

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: 20 POINTS: TRIMESTER 2, 2012

*Trimester Dates: 16 July – 17 November 2012*

*Teaching Dates: 16 July - 19 October 2012*

*Mid-trimester Break: 27 August – 9 September 2012*

*Study/Examination period: 22 October to 17 November 2012*

**COURSE COORDINATOR: DR CHAMSY EL-OJEILI**

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**LECTURES: Monday 10-11 am & Wednesday 10-12 noon: MY 632**

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# SOSC 211: INTERPRETING SOCIETY: 2012

**COURSE COORDINATOR:** Dr Chamsy el-Ojeili  
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Office hours: TBA

**LECTURES:** Monday 10-10.50 am & Wednesday 10-11:50am,  
MY 632

**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.

## 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>, 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.

## **COURSE PRESCRIPTION**

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.

## **COURSE CONTENT**

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.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

At the successful 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.

## **EXPECTED WORKLOAD**

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences workload guideline for a 20 point course is 13 hours a week. This includes attendance and preparation for classes, assignments, and so on.

## TUTORIALS

Tutorial sessions are voluntary. Tutorials will be held from the third week of trimester in the second hour of the Wednesday lecture, in MY 632, from 11:00 to 11:50.

The tutorial programme 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 with guidance from the tutor.

### Tutorial programme:

August 1 – readings (1, 2, 3, 4)  
August 8 – readings (5, 6)  
August 15 – readings (7, 8)  
August 22 – readings (9, 10)  
September 12 – readings (11, 12)  
September 19 – readings (13, 14)  
September 26 – readings (15, 16)  
October 3 – readings (17, 18, 19, 20)

## LECTURE PLAN

### July

16 Introduction (CO)  
18 Marx (CO)  
23 Weber and Durkheim (CO)  
25 Simmel on social forms (ML)  
30 Freud (CO)

### August

1 The interaction order I: Goffman (ML)  
6 The interaction order II: Garfinkel (ML)  
8 Habits and action (ML)  
13 Marxism (CO)  
15 Foucault (CO)  
20 Post-Marxism (CO)

<b>Mid trimester break: 27 August to 9 September</b>
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### September

- 10 Globalization (CO)
- 12 Outside the canon (RS)
- 17 Phenomenology: Schutz (RS)
- 19 Iris Marion Young (RS)
- 24 Reassembling the social I: Durkheim vs Tarde (ML)
- 26 Reassembling the social II: Latour and actor-network theory (ML)

### October

- 1 Mobilities (ML)
- 3 Michel Foucault (RS)
- 8 Zygmunt Bauman (RS)
- 10 Judith Butler (RS)
- 15 Conclusion (CO) (Hand out Test)
- 17 **No lectures (Take-home Test due October 19)**

## COURSE MATERIALS

### Student Notes

**A book of Student Notes has been prepared for you which is the only material you need to purchase.** All undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer from 9–27 July 2012, 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 of the trimester all undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from vicbooks on Level 4 of the Student Union Building.

Customers can order textbooks and student notes online at [www.vicbooks.co.nz](http://www.vicbooks.co.nz) or can email an order or enquiry to [enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz). Books can be couriered to customers or they can be picked up from nominated collection points at each campus. Customers will be contacted when they are available.

Opening hours are 8.00 am – 6.00 pm, Monday – Friday during term time (closing at 5.00 pm in the holidays). 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.

Allen, K.	<i>The Social Lens</i>
Allen, K.	<i>Contemporary Social and Sociological Theory</i>
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>
Garner, R. (ed.)	<i>Social Theory (Two Volumes)</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>
McLennan, G.	<i>Story of Sociology</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.	<i>Sociological Theory</i>
Ritzer, G. (ed)	<i>Encyclopaedia of Social Theory</i>
Ritzer, G. & Smart, B. (eds)	<i>Handbook of Social Theory; see others</i>
Ritzer, G. and Stepnisky, J (eds)	<i>Major Social Theorists, Vols I and II</i>
Roberts. B.	<i>Micro Social Theory</i>

Scott, J.	<i>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>

## ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

Assessment is 100% internal and involves the following three items:

### *Assessment 1*

<b>Essay 1</b>	<b>Due Date: 4pm, Friday 24 August</b> <b>Word Limit: 2500</b>	<b>Weighting: 30%</b>
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### *Assessment 2*

<b>Essay 2</b>	<b>Due Date: 4pm, Friday 12 October</b> <b>Word Limit: 3000</b>	<b>Weighting: 40%</b>
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### *Assessment 3*

<b>Test</b>	<b>Take-home test</b> <b>Word Limit: 2500</b>	<b>Weighting: 30%</b>
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The Test will be handed out during lecture on Monday 15 October and must be placed into Assignment box on level 9, Murphy Bldg, no later than **4pm, Friday 19 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. Was Goffman a 'micro-sociologist'?

