 28

Bourdieu: Sociological Craft

WEEK 5: Feb 4  
Bourdieu: Sociological Craft

WEEK 6: Feb 11  
Bourdieu: Sociological Craft

WEEK 7: Reading Week

WEEK 8: Feb 25  
Bourdieu: Sociological Craft

WEEK 9: March 3  
*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Michel Foucault*

WEEK 10: March 10  
Marx: Socio-materialist theory

WEEK 11: March 17  
Scarry: Socio-materialist theory

WEEK 12: March 24  
Scarry: Socio-materialist theory

WEEK 13: March 31  
Benner: Socio-materialist theory

WEEK 14: April 7  
Simpson: Socio-materialist theory  
There will be no oral reports for this week's class.

## Course and university procedures and regulations:

### **Your Learner Disposition: Requirements and Evaluation**

This course is a senior undergraduate text-focused seminar in a university. It is understood and expected that you have and are responsible for maintaining a greater-than-average interest in the material, an enthusiastic and collegial attitude toward both study and participation, and a firm and observable respect for scholarship and scholars. The expectation is that you will attend each meeting, study the reading thoroughly and in advance, do your assignments with dedication and on time (before their due date), and participate actively in class, with collegiality consistently demonstrated for your classmates and respect consistently demonstrated for your professor both in and out of class.

It should go without saying that students should make every effort to arrive on time for class; students who arrive late miss important class material, create a culture of disrespect for learning and the community of learners, and disrupt the class. If you miss the time reserved for class, your option is to ask a classmate to catch you up. Students who have studied and attended classes are warmly welcomed to visit the professor in her office hours.

Students are always expected to be respectful to their colleagues and to the professor during class discussions and in office hours. Disruption will initially result in the student being asked to leave the classroom; any disruption after that warning will result in the student being given the choice to avail himself or herself of the Voluntary Withdrawal date or (s)he may be subject to disciplinary action such as being debarred from the class.

### **Academic dishonesty**

Students should acquaint themselves with the University's policy on plagiarism, cheating, exam personation, ("**Personation at Examinations**" (**Section 5.2.9**) and "**Plagiarism and cheating**" (**Section 8.1**)) and duplicate submission by reading documentation provided at the Arts Student Resources web site at [http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/student\\_resources/student\\_responsibilities\\_integrity.html](http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/student_resources/student_responsibilities_integrity.html). Ignorance of the regulations and policies regarding academic integrity is not a valid excuse for violating them.

### **Late penalty**

No extensions will be given without medical documentation, or other documentation of comparable seriousness, that will normally be required to avoid a late penalty. Please be advised that a late penalty of 2 points per day, including days on weekends, will be applied to all papers that are handed in after the specified deadlines.

If the student has a binding and documented reason to be absent from class on a specified date, the student must notify the professor as early as possible, so that if the reason is accepted by the professor, the student and professor can make substitute arrangements for the student to complete and submit assigned work.

### **Athletic championships & identity-group holidays**

The university recognizes the right of all students to observe recognized holidays of their faith which fall within the academic year. If you will have to miss any classes or will require an extension for an assignment due to an athletic championship or identity-group holiday, please notify the professor at the beginning of the term or at least three weeks in advance of the relevant date.

### **Unclaimed term work disposal**

Any term work that has not been claimed by students will be held for four (4) months from the end of the final examination period for the term in which the work was assigned. At the conclusion of this time, all unclaimed term work will become property of the Faculty of Arts and be destroyed according to FIPPA guidelines and using confidential measures for disposal.