

**BRESCIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**  
**School of Behavioural and Social Sciences**  
**Winter 2019**  
**Sociology 2271b section 530**  
**Survey of Contemporary Theory**

**Course Director:** Dr. Lina Sunseri

**Class Times :** Tuesdays 2:30 pm-4:30 pm and Thursdays 2:30 am-3:30 pm Room BR-MRW 153

**Office Hour:** Wednesdays 10:30 – 11:30 am Room 301A St. James Building, or by appointment.

**Phone:** 432-8353 x28115

**Email:** lsunseri@uwo.ca

**Prerequisites:** Sociology 2270a/b

Unless you have either the prerequisite for this course, or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

**Antirequisite(s):** Sociology 2240E or the former Soc. 230

## **OVERVIEW**

This course studies several contemporary social theories from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to the present. We will cover some central contributors to structural functionalism, symbolic interactionism, conflict theory, feminist theory, and post-modernism.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Upon completion of this course, the students will be able to:

- ✓ Identify the basic theoretical perspectives of major contemporary social theorists such as Parsons, Merton, Marcuse, Goffman, and Foucault.
- ✓ Describe how the major contemporary social theorists strove to explain the social changes happening in late modernity and in our current social world.
- ✓ Compare critical perspectives on modernity, to more conservative approaches, such as structural functionalism.
- ✓ Evaluate and apply contemporary social theorists to understanding contemporary social phenomena.
- ✓ Demonstrate competency in written communication skills.

*Students may vary in their competency levels on these outcomes. They can expect to achieve these outcomes if they honor course policies, attend classes regularly, complete all assigned work in good faith and on time, and meet all other course expectations of them as students (Linda Nilson, Teaching at its Best, 2010: 37).*

## **Brescia Competencies**

The Brescia Competencies are the building blocks of your Brescia experience. They help you to think critically and participate actively in society – attributes you will apply throughout your entire life. Regardless of what degree you choose, these skills, values, and abilities prepare you to lead with wisdom, justice, and compassion in a changing world. Throughout this course, students will work towards developing the following Brescia Competencies:

**Communication** includes the articulation of one’s ideas, developing informative and persuasive arguments in all forms of communication, understanding the communication context. Students will also develop interpersonal communication skills including working with others in groups, sharing opinions, resolving conflicts, offering ideas, listening to others, asking questions, and demonstrating effective nonverbal behaviours. (Level 3)

**Inquiry and Analysis** involves the methodical practice of exploring issues and posing questions to seek information, knowledge, or clarity in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of what is true. Inquiry and analysis begins with the collecting of information, the examination of the knowledge, and then converting the material into valuable new knowns. Knowledge is therefore discovered over time because investigation is continual, as is the testing of new knowledge. Once the evidence has been organized and synthesized, conclusions about the question or problem are developed that logically follow from the inquiry process. (Level 3)

**Critical Thinking** involves reasoning, a process where we create arguments by connecting thoughts together so that some thoughts (premises) provide support for other thoughts (conclusions). There are three basic skills involved in critical thinking: interpretation, verification and reasoning. The first skill comprises understanding how words express or fail to express thoughts, expressing clearly what we mean, and discerning an argument’s structure. The second skill involves determining whether premises are acceptable. And the third skill encompasses evaluating whether premises make it reasonable accept the conclusion. (Level 3)

**Social Awareness and Engagement** involves the “the ability to understand and respond to the needs of others” (Daniel Goleman). To do so, students need to develop an understanding of the interrelationship between individual and society. They come to see how their actions influence, and are influenced by, other people, social institutions, and social structure. They appreciate the diverse standpoints and cultural experiences of others, and attempt to see things from different

perspectives. Socially aware and engaged students demonstrate knowledge of contemporary social problems, and propose solutions for dealing with these issues. They have the ability to reflect on the impact they have on others. They are able to work with a diverse group of people in intercultural contexts to develop and implement social justice initiatives and enact positive social change. (Level 3)

### **FORMAL ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE STRUCTURE**

**1. MIDTERM EXAM.** Scheduled on **Tuesday February 13, 2019**. The in-class midterm exam will cover material from January 7, 2019 until, and including, February 7, 2019. It will have 2 essay questions, and multiple choice/true false questions.....**40% of total mark** ( All Brescia Competencies and Learning Outcomes outlined above are applied)

**2. FINAL EXAM.** During Final Examination Period in April - date to be scheduled by the Registrar. It will have 2 essay questions, and multiple choice/true and false questions. It will cover course material from February 13, 2019 until end of term .....**40% of total mark** (All Brescia Competencies and Learning Outcomes outlined above are applied)

**3. WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT: LETTER TO A FRIEND-.....20% of total mark- Due March 21, 2019 in class!** (All Brescia Competencies and Learning Outcomes outlined above are applied) Late submissions will be penalized 2 marks out of 100 per each day the paper is late. No papers will be accepted 10 days after the due date.