3. Discuss the psychoanalytic contribution to the examination of society.
4. Discuss the major features of, and debates around, the Marxist approach to society.
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. Discuss the post-Marxist rejection of "society" as a "valid object of discourse" (Laclau and Mouffe).
2. Michel Foucault offers a new way of conceptualizing power relations but does his account lack a normative framework or grounding for liberatory social change? Discuss.
3. Discuss the distinctive way in which Foucault approaches the social.
4. A more global frame of reference is required when thinking about the social today. Discuss.
5. According to Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, "women's contributions to sociology and social theory have been written out of the record of the discipline's history." Discuss this claim, drawing on the work of one or more women founders of classical sociology.
6. Critically discuss the contribution of phenomenology to the examination of social life.
7. Embodiment is social and cultural as well as being disclosive of individual style. Discuss, with reference to the work of Iris Marion Young.
8. "Society does not hold things together, it is what is *held* together" (Latour).
9. "Mobilities": does it take sociology anywhere new and important?
10. 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.
11. Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity complicates received ideas about the constitution of self and society. Discuss the significance of this aspect of Butler's work for sociology.
12. 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. The Test will be handed out during the lecture on Monday October 15 and must be placed into Assignment box on level 9, Murphy Bldg, no later than **4pm, Friday October 19**. A guidance statement on the test will be distributed closer to the date.

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT**

The three pieces of assessment require students to demonstrate their understanding of a number of theoretical approaches within sociology, and to compare and contrast these approaches in relation to issues connected to the study of society.

## **MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

To meet mandatory course requirements students must

- submit Essay one and Essay two, and
- submit 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%		

## **PENALTIES FOR LATE SUBMISSION**

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>

## **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 WITHDRAWAL**

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds.aspx>

## **WHERE TO FIND MORE DETAILED INFORMATION**

Find key dates, explanations of grades and other useful information at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study). Find out how academic progress is monitored and how enrolment can be restricted at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress). Most statutes and policies are available at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy), except qualification statutes, which are available via the *Calendar* webpage at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar.aspx) (See Section C).

Other useful information for students may be found at the website of the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic), at

[www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about\\_victoria/avcacademic](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic).

## **Additional Support**

Student Learning and Support also run study skills workshops specific to Māori and Pasifika students which students could be referred to for help:

Information for Māori Students:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/slss/infofor/maoristudents.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/slss/infofor/maoristudents.aspx) or  
[www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/tpa/index](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/tpa/index)

Information for Pasifika students:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/slss/infofor/pasifikastudents.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/slss/infofor/pasifikastudents.aspx) or  
[www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/tpa/index](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/tpa/index)

## **SCHOOL CONTACTS:**

Head of School:	Dr. Allison Kirkman, MY1013 Tel: 463 5676 E-m: <a href="mailto:allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz">allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz</a>
International Student Liaison:	Dr Hal Levine MY1023 Tel: 463 6132 E-m: <a href="mailto:hal.levine@vuw.ac.nz">hal.levine@vuw.ac.nz</a>
Maori and Pacific Student Liaison:	Dr Trevor Bradley. MY1101 Tel: 463 5432 E-m: <a href="mailto:trevor.bradley@vuw.ac.nz">trevor.bradley@vuw.ac.nz</a>
Students with Disabilities Liaison:	Dr Russil Durrant, MY1120 Tel: 463 9980 E-m: <a href="mailto:russil.durrant@vuw.ac.nz">russil.durrant@vuw.ac.nz</a>
School Manager:	Carol Hogan, MY918 Tel: 463 6546 E-m: <a href="mailto:carol.hogan@vuw.ac.nz">carol.hogan@vuw.ac.nz</a>
School Administrators:	Monica Lichti, Alison Melling, Helen Beaglehole, MY921 Tel: 463 5317, E-m: <a href="mailto:sacs@vuw.ac.nz">sacs@vuw.ac.nz</a>

Office use only

Date Received:

(Date received)

# School of Social and Cultural Studies

Te Kura Mahinga Tangata

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

CRIMINOLOGY

SOCIOLOGY & SOCIAL POLICY

## 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: \_\_\_\_\_