

University of Manitoba, Department of Sociology
Soc 7440 (CRN 14345), 3 credit hours

Contemporary Social Theory

Mara Fridell, office Isbister 311, phone 474-8150
Office hours: Tuesdays 14.30-15.30 or by appt.

Fall 2013 (Sept 5 – Dec 4); *Holidays: Oct 14, Nov 11.*
11.30 – 2.15 Mondays, Isbister 335

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A big-picture map to where we've come from in realist and phenomenological thought, and where particular assumptions, claims and hypotheses take their scholarly communities today, this graduate-level course grounds the emergence and contemporary agendas of sociological theory networks in relation to Western epistemological and ontological traditions of significance to social inquiry, and in relation to the political-economic contexts that bear upon the discipline of sociology and its research endeavors. This course is designed to supplement points and issues introduced in SOC 2220 and 4560; but, while recognizing that a one-term course in theory can in no way be comprehensive, 7440 is also designed to stand alone. This course further aims to advance professional development with review of the roles of theory and the community of scholars in social science research.

REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

This course is a seminar. It is understood that you have a basic interest in the material and an enthusiastic attitude toward participation. The expectation is that you will attend each meeting, do the reading thoroughly and in advance, and participate actively in class.

Required readings:

- Required articles listed below in the Schedule will be provided, either via the url given below or in another electronic form.
- Required books (available at the Bookstore):
 - 1) Toulmin, Stephen & Jane Goodfield. 1982. *The architecture of matter*. University of Chicago.
 - 2) Losurdo, Domenico. 2011. *Liberalism: A counter-history*. Verso.
 - 3) Tucker, Robert C., ed. 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. WW Norton.
 - 4) Whimster, Sam, ed. 2004. *The Essential Weber*. Routledge.
 - 5) Foucault, Michel. 2007. *Security, territory, population: Lectures at the College de France 1977-78*. Picador.
 - 6) Bourdieu, Pierre. 2005. *The social structures of the economy*. Polity.
- Required readings will be selected from these books, and provided electronically. I've also ordered the following at the Bookstore as non-required books:
 - 1) Agamben, Giorgio. 1995. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University. ISBN 978-0804732185.
 - 2) Garry Potter & Jose Lopez, eds. 2005. *After postmodernism: An introduction to critical realism*. Continuum. ISBN 978-0826478924.

In addition:

- I will start out with a couple of weekly quizzes. The quiz questions will convey the level of engagement with the material expected every week. 20 pts total.
- Each week (except the first meeting), you will write a brief (2-3 page) memo and send it to me by 6pm the day before class. Late memos will not be accepted (0 points). The memo will discuss topics or questions arising from the week's reading. You are required to share 3 of your memos with the class, your choice, but one per month. 10 memos x 4 pts per memo = total 40 pts.
- I reserve the option of supplementing memos with quizzes and recalibrating the points.
- There will be a final, polished 'prospectus' paper required. 40 pts.
 - a. In the main, "frontstage" section the paper will specify an empirical object of study and indicate, with a high level of specificity, how one would go about studying it, the kinds of sources one would use, the kinds of cases one would select, and, in general, the way one would deploy sociological concepts and methods for addressing that empirical problem. **It is *necessary* that students weave into the prospectus ideas from at least two of our social thinkers from this course, demonstrating both mastery of the ideas and mastery of their deployment in empirical research.** The proposal must be for an ***empirical sociological*** research project, not a theoretical or philosophical investigation, no exceptions.
 - b. In a short, secondary "Backstage" section, you will identify the assumptions undergirding your proposed study as well as the assumptions' theoretical/scholarly communities, and situate your study, identifying what sort of encompassing social relations--based in immanent and/or active change, and specifying philosophical and historically-situated political direction of that change that the thesis question examines and advances.
- 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+	96-100%	4.5	Extraordinary
A	90-95%	4.0	Excellent
B+	86-89%	3.5	Very Good
B	76-85%	3.0	Good
C+	70-75%	2.5	Sufficient
C	60-69%	2.0	Average
D	50-59%	1.0	Insufficient
F	49% or less	0	Failure

SCHEDULE:

The professor reserves the right to modify this schedule.

