

TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI



VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STUDIES

Te Kura Mahinga Tangata

Sociology and Social Policy

SOSC 211

Interpreting Society

Course Outline

CRN 1627 : 22 POINTS : TRIM 2, 2009

Teaching dates: 13 July – 16 October 2009

Study week: 19 – 23 October 2009

COURSE COORDINATOR: MIKE LLOYD

Room 1015, Murphy Building

Tel: (04) 463 5678

Email: mike.lloyd@vuw.ac.nz

LECTURES: TUESDAY & THURSDAY 2 – 3 PM: MY LT101

SOSC 211: INTERPRETING SOCIETY

COURSE COORDINATOR: Mike Lloyd
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LECTURES: Tuesday & Thursday 2 – 3pm, MY LT101

TUTORIALS: Tuesday 9 - 10am, CO216

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is about the concept of 'society'. Early in the history of the discipline, sociologists put a lot of effort into establishing society as the key object of sociological inquiry. However, there was much debate about this move and questions were raised about exactly what society is, what it could be said to do, and how one could study it. This is an ongoing debate in contemporary sociology. This course aims to introduce students to the main currents of thought about these issues - what we call the problem of 'Interpreting Society'. Questions considered include: Is society the same as the 'nation-state'? Is it a collection of individuals or a 'social system'? Are any theorists left out of the standard story on 'interpreting society'? What role do material objects play in society? Is the concept of society still relevant in today's world of globalisation? Wherever possible, lectures will utilise empirical research and refer to topical examples to ground abstract theoretical debates. The main objective of the course is for students to acquire an understanding of sociological theory about society. Secondly, students should be able to use these theoretical positions to think about social phenomena in the contemporary world.

COURSE MATERIAL

The only course material required for this course are student notes, available from the Student Notes Distribution Centre, Student Union building, for approximately \$25.

GENERAL UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the *Victoria University Calendar* or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

The AVC (Academic) website also provides information for students in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates. This website can be accessed at: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/avcacademic/Publications.aspx>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such material

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

WORKLOAD

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences workload guideline for a 200-level trimester course is 14 hours a week. This includes attendance at classes, preparation for classes and assignments, and so on.

LATE ESSAYS

It is important to note that late work will normally be accepted only in the case of illness or other unavoidable emergencies. In such cases a medical certificate or equivalent is required. In special circumstances a student may make a prior arrangement for an extension.

LATE PENALTY

Late submissions of assignments in all Sociology undergraduate courses are subject to a penalty. The exact deduction will be calculated on the basis of one half mark per day late for each 10 marks, i.e.

Mark out of maximum of	Then deduct the following marks for each day it is late
10	½
20	1
30	1 ½
40	2

Where the due date is a Friday, any written work not handed in by 4.00 p.m. will be liable to a two day penalty.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

To meet the mandatory course requirements for SOSC 211 students must:

- ▲ submit essay one and essay two, and
- ▲ complete the take home test

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

SOSC 211 uses the Blackboard suite to communicate with students; there are also notice boards on level 9 and 11 which might have information for Sociology students.

WEBSITE

The School website can be found at: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/sacs>.

On the same page you can also find **Sociolog**, a chronicle of reflections written by SOSC/SPOL/SSRE staff and postgraduate students.

COURSE DELIVERY

This course has lectures twice a week and six tutorials. Students are recommended to attend both to benefit fully from this course.

July

- 14 Introduction (ML)
- 16 Sociology: where are we at? (ML)
- 21 Reassembling the social (ML)
- 23 Marx: From alienation to the science of history (CeO)
- 28 Durkheim and Weber (CeO)
- 30 Outside the canon (RS)

August

- 4 Psychoanalysis: Society and psyche (CeO)
- 6 Marxism II (CeO)
- 11 Simmel on social forms (ML)
- 13 The interaction order: Goffman (ML)
- 18 Ethnomethodology: Garfinkel (ML)
- 20 Habits and action (ML)
- 21 *Assignment one due*

Aug 24 – Sept 6 Mid trimester break

September

- 8 Phenomenology: Embodiment and experience (RS)
- 10 Iris Marion Young (RS)
- 15 Michel Foucault I (CEO)
- 17 Michel Foucault II (RS)
- 22 Post-Marxism (CeO)
- 24 Zygmunt Bauman (RS)
- 29 Judith Butler (RS)

October

- 1 Sociology and bioethics (RS)
- 6 Humour and society (ML)

8	World-systems theory (CeO)
9	<i>Assignment two due</i>
13	Globalization (CeO) Hand out of take home test
15	No lecture
16	<i>Take home test due</i>

TUTORIALS

Tutorials are on Tuesdays, 9-10am, CO216, and are taken by Chamsy el-Ojeili. They are voluntary, commencing on August 4. If for some reason you have difficulties with the tutorial time please discuss the problem with the course co-ordinator.

