3P03 Advanced Contemporary Sociological Theory : Winter 2021

**Instructor:** Dr. McLaughlin

**Email:** nmclaugh@mcmaster.ca

**Zoom Meetings:** Monday 3:30pm to 4:20pm and Thursdays 2:30pm to 4:20pm

**Room:** ON-LINE

**Office:** KTH 620

**Office Hours:** By appointment just before or after lecture times above  
**TA:** No TA  
**TA email:** No TA email

# Course Description

This class is will provide an introduction to major contemporary sociological theory, with a focus on selected thinkers and a biographical/sociology of ideas engagement with their theories in historical context. We will address several key themes, particularly the science/interpretive sociology debates, the question of the scientific nature of sociology and the relationship between theory and evidence. Alford’s logic of inquiry perspective will be introduced, and we will discuss C.Wright Mills, Robert Merton, Arlie Hochschild, Erving Goffman, Pierre Bourdieu, Randal Collins, network theory, Erich Fromm, WEB Du Bois, Diane Vaughan and Indigenous theorizing through this lens.

**Class Objectives**

Read and understand original writings of major sociological theorists.

Place major theorists in biographical and historical context, learn their basic ideas, be exposed to the major criticisms of each theorist and explore some applications today.

Explore a synthetic approach to theorizing.

Address the science question in sociology and learn to articulate a view on this.

Students will learn the Alford “logic of inquiry” approach and be able to discuss the relationship between theory and evidence in the interpretive, multivariate and historical-comparative logics.

**Class Format**

I will lecture on the readings and topics related to sociological theory outlined below, all recorded on Echo 360 to be listened to at a time of the student’s choice along with PowerPoint slides for students to follow along with. The work of thinkers we will be talking about will also be posted on Avenue to Learn (available through the McMaster library with valid student Identification along with PDF files of the writing of or about the selected thinkers). There will be no books to buy.

I will be available on Zoom to discuss the lectures, readings and videos for the class during all of the class times marked above. Attendance at these Zoom sessions is not mandatory and there is no participation grade associated with them.

Essays will be submitted by Avenue to Learn, and feedback provided also through this on-line system.

# Course Evaluation – Overview

Students will be evaluated by 4 essays where students will answer a question regarding two or three weeks of reading and lectures. The questions will be posted before the class begins. The fuller details of the class are outlined below.

**Grading:** **Advanced Sociological Theory**

Essay on Mills, Merton and Science Friday Jan 29, noon: 15%

Essay on Goffman, Hochschild and Collins: Friday Feb 26, noon: 25%

Essay on Du Bois, network theory and Fromm: Friday March 19, noon: 25%

Final Essay on Vaughan, Bourdieu, Fanon and Indigenous theorizing: Friday, April 23, noon: 35%

The specific questions to be answered will be posted clearly marked on the details for the class section of Avenue to Learn, before the class starts.

**Late Policy**

I will grant a 72 hours grace period after these deadlines, where there is no late penalty. After that, there is NO way to get out of a relatively small 1% a late later period unless you have a formal letter from an official office in the university (SAS or the Dean’s Office). I know it is a tough to go to school during the pandemic, and I am sympathetic. I am also under stress myself. Please do not tell me about the reasons for your lateness: this puts me in an ackward situation, and it potentially put you in an complex situation. You need not tell me about struggles in your life. You have a 72 hour grace period, and can use the one MSAF form, and have access to sympathetic professionals in the Dean’s office and SAS, all trained to deal with these issues. And even after all that, a 1% penalty is very small, if none of the above works.

**Required Materials and Texts**

Robert Alford, “Craft of Inquiry,” “The Construction of Arguments,” 1998.

Jonathan Sterne, “C. Wright Mills, the Bureau for Applied Sociak Research, and the Meaning of Critical Scholarship,” *Cultural Studies* 2005.

Robert K. Merton,” On Sociological Theories of the Middle Range,” 1949.

Erving Goffman,”Embarrassment and Social Organizations,” *American Journal of Sociology* 1956.

Erving Goffman,”The Nature of Deference and Demeanor,” *The American Anthropologist*,” 1956.

Arlie Hochschild, “Emotion Work, Feelings Rules and Social Structure,” *American Journal of* *Sociology* 1979.

Randall Collins, “Sociology of Masks and Social Distancing,” Blog 2020.

Randall Collins, “Situational Stratification,” *Sociological Theory* 2000.

Randall Collins, “Functional and Conflict of Theories of Educational Stratification,” *American Sociological Reviewn* 1971.

Lawrence D. Bobo “Bringing Du Bois Back in”

Aldon Morris,”WEB Du Bois at the Center: From science, Civil rights movement, to Black Lives Matter,” *British Journal of Sociology* 2017.

Mark Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties,” *American Journal of Sociology* 1973.

Neil McLaughlin, “How to Become a Forgotten Intellectual,” *Sociological Forum* 1998.

Neil McLaughlin, “Nazism Nationalism and the Sociology of Emotions,” *Sociological Theory* 1996.