PART I: WESTERN IDEAS AND CONFLICTS, SCHOLARLY COMMUNITIES AND THEIR COLLECTIVE PROJECTS

SECTION A: HISTORICAL ROOTS & CONTEXTS

WEEK 1-3

HISTORY OF THE IDEAS

Book: Toulmin, Stephen & Jane Goodfield. 1982. *The architecture of matter.*

WEEK 4

DRIVING SCHOLARSHIP: SOCIAL CONFLICTS, POLITICAL NETWORKS

Book: Losurdo. 2011. *Liberalism, a counter-history.* (Skip the final chapter.)

WEEK 5

SECTION B: ACCOUNTABILITY & RESILIENCE via *THE COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS*

Kuhn, Thomas. *The structure of scientific revolutions* (1962), Ch. 3 (normal science), 6 (anomalies), and 11 (scientific revolutions, their invisibility).

Varoufakis, Halevi & Theocarakis. 2011. "A most peculiar failure: The curious mechanism by which neoclassicism's theoretical failures have been reinforcing their dominance since 1950," pp. 250-288 in *Modern Political Economics*.

Excerpt from C. Wright Mills, "The Sociological Imagination." http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~psargent/Mills_Intell_Craft.pdf

Hargens, Lowell. 2000. "Using the literature: Reference networks, reference contexts, and the social structure of scholarship." *American Sociological Review* 65 (6): 846-865.

Further reading:

Klinenberg. 2006. "'Blaming the victims': hearsay, labeling and the hazards of quick-hit disaster ethnography." *ASR* 71(4): 689-698. (On significance)

Becker, Howard S. 1986. "Terrorized by the literature." Pp. 135-149 in *Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book or article*. Chicago.
<http://www.famuso.net/mpowers/trandp/docs/8%20Terrorized%20by%20the%20Literature%20-%20Becker.pdf>

Mahoney, James. 2003. "Knowledge accumulation in comparative historical research: the case of democracy and authoritarianism," pp. 131-174 in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Latour, Bruno. 1987. "Literature." Chapter 1 of *Science in action: How to follow scientists and engineers through society*.

PART II: THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD (THEORY & EVIDENCE)/REALISM + SOCIAL
CONSTRUCTION/PHENOMENOLOGY

WEEK 6 (No class; discuss readings week 7)

MATERIALISM AND METHOD IN HISTORICAL-MATERIALISM

Scarry, Elaine. 1985. Chapter 5 "The interior structure of the artefact," pp. 278-326 in *The body in pain: The making and unmaking of the world*.

Fracchia, Joseph. 1991. "Marx's Aufhebung of philosophy and the foundations of a materialist science of history." *History and theory* 30(2): 153-179.

Foster, John B. 1999. "Marx's theory of metabolic rift: Classical foundations of environmental sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 105(2): 366-405.

<http://www.unc.edu/courses/2008spring/geog/804/001/210315.pdf>

Further reading:

Tucker 3-6 Marx, Karl. 1859. "Preface" to "The Critique of Political-economy." (on method)

146-200 Marx, Karl. 1846. "The German Ideology" (on method)

Kollontai, Alexandra. 1916. "Preface to the book Society and Motherhood"

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1915/mother.htm>.

Schulman, Jason. 201X. "In defense of grand narratives." *Jacobin*.

<http://jacobinmag.com/2011/03/in-defense-of-grand-narratives/>

WEEK 7-8

ALIENATION

Book: Tucker 66-101 Marx, Karl. "Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" (on alienation); Tucker 302-329 (on commodity fetishism); Tucker 419-425 (on capitalist accumulation and crisis).

Marx, Karl. 1867. "Primitive Accumulation," Chapters 26-33 of Part VIII in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I*. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/>.

Burkett, Paul. 2005. "Marx's vision of sustainable human development." *Monthly Review* 57(5). <http://monthlyreview.org/2005/10/01/marxs-vision-of-sustainable-human-development>.

Further reading:

DuBois, W. E. B. Excerpts from *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*; from *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil*.

Fanon, Frantz. 1961. "Chapter 3: The Pitfalls of the National Consciousness," from *The Wretched of the Earth*. <http://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/fanon/pitfalls-national.htm>.