The tutorial programme is designed to complement the lecture series and is an opportunity for student discussion and questions. Therefore you are expected to have read the assigned reading before the tutorial and be prepared to discuss the reading as guided by your tutor.

Tutorials and readings:

August 4:	Reading 1 – 3
August 11	Reading 4 – 6
August 18	Reading 7 – 9
September 8	Reading 10 – 12
Sept 15	Reading 13 – 15
Sept 22	Reading 16 – 18

Reading 1:

Callon, M. and Latour, B. 1981. "Unscrewing the Big Leviathan: how Actors Macro-Structure Reality and How Sociologists Help Them do so", in K, Knorr-Cetina and A. V. Cicourel (eds). *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology*. Routledge and Kegan Paul: Boston/London, pp. 277-303.

Reading 2:

Latour, B. 2005. "How to Keep the Social Flat", in *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, pp. 165-172.

Reading 3:

Marx, K. Excerpts from *The German Ideology* and "Preface to a Critique of Political Economy", in D. McLellan (ed.). 1987. *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, pp. 160-179 and 388-391.

Reading 4:

Durkheim, E. 1968. From *The Rules of Sociological method*. The Free Press: New York, pp. xli-lviii.

Reading 5:

Frisbee, D. and Sayer, D. 1986. From *Society*. Ellis Horwood: Chinchester, pp. 54-74.

Reading 6:

McDonald, Lynn (1994) *The Women Founders of the Social Sciences*. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, pp. 1-22.

Reading 7:

Collins, R. and Makowsky, M. 2005. "Sigmund Freud: Conquistador of the Irrational", in *The Discovery of Society* (Seventh edition). McGraw Hill: Boston, pp. 129-147.

Reading 8:

Gottlieb, R. 1992. "Western Marxism: The Role of Consciousness", in *Marxism 1844-1990: Origins, Betrayal, Rebirth*. Routledge: New York, pp. 109-129.

Reading 9:

Goffman, E. 1983. "The Interaction Order", *American Sociological Review*, 48, pp. 1-17.

Reading 10:

Ferguson, Harvey (2002) "Phenomenology and Social Theory", in George Ritzer & Barry Smart (Eds) *Handbook of Social Theory*. London: Sage Publications, pp. 232-248.

Reading 11:

Young, Iris Marion (2005) "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Compartment, Motility, and Spatiality", in Iris Marion Young *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 27-45.

Reading 12:

Harrison, P. R. 1991. "Michel Foucault", from P. Beilharz (ed.). *Social Theory: A Guide to Central Thinkers*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, pp. 84-89.

Reading 13:

Laclau, E. 1990. "The Impossibility of Society", in *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Times*. London: Verso, pp. 89-92.

Reading 14:

Bauman, Zygmunt (2001) "The Telos Interview" in Peter Beilharz (Ed.) *The Bauman Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, pp. 18-29.

Reading 15:

Butler, Judith (1997) "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" in Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury (Eds) *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 401-417.

Reading 16:

Rabinow, Paul (1992) "Artificiality and Enlightenment: From Sociobiology to Biosociality", in Jonathon Crary and Sanford Kwinter (Eds) *Incorporations*. New York: Zone, pp. 234-252.

Reading 17:

Chase-Dunn, C. 2007. "Dependency and World-systems Theories", in Ritzer, G. (ed.) 2007. *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. Cambridge: Blackwell, pp. 1060

Reading 18:

Walby, S. 2003. "The Myth of the Nation-State: Theorizing Society and Politics in a Global Era", in *Sociology*, Volume 37 (3), pp. 529-546.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is internal and involves the following three items:

Assessment 1

Essay One
Due Date: 4pm, Friday, August 21
Weighting: 30%
Word Limit: 2500

Assessment 2

Essay Two
Due Date: 4pm, Friday, October 9
Weighting: 40%
Word Limit: 3000

Assessment 3

Take home test
Due: 4pm, Friday, October 16
Weighting: 30%
Word Limit: 2500

Test will be handed out in the lecture on October 13 and must be submitted by the above date in the Assignment box on level 9, Murphy building.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COURSE OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT

- the essay topics are designed to give students the opportunity to display their grasp of sociological approaches to the study of society, and to show that they can begin thinking about applying these to analysis of substantive issues in contemporary society.
- the test encourages students to overview the whole course and to consolidate their knowledge of the substantive content of the course.

