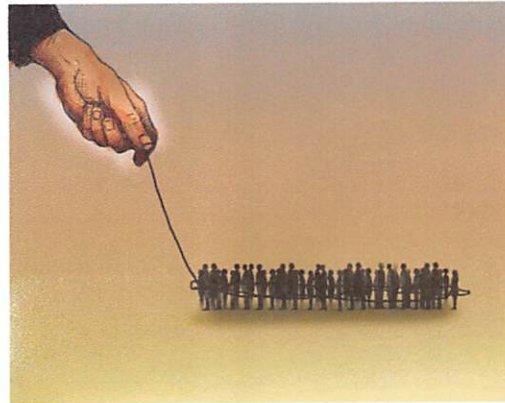


SOCI 4411-WDE
POWER IN SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS
Winter 2021

Seminar: Zoom, Mondays 2:30-5:30pm
Instructor: Dr. Sanders
Office hours: Mondays 1-2pm
phone: 807-343-8530
email: D2L site (please do not email my LU account)



“Scientia potentia est” (Knowledge is power) – Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1668)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is social power? How does power operate? How is power distributed? How are power arrangements created, altered, sustained, or destroyed? These are questions that have bedeviled social thinkers for centuries. Although there is little consensus as to how to answer these questions, there are several distinct problems and theoretical issues that are repeatedly confronted by scholars who concern themselves with the study of power. In this course, we will consider some of the ways these issues have been addressed.

Our main goal will be to compare and contrast alternative approaches to the conceptualization of power. Where are the continuities? Where are there ruptures? Which questions continue to haunt theorists of power and how do alternative research traditions represent distinctive solutions to the questions? The goal here is to think theoretically and always in reference to question of power. The concepts employed in the readings are as subtle, complex, and misunderstood as any terms you are likely to encounter in the social sciences. The course is organized to encourage you to confront this complexity head-on. You will be encouraged to think clearly, to reason through concrete examples, to make connections across areas of sociological research, and to develop a more rigorous approach to social theory analysis.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To learn about the different ways that sociologists conceptualize social power and how it operates in society;
- To identify the social, cultural, political, and economic influences and effects of power;
- To become adept readers of social theory texts;
- To show an appreciation of the complexity and challenges of social theory;
- To refine writing skills including grammar, syntax, structure and organization, argumentation, and referencing;
- To articulate thoughtful discussion questions and engage in open discussion of course material with classmates.

COURSE FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS

As a seminar, much of our time will be spent in shared dialogue or in breakaway groups. You will be expected to carefully read all assigned material before class and to share your thoughts and perspectives during class discussion. We will draw on a range of approaches to teaching and learning: reflecting upon past and current events, group discussion, critical analysis, in-class exercises, audio and video media, and mini-lectures. An important premise of the course is that teaching and learning are shared. Participation means taking responsibility for your own learning and that of your classmates. You will be encouraged to cultivate a stance of intellectual curiosity toward each social theory. Above all you will be invited to listen and engage with one another in ways that are challenging, critical, constructive, and respectful.

COURSE READINGS

- Weekly readings will be posted to D2L
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage.

COURSE EVALUATION AND SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS

<u>Description</u>	<u>Final Submission Date</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Seminar facilitation	TBD	20%
Midterm	Feb 24	20%
Final	Apr 12	20%
Weekly analytic briefs	---	20%
Weekly seminar participation	---	20%

Each week select students will serve as **seminar facilitators**. Duties include a close reading of the assigned materials, facilitating group discussion, and providing discussion questions in advance of lecture. You may work independently or collaborate others; you may also design in-class activities (e.g., case studies, break-out groups) or present short lectures. The goal is to encourage discussion and exchange of ideas (so, no quizzes or lengthy writing assignments).

The **midterm** includes short answer and essay questions and is designed to evaluate your ability to apply key concepts, not recitation of materials. Make-ups will be essay format and will require appropriate authoritative documentation (e.g., no parents, no partners).

The **final** is a 10-15 minute oral presentation on the last day of class where you will apply social theory to analysis of a current event or social issue. Make-ups will be essay format and require appropriate authoritative documentation (e.g., no parents, no partners). Instructions to follow.