Diane Vaughan, “Theorizing Disaster,” *Ethnography* 2004.

Diane Vaughan, “NASA Revisited,” *American Journal of Sociology,*

Pierre Bourdieu, “Symbolic Power,” *Critique of Anthropology* 1979.

David Swartz, “From Critical Sociology to Public Intellectual,” *Theory and Society* 2003.

Franz Fanon, “This is the Voice of Algeria,” 1959.

Jeffrey Denis,” Contact Theory in a Small-Town Settler-Colonial Context,” *American Sociological Review* 2015.

**Class Schedule**

**Jan 11 and Jan 14:** Intro

**Jan 18 and Jan 21:** Is Sociology a Science

Robert Alford, “Craft of Inquiry,” “The Construction of Arguments,” 1998.

**Jan 25 and Jan 28:** Merton and Mills

Jonathan Sterne, “C. Wright Mills, the Bureau for Applied Social Research, and the Meaning of Critical Scholarship,” *Cultural Studies* 2005.

Robert K. Merton,” On Sociological Theories of the Middle Range,” 1949.

**Feb 1 and Feb 4:** Goffman

Erving Goffman,”Embarrassment and Social Organizations,” *American Journal of Sociology* 1956.

Erving Goffman,”The Nature of Deference and Demeanor,” *The American Anthropologist*,” 1956.

**Feb 8 and Feb 11:** Hochschild

Arlie Hochschild, “Emotion Work, Feelings Rules and Social Structure,” *American Journal of* *Sociology* 1979.

**Feb 22 and Feb 25:** Collins

Randall Collins, “Sociology of Masks and Social Distancing,” Blog 2020.

Randall Collins, “Situational Stratification,” *Sociological Theory* 2000.

Randall Collins, “Functional and Conflict of Theories of Educational Stratification,” *American Sociological Reviewn* 1971.

**March 1 and March 4:** Du Bois

Lawrence D. Bobo “Bringing Du Bois Back in”

Aldon Morris,”WEB Du Bois at the Center: From science, Civil rights movement, to Black Lives Matter,” *British Journal of Sociology* 2017.

**March 8 and March 11:** Network Theory

Mark Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties,” *American Journal of Sociology* 1973.

**March 15 and March 18:** Fromm

Neil McLaughlin, “How to Become a Forgotten Intellectual,” *Sociological Forum* 1998.

Neil McLaughlin, “Nazism Nationalism and the Sociology of Emotions,” *Sociological Theory* 1996.

**March 22 and March 25:** Vaughan

Diane Vaughan, “Theorizing Disaster,” *Ethnography* 2004.

Diane Vaughan, “NASA Revisited,” *American Journal of Sociology,*

**March 29 and April 1:** Bourdieu

Peirre Bourdieu, “Symbolic Power,” *Critique of Anthropology* 1979.

David Swartz, “From Critical Sociology to Public Intellectual,” *Theory and Society* 2003.

**April 5 and April 8:** Fanon and Indigenous Theorizing

Franz Fanon, “This is the Voice of Algeria,” 1959.

Jeffrey Denis,” Contact Theory in a Small-Town Settler-Colonial Context,” *American Sociological Review* 2015.

**April 12:** Review

**Class Rules and Regulations**

Please note the following rules. And consult Avenue to Learn for Instructions for Assignments, Grading Rubrics and all deadlines.

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at [http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf](http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf%20)

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty: 1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.  
2. Improper collaboration in group work.  
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

## AVENUE TO LEARN

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor

**COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This course addresses three University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (see <http://cll.mcmaster.ca/COU/degree/undergraduate.html>). First, sociological theories and social psychological theories are diverse in their claims and in their focus. Gaining knowledge of these diverse theories, will expand the student’s depth and breadth of knowledge. Second, there is no single sociological theory/social psychological theory accepted as the final or best approach. As such, this course requires that students consider and critically evaluate competing theoretical approaches and link them to evidence. In so doing, students will gain an awareness of limits of knowledge. Finally, this course will encourage students to write essays. Writing quality, style and care will count, an important professional skill.

# University Policies

## Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academiccredentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academiccredit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity)**.**

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty

* Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
* Improper collaboration in group work.
* Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

## Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](https://sas.mcmaster.ca/) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca%20) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [*Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities*](http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf)policy.

## Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a [RISO](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/02/Academic-Accommodation-for-Religious-Indigenous-and-Spiritual-Observances-Policy-on.pdf) accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

## Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Code-of-Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities.pdf) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

## Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

## Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

## Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

## Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

## Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

| **MARK** | **GRADE** |
| --- | --- |
| 90-100 | A+ |
| 85-89 | A |
| 80-84 | A- |
| 77-79 | B+ |
| 73-76 | B |
| 70-72 | B- |
| 67-69 | C+ |
| 63-66 | C |
| 60-62 | C- |
| 57-59 | D+ |
| 53-56 | D |
| 50-52 | D- |
| 0-49 | F |