

# SOCI-2111-WA **Perspectives in Social Thought**

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**Classes (days/times):** January 8, 2017 – April 6, 2018; Tuesday & Thursday, 2:30 PM-4:00 PM

**Location:** RB1021

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**Course D2L website:** <https://lakeheadu.desire2learn.com/d2l/login>

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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION/OBJECTIVES**

SOCI 2111 is designed to provide an introductory survey of foundational perspectives in social thought as they pertain to the discipline of sociology. Given its introductory nature, the course presumes that students taking it have not had previous exposure to sociological theory beyond what is covered in SOCI 1100. Nevertheless, the basic competency in all major sociological perspectives and their philosophical/theoretical foundations is assumed. SOCI 2111 is a required course for Sociology majors. It is recommended that students registered in this class should have SOCI 1100 successfully completed.

The overall aim of SOCI 2111 is to offer the sociology of knowledge approach to the foundational perspectives in social thought. The course is premised on an assumption that social thought and sociological theorizing do not arise in vacuum but are intellectual responses to specific historical conditions and societal realities. The best way to understand why particular forms of social thought are the way they are, therefore, is to examine them in the context of times and age of their making. Additionally, the course is premised on an idea that the history of social thought and sociological theorizing is a continuous and ever-evolving dialogue between different streams and forms of thinking and theorizing. Thus, the best way to understand their character is to situate them within this dialogue and examine their contributions to dealing with specific issues, problems and/or themes the dialogue generates and invites.

In exploring the foundational perspectives in social thought, SOCI 2111 covers three general themes: (1) from reason to revolution; (2) from social philosophy to social science; (3) from certainty to doubt. Theme I focuses on the pre-Enlightenment period, a transition to the era of Enlightenment philosophy, and a reaction to the 'promise of the Enlightenment'. Theme II considers the principal proto-sociological and sociological streams of Enlightenment-based theorizing about the modern Western society. Theme III explores the responses and reactions to Enlightenment-based social theories, and the precursors to post-Enlightenment and post-modern forms of thought.

The primary methods of instruction in SOCI 2111 will be formal lectures and 'dialogical encounters' between instructor and students. The main purpose of class lectures is to offer a necessary historical, philosophical and conceptual background for situating and understanding particular streams of social thought, while the main objective of 'dialogical encounters' is to explore, through discussion and/or debate,

the actual theoretical ideas/questions you will be reflecting on in your commentaries. Although a significant portion of our class time will be devoted to formal lectures, your willingness to read, think and talk is indispensable for the overall success of the course and for how much you get out of it.

## COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objective of the course is to provide students with a comprehensive survey understanding of the foundational perspectives in social thought as they pertain to the discipline of sociology. By the end of the course, the diligent student will possess a competence in assessing, comparing and evaluating a broad range of pre-sociological, proto-sociological and sociological forms of theorizing, and be fully prepared to take up the more advanced explorations of specific theoretical issues, problems and debates.

## COURSE READINGS

The following is a required SOCI 2111 textbook:

*The Making of Social Theory: Order, Reason, and Desire* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), by Anthony Thompson. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2010.

**Please note:** A copy of the textbook is available on a 2-hour reserve at the Lakehead University library.

All other course materials, information and resources will be posted on our **Desire2Learn** course website.

To get the most out of the course, you should have your weekly readings done *before* our Tuesday classes. This will make you more prepared for the lectures and give you more time to think through the ideas you will be dealing with in your reflective commentaries.

## STUDYING & LEARNING STRATEGY

In addition to your textbook, the on-line course environment contains several aids to help you master the course material and get the most out of your learning experience. You should embrace the following as your studying and learning strategy:

### I

- **Week 1:** you should take time to thoroughly familiarize yourself with the course outline, the Desire2Learn course website, and the course textbook. To ease into the course material, you should also do all Week 1 readings indicated in the Course Schedule section (please see below). In addition, you should do a mock Reflective Commentary based on the introductory readings. You will not be handing in this Commentary, but it will be a good practice that will prepare you for doing the 'real' Commentaries.

### II

- **Non-exam Weeks:** you should start by reading through the chapter's **Reading Notes**. The Notes contain four sections: Chapter Summary, Learning Objectives, Study Questions, Research Aids.
  - Read Chapter Summary and Learning Objectives first, before you start with the actual textbook chapter. They will help you get a sense of the chapter's material and what you should be focusing on while reading it. Proceed with reading the textbook chapter, keeping in mind Chapter Summary and Learning Objectives.
  - When you are done, test your comprehension of the material by thinking through (and, if you wish, answering) the questions in the Study Questions section of the Reading Notes. If you can imagine yourself providing a 10-15 min. oral answer for each question, you have mastered the core ideas/themes from the chapter and are ready to write the commentary.