Students are responsible for writing **weekly analytic briefs** due on or before the start of class. The goal of writing briefs is to encourage careful reading and critical thinking prior to class so that you are prepared to discuss the material and engage with other people's ideas. This is the essence of university seminar. For this reason, briefs are due prior to seminar without exception. Briefs that are submitted late will only be worth half credit. This policy is firm as it is intended to encourage preparedness and shared learning. Please do not ask for exceptions.

Regarding the structure of briefs: They should be concise (approx. 1-2 single-spaced pages) and at a minimum summarize the main argument of the readings. Ideally, you will present an original argument or thesis that somehow engages with the theory of power and case example. Otherwise there is no specific format. You can write about whether you are persuaded by the readings and why or why not, you can critique the readings, or you can critically compare and contrast the readings to other weeks. The only thing to keep in mind is that I expect they will demonstrate that you have in fact completed the readings and critically reflected on them.

As indicated above, I take **seminar participation** seriously as a maker of professional development. The success of this course and your final mark rely on careful preparation and active participation in discussions. This means articulating thoughtful questions and answers to questions, and engaging in active listening and discussion of material during seminar. I do not expect that you will do these tasks perfectly from the start, but I do expect you to demonstrate improvement over the semester. Please note that seminar participation marks cannot be made up due to absence as the purpose of the participation mark is to demonstrate that you understood the assigned material, that you actively engaged in discussion about the topic during seminar, and that you are able to think on your feet and engage in thoughtful and constructive dialogue with colleagues. This is the heart of the professional development seminar experience and cannot be made up regardless of why a session was missed.

One **extra credit paper** (approx. 10 pages) can be submitted for up to 10 points. The paper must apply a theory of power to an original issue. The paper should be structured as a composition essay and include an introduction and defensible thesis, a discussion of theory including critique, thoughtful argumentation, evidence and application, and final conclusions,. Meet with me to discuss this option and receive further instructions.

GENERAL POLICIES

Etiquette: Common courtesy goes a long way. This includes paying attention during seminar (i.e., not multitasking with cell phones, email, social media), listening to others without interrupting, and promoting a civil and constructive learning environment.

Email: Please email me through D2L (not via LU email). I will respond to student emails during office hours. Emails should be brief and require only a 1-2 sentence response. More detailed inquiries should be reserved for office hours. Please do not send emails that ask questions that can be answered by reading the course outline (e.g., due dates). When emailing professors, it is good practice to use standard workplace etiquette: emails should be brief yet professional, include a salutation, be coherent and use complete sentences, and be courteous in tone.

Grades and feedback: I will provide written feedback on assignments that are submitted on time. For late work, I will provide oral feedback during office hours or by appointment. I do not discuss grades by email or provide detailed breakdowns of graded work by email. All grade inquiries must be in person during office hours or by appointment. I am happy to schedule phone calls by appointment.

Attendance: There is no greater predictor of doing well in a course than attending classes. Though cameras are not required to be turned on, I consider it common courtesy for cameras to be on during discussions—plus it helps me better evaluate attendance and participation. Zoom backgrounds are available for free if you have privacy concerns.

Copyright compliance: I understand and agree that all instructional, reference, and administrative materials to which I am given access in this course (the course materials), whether they consist of text, still or kinetic images, or sound, whether they are in digital or hard copy formats, and in whatever media they are offered, are protected in their entirety by copyright, and that to comply with this copyright and the law.

1. I may access and download the course materials only for my own personal and non-commercial use for this course; and
2. I am not permitted to download, copy, store (in any medium), forward or share, transmit, broadcast, show, post or play in public, adapt, or change in any way any text, image, or sound component of the course materials for any other purpose whatsoever except as expressly authorized, and only to the extent authorized, in writing, by the course instructor. I further understand and agree that, if I infringe the copyright of the course materials in any way, I may be prosecuted under the Lakehead University Student Code of Conduct—Academic Integrity, which requires students to act ethically and with integrity in academic matters and to demonstrate behaviors that support the University's academic values.