Students should follow the guidelines for essay writing that have been presented in stage one sociology courses. If you are unfamiliar with these a copy may be obtained from your tutor. Guidance on assignments will be discussed in tutorials at appropriate places.

ESSAY TOPICS

Essay 1

1. 'In everyday life the term society is used as if it referred in an unproblematic way to something that exists 'out there' and beyond the individual subject' (Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, 1998, p. 625). Critically discuss how, past or present, sociologists have viewed this assumption.
2. The sociological canon is the outcome of debates about the purpose of sociology and the social role of the sociologist. Critically discuss, drawing on the work of one or several women sociologists writing at the turn of the twentieth century.
3. The relationship between social structure and human agency has been a central question for sociologists interpreting society. Discuss, drawing on any theorist(s) covered in the course.
4. Discuss the shifts and continuities in theorizing society from Marx to Marxism.
5. Discuss the psychoanalytic contribution to the examination of society.
6. 'Society does not hold things together, it is what is *held* together' (Latour). Discuss.
7. 'When one turns to the problems that ethnomethodology tries to illuminate one is struck, for the most part, by their embarrassing triviality. ...It amounts to an orgy of subjectivism' (Coser, *American Sociological Review*, 1975: 698). Discuss.

Essay 2

These questions relate to lecture material covered from September 8 - October 8.

1. Discuss some of the advantages and disadvantages of phenomenology for sociological inquiry.
2. Social theorist, Iris Marion Young, draws inspiration from non-feminist philosophy. Analyse the relation between Young's work and that of Merleau-Ponty, focusing specifically on how the feminist critique alters the terms of the non-feminist text.
3. 'Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts.' Critically discuss Butler's theory of identity constitution in light of a sociological account of human agency from one research tradition.
4. With reference to the work of Foucault discuss how the concept of surveillance helps sociologists explain the relations between embodiment and social power.
5. Zygmunt Bauman's work has been described as "defamiliarizing" the social world as we have come to understand it. Drawing on two core themes in Bauman's writings, discuss his contribution to contemporary sociology.
6. Discuss the contribution of sociology to bioethics by focusing on one concrete bioethical issue.
7. Discuss the challenges posed by world-systems theory to "society" as a starting point for sociological analysis and outline the alternative analytical strategy of world-systems theory.
8. The study of humour is a bit like a punchline – it is the last thing that sociology needs. Discuss.
9. Create your own essay topic, in consultation with the lecturer.

Test

The test is a take home and will consist of essay type questions relating to the core themes of the lecture content and course readings. A guidance statement on the test will be available beforehand.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

There is a large literature relating to this course in the library, in books and the key sociology journals. Here are just a few general books to get you started, but please browse beyond them; especially in the extensive primary and secondary literature relating to theorists discussed in the course. Most of these titles are on 3 day loan, but not necessarily listed under SOOSC211 course reserve. Other material may be put on course reserve as lectures progress and according to demand.

Calhoun, C. et al (eds)	<i>Contemporary Sociological Theory; Sage Handbook of Sociology</i>
Callinicos, A.	<i>Social Theory: A Historical Introduction</i>
Clark, S.	<i>From Enlightenment To Risk: Social Theory and Contemporary Society</i>
Collins, R.	<i>The Three Traditions</i>
Collins, R & Makowsky, M.	<i>The Discovery of Society</i>
Craib, I.	<i>Classical Social Theory, Modern Social Theory</i>
Crow, G.	<i>Art of Sociological Argument</i>
Elliott, A. & Ray, L. (eds)	<i>Key Contemporary Social Theorists</i>
Frisby, D. & Sayer, D.	<i>Society</i>
Hughes, J. <i>et al</i>	<i>Understanding Classical Sociology</i>
Hamilton, P. &	<i>The Uses of Sociology</i>
Thompson, K. (ed)	
Latour, B.	<i>Reassembling the Social</i>
Layder, D.	<i>Understanding Social Theory</i>
Lemert, C. (ed)	<i>Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classical Readings</i>
Mennell, S.	<i>Sociological Theory: Uses and Unities</i>
O'Donnell, M.	<i>Classical and Contemporary Sociology</i>
Outhwaite, W.	<i>The Future of Society</i>
Ray, L.	<i>Theorizing Classical Sociology</i>
Scott, J. (ed)	<i>Fifty Key Sociologists</i>
Seidman, S.	<i>Contested Knowledge: Social Theory in the Postmodern Era</i>
Swingewood, A.	<i>A Short History of Sociological Thought</i>
Sydie, R.A.	<i>Natural Women, Cultured Men: A Feminist Perspective on Sociological Theory</i>
Tucker, K.	<i>Classical Social Theory</i>
Turner, B. (ed)	<i>Blackwell Companion to Social Theory</i>
Urry, J.	<i>Sociology Beyond Societies</i>