- If you run into difficulties with the textbook material, in addition to asking questions in class and/or coming to see me and/or the course TA during our office hours (or by appointment), you have several tools to help you deal with this: **Research Aids** section of the Reading Notes, on-line **Discussion Forum**, and **email**.
  - Research Aids contains a list of books and websites you can consult for additional and/or background information on the ideas/themes explored in the chapter. Consult these to clarify broader context for what the chapter is focusing on.
  - If you are unclear about specific points and/or particular ideas the chapter is discussing, use the on-line **Discussion Forum** to seek help from your classmates. Start a thread in the relevant Topic-Specific Course Issues section of the Forum, and you will most likely get a clarification from another student (**please note**: Do not expect others to provide you with full answers to all of your questions and do your homework for you. Use the Forum after you have made a genuine attempt to understand the material on your own, in consultation with Reading Notes). *Think of the Discussion Forum as an on-line substitute for in-class discussions and use it accordingly.* The Forum will be semi-monitored, and the TA and I will make occasional posts when/if we see it fit.
  - Finally, if all else fails, you can **email** us with your specific questions (**please note**: Before emailing, you should take advantage of our office hours and address whatever questions you might have in person). Restrict your questions to specific issues/concerns for which you cannot get help by any other means. *You should email your textbook material- and exam-related inquiries to me, and commentary-related inquiries to our TA.* If you have general course questions, post them on the Forum, under General Course Issues, and the replies will be provided there. **Please note**: Do not expect immediate response to your email inquiries. The fastest way to get a response are in-office consultations.
- Once you are comfortable with the chapter's themes and ideas, proceed with writing your Reflective Commentary (for Commentary details, please see Method of Evaluation section below). Think of the Commentary as a 'proof' that you understand the course material, and that you can engage with it on your own terms through critical reflections and by way of handling reflection questions. You can also think of it as a self-assessment tool, helping you evaluate your material comprehension. Finally, you should think of the Commentary as your weekly 'building blocks' for getting ready for the exams.

### III

- **Exam Weeks**: you should start by rereading your study notes and reviewing your Reflective Commentaries. This will get you ready for writing the exam. Once you get to see the exam question sheet, you should read it carefully to make sure that you understand what you are being asked to discuss. You can answer the questions in any order you wish, for as long as you indicate clearly what definition or essay you are answering. A good strategy is to first answer what you feel most comfortable with, and then work your way through more challenging questions. **Please note**: You will have limited time to complete the exam, so make sure to pace yourself appropriately.

## METHOD OF EVALUATION

Your performance in the course will be evaluated on the basis of the following:

**Midterm Exam** (35%): Thursday, March 1

**Final Exam** (35%): TBA

**Reflective Commentaries** (30%)

Both **exams** will be a combination of definitions and essay answers. 'Definitions' are paragraph-long explanations of the key theoretical concepts, while 'essays' are longer-form discussions of the main ideas

and/or themes from the course readings. Please note that *there will not be any multiple choice or true/false questions*. There will be some choice regarding the range of possible answers. The material for the exams will be sourced from the course textbook, lectures, and anything else presented during our class time. There will be a pre-exam review session with the purpose of clarifying difficulties and problems encountered during your preparation for the test. The final exam is non-cumulative.

**Reflective commentaries** are written reflections *on the weekly textbook readings*. The commentaries—to submitted on-line *via* our D2L website—are due by the **beginning of Thursday class** (this is **not negotiable**). **Late submissions will not be accepted**. Absolutely no make-up commentaries will be allowed, unless there are extraordinary circumstances (for which you need to provide appropriate documentation) that warrant submission extension.

**The purpose of the commentary is not to summarize the weekly readings**. Rather, it is to (1) offer your own thoughts about the principal theoretical ideas presented in the textbook readings, and (2) discuss two (out of three) Reflection Questions provided at the end of the chapter you are commenting on. Thus, your commentary is to consist of two parts: Part I, where you demonstrate your ability to distill and critically reflect on the main theoretical ideas discussed in the chapter; Part II, where you engage in a focused discussion of the issues the Reflection Questions are inviting you to think about in a more in-depth fashion. The best commentaries are usually those that are more analytical than descriptive and that raise some interesting points and questions that can spark a good discussion/debate. **Please note**: each chapter offers three Reflection Questions. You are free to choose whichever two questions you wish to discuss in your commentary.

The **length of each commentary** should not exceed two pages of typed text, using 1.5 line spacing and 12 pt Times New Roman font. Do not use a cover page for your assignments: put your name and your student ID number in the top left corner of page 1.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following grading scale will be applied in evaluating your course work:

### **90-100% (A+)**

*Outstanding Performance*: superb mastery of the principles and materials treated in the course; exceptional fluency in communicating that mastery and a high degree of originality and independence in applying material and principles.

### **80-89% (A)**

*Excellent Performance*: comprehensive in-depth knowledge of the principles and materials treated in the course; fluency in communicating that knowledge and originality and independence in applying material and principles.

### **70-79% (B)**

*Good Performance*: thorough understanding of the breadth of materials and principles treated in the course and ability to apply and communicate that understanding effectively.

### **60-69% (C)**

*Satisfactory Performance*: basic understanding of the breadth of principles and material treated in the course and an ability to apply and communicate that understanding competently.

