



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STUDIES
Te Kura Mahinga Tangata

Sociology and Social Policy

SOSC 211

Interpreting Society

Course Outline

CRN 1627: 20 POINTS: TRIMESTER 2, 2010

Lecture period: 12 July - 15 Oct 2010

COURSE COORDINATOR: DR DAVID PEARSON

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LECTURES: WEDNESDAY & FRIDAY 2–3PM: Laby LT118

SOSC 211: INTERPRETING SOCIETY - 2010

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LECTURES: Wednesday & Friday 2-3pm, Laby Building 118
Tutorials: tba

SCHOOL LOCATION: Sociology staff are on level 10, Murphy Building. Information, which may be of interest to you, is posted on the notice boards on levels 9 and 10.

COURSE CONTENT

This course introduces students to major sociological theories. Emphasis is on understanding theoretical ideas and how they relate to the construction and analysis of social issues.

SOSC 211 examines 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.

WORKLOAD

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences workload guideline for a 200-level course is 15 hours a week. This includes attendance and preparation for classes, assignments, and so on.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the completion of the course students should be able 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
- overview and to consolidate their knowledge of the substantive content of the course.

WEBSITE

The School's website is at: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/sacs>. On the same page you will find *Sociolog*, <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/sacs/about/sociolog.aspx>, a chronicle of reflections written by Sociology & Social Policy staff and postgraduate students.

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Any additional information to the course outlines relating to SOSC 211 will be communicated via Blackboard or during lectures.

CLASS REPRESENTATIVE

A class representative will be recruited in consultation with the class at the beginning of the course. The class representative's name and contact details will be available to the Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA), the course

coordinator and the class (on BlackBoard). The class representative provides a communication channel to liaise with the course coordinator on behalf of students.

COURSE MATERIAL

Student notes

A book of Student Notes has been prepared for you which is the only material you need to purchase.

For the first two weeks of trimester all undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer, while postgraduate textbooks and student notes will be available from the top floor of vicbooks in the Student Union Building, Kelburn Campus. After week two all undergraduate textbooks will be sold from vicbooks and student notes from the Student Notes Distribution Centre on the ground floor of the Student Union Building.

Students are able to order textbooks and student notes online at www.vicbooks.co.nz or can email enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz. Books can be couriered or ready for pick once advised by VicBooks. Opening hours are 8am – 6pm, Monday – Friday during trimester but close at 5pm during trimester break, phone 463 5515.

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. Other references will be mentioned in lectures. Most of the titles below are on 3 day loan, but not necessarily listed under SOSC211 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, and others</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.	<i>Contemporary Social Theory: An Introduction</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. & Thompson, K. (ed)	<i>The Uses of Sociology</i>
Joseph, J.	<i>Marxism and Social Theory</i>
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>
Ritzer, G. (ed)	<i>Encyclopaedia of Social Theory</i>
Ritzer, G. & Smart, B. (eds)	<i>Handbook of Social Theory; see others</i>
Roberts, B.	<i>Micro Social Theory</i>
Scott, J. (ed)	<i>Fifty Key Sociologists</i>
Seidman, S.	<i>Contested Knowledge: Social Theory in the Postmodern Era</i>
Stones, R. (ed)	<i>Key Sociological Thinkers</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; Mobilities</i>

TUTORIALS

Tutorials are voluntary. Tutorial arrangements will be made in the first week of the course.

The tutorial programme (please see separate handout) is designed to complement the lecture series and is an opportunity for student discussion and questions. You are expected to have read the assigned reading before the tutorial and be prepared to discuss the reading as guided by your tutor.

COURSE WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURES

If you decide for ANY reason to withdraw from SOSC 211 please see the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences office on level 4, Murphy Building for an Add/Drop Course form. Failure to do so may have consequences for enrolment, student grants, etc., i.e. Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds.aspx>

LECTURE PLAN

July

- 14 Introduction (DP)
- 16 Classical conceptions of society I (DP)
- 21 Classical conceptions of society II (DP)
- 23 Functionalism and society (DP)
- 28 Simmel on social forms (ML)
- 30 The interaction order I: Goffman (ML)

August

- 4 The interaction order II: Garfinkel (ML)
- 6 Habits and action (ML)
- 11 Structuration: Giddens (DP)
- 13 The network society: Castells (DP)
- 18 Changing the Scene I (DP)
- 20 Changing the Scene II (DP)