GRADES FOR SOCIOLOGY ESSAYS/TESTS

The School follows university policy in giving letter grades for all internally assessed work instead of giving numerical marks. The following table sets out the range of marks within which each letter grade is assigned. Your final grade and marks for the course will be an aggregate of the grades you achieve during the course.

PASS		FAIL	
A+	85% or over	D	40% - 49%
A	80% – 84%	E	Below 40%
A-	75% - 79%		
B+	70% - 74%		
B	65% – 69%		
B-	60% – 64%		
C+	55% – 59%		
C	50% – 54%		

SCHOOL CONTACTS

Head of School:	Dr Allison Kirkman, MY1013 Tel: 463 5676 E-m: Allison.Kirkman@vuw.ac.nz
International Student Liaison:	Dr Hal Levine MY1023 Tel: 463 6132 E-m: Hal.Levine@vuw.ac.nz
Maori and Pacific Student Liaison:	Dr Trevor Bradley, MY1101 Tel: 463 5432 E-m: Trevor.Bradley@vuw.ac.nz
Students with Disabilities Liaison:	Dr Carol Harrington, MY 1012 Tel: 463 7451 E-m: Carol.Harrington@vuw.ac.nz
School Manager:	Carol Hogan, MY918 Tel: 463 6546 E-m: Carol.Hogan@vuw.ac.nz
School Administrators:	Monica Lichti, Alison Melling, Heather Day MY921, Tel: 463 5317; 463 5258; 463 5677 E-m: sacs@vuw.ac.nz

COVER SHEETS

All written work submitted in Sociology and Social Policy courses must have a cover sheet, see sample at end of Course Outlines.

HANDING IN ESSAYS

It is the policy of the Sociology Division that all written assignments must be handed in by 4.00 p.m. on the due date.

ASSIGNMENT BOX AND ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEET

It is the policy of the Sociology and Social Policy programmes that all written assignments must be **handed in by 4 pm on the due date**.

Assignment Box

Assignments must be placed in the assignment box on level 9, Murphy Building, to the side of the lifts. They **MUST NOT** be placed in individual staff pigeonholes, or under staff office doors, or handed to lecturers or tutors.

This is to ensure that all work is properly recorded when submitted, and to avoid problems that have arisen in the past, when work has “gone missing”.

The Assignment Box is cleared at 4.00 pm on the due date, all work is date-stamped, its receipt recorded, and then handed on to the appropriate markers.

Students must keep a photocopy of every written assignment.

Unless students have followed this procedure, the staff will accept **no** responsibility for pieces of written work claimed to have been handed in.

Assignment Cover Sheets

All written work submitted for assessment in Sociology and Social Policy papers must have a School Assignment Cover sheet. A sample is to be found at the back of this Course Outline. Further copies can be located on the reception counter at the Administration Office, and on the Assignment Box, on level 9 of Murphy building. You may wish to have a front sheet of your own, but a School Cover sheet must be used. This is critical to accurate identification and recording of your work.

Office use only

Date Received:

(Date Stamp)

School of Social and Cultural Studies

Te Kura Mahinga Tangata

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

CRIMINOLOGY

SOCIOLOGY & SOCIAL POLICY

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Assignment Cover Sheet

(please write legibly)

Full Name: _____
(Last name) *(First name)*

Student ID: _____ Course (eg ANTH101): _____

Tutorial Day: _____ Tutorial Time: _____

Tutor's name: _____

Assignment Due Date: _____

CERTIFICATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I certify that this paper submitted for assessment is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signed: _____ Date: _____