

Sociology 4411FDE: Critical Thinkers for Critical Times

Instructor: Dr. T. Puddephatt

Class Location: Zoom class

Class Time: Friday 2:30-5:30 pm

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Introduction to the Course

The following course is designed as a conceptual exploration of symbolic interactionism. We touch on various theoretical themes, beginning with broad orienting assumptions and delving deeper into more specific issues as we go along. The hope is that you gain an understanding of the broad parameters of symbolic interactionism as a subfield of sociology and begin to explore topics of interest in more detail. Newer critiques, debates, and directions round out the course.

Evaluation Criteria

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|------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Seminar Participation | 30% |
| 2. Ethnographic Book Review | 15% |
| 3. Book Review Presentation | 10% |
| 4. Topical Review Paper | 30% |
| 5. Review Paper Presentation | 15% |

Course Readings:

All course readings are either (1) available electronically through Lakehead library (use the “sociological abstracts” database); or (2) provided to you through the content section of our D2L website. Thus there are **no costs** to you as a student.

Explanation of Evaluation:

1. **Seminar Participation:** As a senior seminar course, it is vital that students come to class prepared and willing to discuss the assigned readings. This grade is not based on attendance, but rather the quality of participation (i.e. demonstrating knowledge of the content of the weekly readings and contributing to class discussion). This makes up 30% of the grade and is my only metric of your understandings of the weekly readings, so please show up prepared and ready to contribute to discussion.
2. **Ethnographic Book Review:** One of the strengths of symbolic interactionist research is its use of ethnographic methods, in which researchers spend time immersing themselves in the lifeworlds of others to better understand their perspectives, meanings, patterns of collective activity, and ways of life. You are to choose one book-length ethnography that utilizes an interactionist framework, and read it closely, to write a summary and critical review. The review should be thematic (not chapter by chapter), addressing the main theoretical ideas and arguments presented. This review should be maximum 5 pages, double-spaced, using 12 pt times new roman font. Due October 23.
3. **Book Review Presentation:** Here you can present the key findings and themes from the book to the class, to give the group a sense of the core argument. You can also raise

questions, and consider any criticisms, as well as how future research might be directed to deal with any unresolved issues / questions. This should be a 5 minute presentation (use slides), followed by questions and answers from peers (2-4 minutes).

4. Topical Review Paper: Symbolic interactionism is a perspective that can be used to understand the lived experiences of any human group activity, thus everyone should be able to find an interesting topic to explore. The assignment is to choose a specialized topic and review how symbolic interactionist researchers have contributed to it thus far. The idea is to do an interactionist literature review of the area in question, discussing developments over time and highlighting the most important contributions. You might consider the strengths that an interactionist approach offers, which other sociological perspectives to the topic might miss. This should be maximum 10 pages, double-spaced, times new roman font. Due December 12.
5. Review Paper Presentation: Here students will present their topic of interest to the class, and review interactionist contributions to this area over time. Key themes and emphases should be highlighted, showing the unique contributions of interactionism to the topic. The presentation should be 10 minutes long (w slide show), with 5 minutes left for questions and answers with classroom peers. Sign up to present on one of last 2 days.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

September 11: Introduction

Welcome! Explanation of the course & expectations of students

September 18: Classical Roots

1. Mead, George Herbert. 1934. "The Self," pp 347-360 in Calhoun et al (eds.) *Classical Sociological Theory*, 3rd Edition. Wiley. D2L
2. Prus, Robert. 1996. "Interpretive Roots: Experience as Intersubjective Reality," pp 33-65 in Prus' *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research*. SUNY Press. D2L

September 25: Herbert Blumer: Perspective and Method

1. Blumer, Herbert. 1969. "The Methodological Position of Symbolic Interactionism," pp 1-60 in Blumer's *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. D2L

October 2: Generic Social Processes

1. Prus, Robert. 1987. "Generic Social Processes: Maximizing Conceptual Development in Ethnographic Research," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 16: 250-291.
2. Puddephatt, Antony and Arthur McLuhan. 2019. "Generic Social Processes: Re-imagining a Conceptual Schema for Grounded Theory in the Contemporary Era," *Sociological Focus*, 52(2): 140-155.