#### **Instructions:**

In this writing assignment, I am asking you to write a letter to a friend or relative (someone with whom you have good rapport but who is not a sociologist or sociology student). You are not at all required to mail the letter; the purpose is to develop your sociological thinking, writing skills, critical thinking, and to allow you to demonstrate your understanding of contemporary social theories. Before completing this assignment, you will need to read very carefully the required readings that apply to the theory you have selected.

Your letter should be approximately **3 typed pages** in length (1 inch margins; 12 point Times New Roman font; and single spaced). It is due in class on **March 21, 2019**. Your letter must:

- Explain how a particular contemporary social theory (from the ones we cover in this course) helped you to understand a specific contemporary news event that has occurred in either Canada or USA.
- Provide a detailed example of the news event and explanation of its cause and/or effect, using one of the theories used in the course. Although you should cite the course reading from which you learned of the theory (even in a letter), do not use direct quotes. Put the information in your own words.
- You need to clearly and directly link the concepts within the chosen theory to the news event.
- Conclude by telling your friend how this specific theory has overall enriched your understanding on how current social relationships/social structures work.

Write in your own voice, use first person, and avoid jargon. Focus instead on how you can use everyday language to inform your reader of the complex things you are learning in this course. Make sure to cite the reading(s) in the text of your letter (when you paraphrase), as well as the source from which you learned of the news event you are writing about. Remember, NO direct quotes. I want your words, not theirs. Attach a Works Cited page.

You will be evaluated on the grammar, the organization, the clarity of your points, and the demonstration of properly understanding and applying the selected theory to the event.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

1. George Ritzer and Jeffrey Stepnisky. *Contemporary Sociological Theory and Its Classical Roots: The Basics*, 2013, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. [RTZ]
2. Peter Kivisto, *Social Theory: Roots and Branches*, 2013, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. [PK]

]

### PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

1. **In case Brescia University College might close due to hazardous weather conditions or other emergency circumstances and classes are not held:** examinations scheduled for the day or evening of a closing are cancelled and rescheduled. Deadlines for assignments and other submissions originally scheduled on the day of closure are postponed until the next scheduled class after Brescia re-opens.
2. **Laptop Use:** laptops are allowed in class, **however**, they are only to be used to take notes, not for “chatting” on line or surfing the internet for non-class related information. The latter constitutes disruptive and disrespectful behaviour and is not acceptable. If instructor finds a person doing so, she will warn that student to stop such behaviour. If the student persists in that behaviour, he/she might be told to stop using the laptop or leave the class. Also, please **turn OFF** and **PUT AWAY** any cell phones, blackberry and other similar devices during class!!
3. For academic accommodation to be considered for any course component worth less than 10% of the final course grade, it is the responsibility of the student to approach the course instructor(s) in a timely fashion. Documentation may be required to be submitted to the academic advisor. If documentation is required, the request for accommodation will be decided by the academic advisor in consultation with the instructor. If documentation is not required, the instructor will make the final decision as to whether or not accommodation will be granted. The policies governing requests for academic accommodation for course components worth 10% or more of the course grade are outlined in the Academic Policies section included at the end of the course outline.
4. Electronic devices **WILL NOT** be allowed during tests/exams.
5. Please note that grades **CANNOT** be adjusted on the basis of need. The mark in the course will be the mark that you earn. Tests and exams cannot be re-written to obtain a

higher mark. There are no supplemental or bonus assignments. Marks will not be given to students via e-mail, only in person and will be posted on OWL, except for final marks – these will be available only through the Office of the Registrar.

6. The instructor does **not** post lecture notes online, therefore it is your responsibility to borrow notes from a classmate if you have missed a class and to find out about other important information that you missed during your absence.

### **Topics and Readings**

#### **1. INTRODUCING CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORY, and Beginning Structural Functionalism** January 7-18

- *Introduction to Sociological Theory*, 1-13, RTZ
- *Structural Functionalism*, 72-92, RTZ
- R. Merton, “The Unanticipated Consequences of Social Action”, 197-204, PK
- T. Parson, “The Subsystems of Society”, 205-210, PK

#### **2. Symbolic Interactionism** January 21-February 1

- *Symbolic Interactionism*, 139-151, RTZ
- H. Blumer, “Society as Symbolic Interaction”, 250-256, PK
- E. Goffman, “Performances”, 257-262 PK

#### **3. Ethnomethodology** February 4-8

- Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis*, 152-157, RTZ
- H. Garfinkel, “Studies of the Routine Grounds of Everyday Activities”, 276-279 PK

#### **February 12 In-Class MIDTERM EXAM**

#### **4. Critical Theories** February 14- March 8

- Contemporary Grand Theories*, 108-138, RTZ
- H. Marcuse, “One-Dimensional Man”, 439-444, PK
- Globalization Theory*, 271-310, RTZ

**NOTE: February 18-22: READING WEEK!!**

#### **5. Feminist Theory-** March 11-March 22

- Contemporary Feminist Theories*, 195-230, RTZ
- C. West and D. Zimmerman, “Doing Gender”, 328-335, PK
- P. Hill Collins, “Toward an Afrocentric Feminist Epistemology”, 350-359, PK