### **50-59% (D)**

*Marginal Performance*: adequate understanding of most principles and material treated in the course, but significant weakness in some areas and in the ability to apply and communicate that understanding.

### **40-49% (E)**

*Failure*: inadequate or fragmentary knowledge of the principles and material treated in the in the course, or failure to complete the work required in the course.

**1-39% (F)**

*Failure:* inadequate or fragmentary knowledge of the principles and material treated in the in the course, or failure to complete the work required in the course.

**0% (F)**

*Academic Dishonesty:* demonstrable violation of the academic rules of conduct as defined by Lakehead University academic standards.

Your grade is a reflection of your performance in the course, which is the only criterion for your final course mark. *There will be no rescaling of grades at the end of the course* and no adjustments except for legitimate clerical errors. Please take note of that.

According to Lakehead University defined standards, grade 0-49% constitutes unsatisfactory academic performance and means failing the course; 50-59% is a minimally accepted level of performance for passing the course, while 90-100% constitutes outstanding performance. For details on evaluation and grading see your Lakehead *University 2017-2018 Academic Calendar*, section University Regulations (V Standing).

**GENERAL POLICIES**

**Academic Statement:** Each student is asked to submit via our D2L website (or in class, if preferred) a brief statement about his or her academic background as it relates to the Sociology program in general and this course in particular. If possible, the statement should be accompanied by the student's recent photograph.

**Email:** Emailing is to be regarded as an official form of communication. Only emails sent through Lakehead University account will be read and replied to. All other email messages will be ignored.

**Cell phones:** Cell phones are to be turned off during lectures and exams (except under exceptional circumstances in which approval has been granted by the instructor).

**Notebooks/portables:** Use of notebook computers and/or portable devices during lectures is **not allowed** (except under exceptional circumstances in which approval has been granted by the instructor).

**Audio/video devices:** Use of audio/video recording devices during lectures is **not allowed** (except under exceptional circumstances in which approval has been granted by the instructor).

**Discussion Forum:** This is an on-line extension of an in-class interaction, and should be treated as such. Please use appropriate language and tone when participating. Crude, disrespectful, inflammatory, offensive and/or confrontational Forum participation will not be tolerated, and will result in the ban from the Forum.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Class attendance is not mandatory but is highly recommended. If you decide to attend, you are expected to arrive on time and be respectful to other students in class. Disruptive and otherwise inappropriate behaviour in the classroom will not be tolerated. Students engaged in such behaviour will be dealt with accordingly.

**DISCLAIMERS**

**Disclaimer I:** The information in this syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced and discussed in class before being implemented.

**Disclaimer II:** By taking SOCI 2111 you are acknowledging that you have read and understood—and are in agreement with—the course contents and policies, as outlined and explained in this syllabus.

**COURSE SCHEDULE** (subject to change; any changes will be announced in class)

<p><b>Week 1</b> (Jan 8-12)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>COURSE INTRODUCTION &amp; SYLLABUS WALKTHROUGH</i></p> <p><b>READINGS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preface</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> <li>• Introduction: The Unmaking of Traditional Society</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 2</b> (Jan 15-19)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>THEME I: FROM REASON TO REVOLUTION</i></p> <p><b>READING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 1: Enlightenment and Revolution: Rousseau and Wollstonecraft</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 3</b> (Jan 22-26)</p>	<p><b>READING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 2: The Conservative Reaction and Romanticism</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 4</b> (Jan 29-Feb 2)</p>	<p><b>READING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 3: Democracy and Social Liberalism</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 5</b> (Feb 5-9)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>THEME II: FROM SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY TO SOCIAL SCIENCE</i></p> <p><b>READING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 4: French Positivism and German Idealism</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 6</b> (Feb 12-16)</p>	<p><b>READINGS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 5: Karl Marx</li> <li>• Chapter 11: Early Twentieth-Century Marxism: The Russian Revolution and Gramsci (<b>optional</b>)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 7</b> (Feb 19-23)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FEBRUARY BREAK: NO CLASSES</b></p>
<p><b>Week 8</b> (Feb 26-Mar 2)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PRE-EXAM REVIEW</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>MIDTERM: THURSDAY, MARCH 1</b></p>
<p><b>Week 9</b> (Mar 5-9)</p>	<p><b>READING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 7: Émile Durkheim</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 10</b> (Mar 12-16)</p>	<p><b>READING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 8: Max Weber</li> </ul>

<p><b>Week 11</b> (Mar 19-23)</p>	<p><b>READING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 6: Fin de Siècle Social Thought: Feminism, Decadence, and Nietzsche</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 12</b> (Mar 26-30)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>THEME III: FROM CERTAINTY TO DOUBT</i></p> <p><b>READING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 9: Emancipation and Pragmatism: Du Bois, Dewey, and Mead</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 13</b> (Apr 2-6)</p>	<p><b>READING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 10: The Individual and Society: Simmel and Freud</li> <li>• Chapter 12: Elites and Social Democracy: From Pareto to Mannheim (<b>optional</b>)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">PRE-EXAM REVIEW</p>