October 9: Language and Mind

1. Albert Bergesen. 2008. "Chomsky vs Mead," *Sociological Theory*, 22: 257-270.

2. Antony Puddephatt. 2011. "Language and Mind in the Thought of George Herbert Mead: Challenges from Chomsky's Linguistics," *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, 36: 75-106.
D2L

October 16: READING WEEK

October 23:

1. Student book review presentations

*****BOOK REVIEW DUE!!*****

October 30: Emotional Reflexivity

1. Burkitt, Ian. 2012. "Emotional Reflexivity: Feeling, Emotion and Imagination in Reflexive Dialogues." *Sociology* 46(3):458-72.
2. Holmes, Mary. 2010. "The Emotionalization of Reflexivity." *Sociology* 44(1):139-54.

November 6: Cognitive Sociology

1. McVeigh, Ryan. 2020. "The Body in Mind: Mead's Embodied Cognition," *Symbolic Interaction*, 43(3): 493-513.
2. Price, Taylor. 2020. "Cognition in Situations," *Symbolic Interaction*, 43(4): 692-720.

November 13: Constructing Social Problems

1. Pawluch, Dorothy. 2019. "On the Unbearable Lightness of Being a Constructionist," *The American Sociologist*, 50(2): 204-219.
2. Adorjan, M., A. Christensen, B. Kelly, and D. Pawluch. 2012. "Stockholm Syndrome as Vernacular Discourse," *The Sociological Quarterly*, 53(3): 454-474.

November 20: Power, Status, and Domination

1. Lonnie Athens, 2008. "Radical Interactionism: Going Beyond Mead," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 37(2): 137-165.
2. Boismier, Kelsey, and Antony Puddephatt. 2026. "Symbolic Interaction in Authoritarian Times: A Frommadian Synthesis," *Sociological Theory* (online first).

November 27:

Paper Presentations

December 4:

Paper Presentations

Final Topical Review Essay due December 12!! Thanks!

IMPORTANT NOTE ON GENERATIVE AI USE

Generative AI can be a powerful research tool, and I do not discourage its use in the learning process and in our research workflows. Indeed, AI can be useful as a tutor to bounce ideas off and explore possibilities, to seek out sources and data, generate synopses and track ideas through time, and draw up handy concept maps, etc. However, it is important to use AI ethically (i.e. do not let it do your thinking and writing composition for you, which is plagiarism). For every assignment you submit, you must also submit a form that (a) details how, if at all, you made use of AI in developing the assignment; and (b) checking a box that promises no unethical use of AI in the submission. *If I am able to detect any unethical generative AI use, it will result in a zero grade for that assignment.*

Generative artificial intelligence systems are capable of generating text, images, or other media in response to prompts. GenAI tools can provide valuable assistance and support in academic work. However, it is essential to use them responsibly and ethically. The following information and guidelines apply to the use of AI-based tools in this course:

- a. **Student Responsibility** – It is the responsibility of the student to understand the limitations of AI-based tools. While these tools can provide suggestions and insights, final decisions and critical thinking should come from the student's own understanding and effort. Before submitting, review your work with this in mind. If you don't understand what type of GenAI usage is appropriate, ask the course instructor for clarification.
- b. **Formative Usage** – In this class, you may use GenAI for formative, but not summative, work. That means it can be used as a “possibility engine” (brainstorm tool), a “study buddy,” a “collaboration coach,” a “guide on the side,” a “personal tutor,” a “co-designer,” etc. to help you learn course content, but it cannot be used as the primary vehicle for any work that is submitted for marks or evaluation.
- c. **Plagiarism** – Since [writing and critical thinking ability] are learning outcomes of this course, all work submitted for evaluation must be the student's original work. Using the work of others (including content curated/generated by AI) without proper citation is considered plagiarism.
- d. **Citation of Sources** – If you use material generated by an AI program for an assignment in this course, it must be cited like any other source (with due consideration for the quality of the source, which may be judged as poor). Failure to do so will be considered a violation of academic integrity. [See Student Code of Conduct – Academic Integrity.](#)