Mid trimester break: August 23 – September 5

September

- 8 Reassembling the social I: Durkheim vs Tarde (ML)
- 10 Reassembling the social II: Latour and Actor-network theory (ML)
- 15 Mobilities (ML)
- 17 Michel Foucault and Sociology I (CH)
- 22 Michel Foucault and Sociology II (CH)
- 24 Pierre Bourdieu and Structuralist Constructivism I (CH)
- 29 Pierre Bourdieu and Structuralist Constructivism II (CH)

October

- 1 Critical Discourse Analysis I (CH)
- 6 Critical Discourse Analysis II (CH)
- 8 Conclusion (Hand out Test)
- 13/15 No lectures (Test due to be submitted 15 Oct)

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is internal and involves the following three items:

Assessment 1

Essay 1 **Due Date: 4pm, Monday, 6 September** **Weighting: 30%**
Word Limit: 2500

Assessment 2

Essay 2 **Due Date: 4pm, Wednesday, 6 October** **40%** **Weighting: 40%**
Word Limit: 3000

Assessment 3

Test **Take home test -** **Weighting: 30%,**
Word Limit: 2500

The Test will be handed out during lecture on Friday, 8 October and must be placed into Assignment box on level 9, Murphy Bldg, no later than 4pm, Friday 15 October.

Students should follow the guidelines for essay writing that have been presented during 100-level 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. There is no consensus among classical sociologists about 'society' as a concept. Discuss, drawing on at least two theorists.
2. Contrast and compare different approaches to society within structural functionalism and structuration theory.
3. Globalisation theories destroy the idea that 'society' is strongly linked to the 'nation-state'. Discuss
4. Discuss the relationship between 'society' and the ideas and practices broadly described as 'postmodernity'.
5. '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

1. 'Society does not hold things together, it is what is *held* together' (Latour).
2. 'Mobilities': does it take sociology anywhere new and important?
3. Discuss Foucault's contribution to sociological analysis of the human body.
4. What part does the state play in Foucault's conception of society in *Discipline and Punish*?
5. According to Bourdieu, what is wrong with pure constructivism and pure social structuralism? What does he mean by "structuralist constructivism"?
6. According to Bourdieu, what is symbolic power and from where does it get its force. Your answer should include discussion of at least one example.
7. According to Fairclough, how can we find evidence of ideological hegemony within discourse? How can we find evidence of social change? Discuss by applying some of Fairclough's analytical techniques to a text, or small group of texts, of your choosing.
8. Create your own essay topic, in consultation with the lecturer.

Take Home Test

The test is 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.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

To meet the course requirements students are required to

- hand in assessment 1 and assessment 2, and
- complete the take home test.

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%

LATE PENALTIES

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 submissions, without authorised extensions, are subject to a penalty. The exact deduction will be calculated on the basis of ½ a mark a day for each 10 marks, i.e.

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

Where the due date is a Friday, any written work not handed in by 4p.m. will be liable to a two day penalty.

HANDING IN ESSAYS

It is the policy of the Sociology Programme that all written assignments must be handed in by latest 4p.m. on the due date with a Assignment cover Sheet, see sample at the end of the course Outlines.

Assignment Box

Assignments must be placed in the assignment box on level 9, Murphy Building. 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 date stamped and properly recorded at 4pm and handed 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.

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>

GENERAL UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND STATUTES

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_victoria/avcacademic/Publications.aspx

SCHOOL CONTACTS:

Head of School: Dr. Allison Kirkman, MY1013
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International Student Liaison: Dr Hal Levine MY1023
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Maori and Pacific Student Liaison: Dr Trevor Bradley. MY1101
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Students with Disabilities Liaison: Dr Russil Durrant, MY1120
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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, E-m: sacs@vuw.ac.nz

Office use only

Date Received:

(Date Stamp)

School of Social and Cultural Studies

Te Kura Mahinga Tangata

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

CRIMINOLOGY

SOCIOLOGY & SOCIAL POLICY

Assignment Cover Sheet

(please write legibly)

Full Name: _____

Student ID: _____ Course (eg ANTH101): _____

Tutorial Day: _____ Tutorial Time: _____

Tutor (if applicable): _____

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: _____