Marx, Karl. 1894. "Chapter 48: The Trinity Formula," in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume III. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894-c3/ch48.htm>. (on exploitation)

Tucker 329-383 Marx, Karl. C-M-C', Labour Power, Surplus Value. (on exploitation)

Tucker 455-459 Marx, Karl. "Forms of Crisis."

Tucker 339- 348 Marx, Karl. "Counteracting Factors to the Law of the Tendency to Fall in the Rate of Profit." (read in Tucker or on-line, see above.)

WEEK 9

MODERNITY & DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

Book: Whimster, ed. *The Essential Weber*, pp. 407-413; 295-358 (Weberian soc concepts);
205-214, 245-256 (soc of modernity); 119-145 (distribution of power).

WEEKS 10-11 (holiday week 10; discuss week 11)

BIOPOWER & GOVERNMENTALITY

Book: Foucault, Michel. *Security, territory, population: Lectures at the College de France 1977-78*.

SOVEREIGN POWER + BIOPOWER = THE BARE-LIFE EXCLUSION

Agamben, Giorgio. 1995. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*.
<http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ucsd/biopolitics/HomoSacer.pdf>

Further reading:

Harding, Sandra. 2004. "A socially-relevant philosophy of science? Resources from Standpoint theory's controversiality." <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~dasgupta/HardingStandpoint.pdf>.

WEEK 12

AGENTS & FIELD

Book: Bourdieu, Pierre. 2005. *The social structures of the economy*.

Further reading:

Emirbayer, Mustafa. 1997. "A manifesto for a relational sociology."
http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~emirbayer/Mustafa_Emirbayer/ARTICLES_files/manifesto%20for%20a%20relational%20sociology.pdf

On-line interview with Anne Swidler (2001):

<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/theoryatmadison/papers/ivwSwidler.pdf>

Latour, Bruno. 200x. "On using ANT for studying information systems: A somewhat Socratic dialogue." <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/90-ANT-DIALOG-LSE-GB.pdf>.

Noys, Benjamin. 2011. "The discreet charm of Bruno Latour, or the critique of anti-critique." http://www.academia.edu/1477950/The_Discreet_Charm_of_Bruno_Latour_or_the_critique_of_anti-critique

WEEK 13

CRITICAL REALISM

Williams, Simon J. 1999. "Is anybody there? Critical realism, chronic illness and the disability debate." *Sociology of health & illness* 21(6): 797-819.

Herring, D. & D. Stokes. 2011. "Critical realism and historical materialism as resources for critical terrorism studies." *Critical studies in terrorism* 4(1): 5-21.

http://www.academia.edu/1141058/Critical_Realism_and_Historical_Materialism_as_Resources_for_Critical_Terrorism_Studies

Further reading:

Porpora, Douglas. 2005. Chapter 20: "Do realists run regressions?" pp. in *After postmodernism: An introduction to critical realism*, edited by Garry Potter & Jose Lopez.

COURSE & UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES & REGULATIONS:

Composition specs: Use ASA style guidelines. Generally: 12 pt font, 1 inch margins, 1 or 1.5 spacing. Use **subheadings** to switch topics when you can't compose a smooth transition.

Voluntary withdrawal deadline date: Nov 13.

Late penalty: Please be advised that a late penalty of 2% per day, including days on weekends, will be applied to all papers that are handed in after the specified deadlines. Medical documentation, or other documentation of comparable seriousness, will normally be required to waive this penalty. If you know before the due date that a paper will be late for any reason, you should contact the professor immediately. In some cases, entirely at the professor's discretion, it may be possible to arrange an extension. It is your responsibility to approach the professor as early as possible to make arrangements for an extension. She will not grant extensions that are requested after the due date of the assignment, unless you have a binding and documented reason, such as medically documented illness. No paper extension will be given under any conditions more than two weeks after the due date.

Quizzes may not be made up after the class each quiz is distributed within, except entirely at the professor's discretion and with binding and documented reason. 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 professor can make substitute arrangements with the student to take the quiz.

University policy on **academic integrity** will be enforced. A full description of academic integrity matters, including plagiarism and cheating, can be found in Section 8 of the General Academic Regulations and Requirements of the University of Manitoba.

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. Entirely at her discretion, your professor *may* symmetrically recognize the student's right to observe non-religious communities' sacred occasions. 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.