Exam/assignment integrity

Plagiarism: All work must be completed with academic integrity. Please review the LU policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty, accessible from the LU homepage or the course information folder on the website. Please come to me with any questions or concerns about this policy prior to handing in assignments or taking the tests. I understand and agree that:

1. Unless otherwise allowed by the course instructor, I must complete the assignments in this course without the assistance of anyone else.
2. Unless otherwise allowed by the course instructor, I must not access any sources or materials (in print, online, or in any other way) to complete any course exam.
3. I further understand and agree that, if I violate either of these two rules, or if I provide any false or misleading information about my completion of course assignments or exams, I may be prosecuted under the Lakehead University Student Code of Conduct—Academic Integrity, which requires students to act ethically and with integrity in academic matters and to demonstrate behaviors that support the University's academic values.

Accommodations: LU is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. This commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all their academic activities. If you think you may need accommodations, you are encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) as early as possible. Please visit: <http://studentaccessibility.lakeheadu.ca>

WEEKLY SCHEDULE*

Week 1. What is power? (Jan 11)

- Introductions: Meet one another and class overview.
- Syllabus: Reviewing our social contract and answering your questions.
- Hobbes on Power: A “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” orienting lecture to the course subject matter.
- Choose weeks to facilitate seminar.



Week 2. Durkheim on power: the “interconnectivity of social elements and collective conscience...” (Jan 18)

- Main theory: excerpts from *The Division of Labor in Society* on “The Common Consciousness and its Causes” (read pp. 236-232) and *The Rule of Sociological Method* on “What is a Social Fact?” (Durkheim) (read pp. 48-59, skim pp. 60-71, read pp. 72-83)
- Case example: “The Stanley Cup of Hockey and Suicide in Quebec” (Trovato)

Week 3. Marx on power: the “domination and subordination of social classes...” (Jan 25)

- Main theory: excerpts from “Estranged Labor” and “Wage Labour and Capital” (Marx)
- Case example: excerpts from *The Managed Heart* (Hochschild) (read pp. 3-23, 89-136)
- Recommended: “Inventory of Marx’s Ideas” (Mills)
- **NOTE: Seminar from 2:30-4pm**

Week 4. Weber on power: the “use of administrative bureaucratic authority...” (Feb 01)

- Main theory: excerpts from *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait* (Bendix) (read pp. 289-300, 412-424, and skim rest)
- Case example: excerpts from *Street-Level Bureaucracy* (Lipsky) (read pp. 3-12, 13-25, 71-80, 105-116)

Week 5. Emerson on power: the “implementation of cost-benefit analysis to determine risks and benefits” (Feb 08)

- Main theory: “Power-Dependence Relations” (Emerson)
- Case example: “The Sex Ratio Question” (Guttentag & Secord)

Week 6. Reading Week—Power outage (Feb 15-19)

- No seminar, no assigned readings

Week 7. Midterm—It will be an exercise of power! (Feb 22)

- Midterm will be administered through D2L

* Schedule subject to change as necessary.

Week 8. Foucault on power: it is “ubiquitous and beyond agency or structure” (Mar 01)

- Main theory: “Lecture Two: 14 January 1976” (Foucault)
- Case example: excerpts from *Discipline and Punish* (read pp. 1-131)

Week 9. Foucault on power (con’t) (Mar 08)

- Main theory: “Foucault on Modern Power” (Fraser)
- Case example: excerpts from *Discipline and Punish* (read pp. 135-308)

Week 10. Holiday (Mar 15)

- No seminar, no assigned readings

Week 11. Conrad on power: the “ability to define deviance as illness” (Mar 22)

- Main theory: excerpts from *Deviance and Medicalization* (Conrad & Schneider) (pp. TBD) and “Shifting Engines of Medicalization” (Conrad)
- Case example: TBD

Week 12. Hall on Power: “Language-use both establishes and potentially unsettles power relations” (Mar 29)

- Main theory: “The Mass Media as a Power Institution” (Marger) and
- TBD

Week 13. Flexing Your Own Power: Final Projects (Apr 05)

- Recommended reading: “The Power Concept in Sociology: A Theoretical Assessment” (McNamee & Glasser)
- This week you have the floor. Show me what you have learned this term about a theory of power.