## 6.A Look at Postmodern Theory: Michel Foucault – March 25-April 5

*Postmodern Grand Theories*, 231-246, RTZ

M. Foucault , “Panopticism”, 508-513 PK

### April 9: Wrap Up and Review.

## 2018-19 BRESCIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

### 1. POLICY REGARDING MAKEUP EXAMS AND EXTENSIONS OF DEADLINES

When a student requests academic accommodation (e.g., extension of a deadline, a makeup exam) for work representing 10% or more of the student’s overall grade in the course, it is the responsibility of the student to provide acceptable documentation to support a medical or compassionate claim. All such requests for academic accommodation **must** be made through an Academic Advisor and include supporting documentation.

Academic accommodation for illness will be granted only if the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete her academic responsibilities. Minor ailments typically treated by over-the-counter medications will not normally be accommodated.

Students must submit their documentation along with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested no later than two business days after the date specified for resuming responsibilities. In cases where there might be an extended absence or serious issue, students should submit their documentation promptly and consult their Academic Advisor for advice during their recovery period. Whenever possible, students who require academic accommodation should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, examinations, etc. Appropriate academic accommodation will be determined by the Dean’s Office/Academic Advisor in consultation with the student’s instructor(s). Academic accommodation may include extension of deadlines, waiver of attendance requirements for classes/labs/tutorials, arranging Special Exams or Incompletes, re-weighting course requirements, or granting late withdrawals without academic penalty

Please note that personal commitments (e.g., vacation flight bookings, work schedule) which conflict with a scheduled test, exam or course requirement are **not** grounds for academic accommodation.

A UWO Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is **required** if a student is seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. A SMC can be downloaded from: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf) . The student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that her ability to meet academic responsibilities was seriously affected. Please note that under University Senate regulations documentation stating simply that the student “was seen for a medical reason” or “was ill” is **not** adequate to support a request for academic accommodation.

The full policy on requesting accommodation due to illness can be viewed at:

[http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page\\_12](http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_12)

### 2. ACADEMIC CONCERNS

If you feel that you have a medical or personal challenge that is interfering with your work, contact your instructor and Academic Advisor as soon as possible. Problems may then be documented and possible arrangements to assist you can be discussed at the time of occurrence rather than on a retroactive basis. Retroactive requests for academic accommodation on medical or compassionate grounds are not normally considered.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your work load is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor. If you consider reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines (refer to the Registrar's website, <http://brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar-services/> or the list of official sessional dates in the Academic Calendar, see the Sessional Dates tab at <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/index.cfm?SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=> ). You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. *Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP eligibility and/or Entrance Scholarship eligibility.*

### 3. ABSENCES

**Short Absences:** If you miss a class due to a minor illness or other problems, check your course outline for information regarding attendance requirements and make sure you are not missing a test or assignment. Cover any readings and arrange to borrow notes from a classmate. Contact the course instructor if you have any questions.

**Extended Absences:** If you have an extended absence, you should contact the course instructor and an Academic Advisor. Your course instructor and Academic Advisor can discuss ways for you to catch up on missed work and arrange academic accommodations, if appropriate and warranted.

It is important to note that the Academic Dean may refuse permission to write the final examination in a course if the student has failed to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year or for too frequent absence from the class or laboratory ([http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=5&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading\\_68](http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=5&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading_68) ).

### 4. SCHOLASTIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at: [http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page\\_20](http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_20) .

Students are responsible for understanding the nature of and avoiding the occurrence of plagiarism and other academic offences. Note that such offences include plagiarism, cheating on an examination, submitting false or fraudulent assignments or credentials, impersonating a candidate, or submitting for credit in any course without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course in the University or elsewhere. Students are advised to consult the section on Scholastic Discipline for Undergraduate Students in the Academic Calendar.

If you are in doubt about whether what you are doing is inappropriate or not, consult your instructor, the Academic Dean's Office, or the Registrar. A claim that "you didn't know it was wrong" is not accepted as an excuse.

The penalties for a student guilty of a scholastic offence (including plagiarism) include refusal of a passing grade in the assignment, refusal of a passing grade in the course, suspension from the University, and expulsion from the University.

#### **Plagiarism:**

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

#### **Computer-marked Tests/exams:**

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating. Software currently in use to score computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams performs a similarity review as part of standard exam analysis.

### **5. PROCEDURES FOR APPEALING ACADEMIC EVALUATIONS**

All appeals of a grade must be directed first to the course instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the course instructor, a written appeal is to be sent to the School Chair. If the response of the Chair is considered unsatisfactory to the student, she may then submit a written appeal to the Office of the Dean. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the Dean, she may appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic (SRBA), if there are sufficient grounds for the appeal. For information on academic appeals you can consult your Academic Advisor or see the Student Academic Appeals – Undergraduate in the Academic Calendar [http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page\\_14](http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_14).

Note that final course marks are not official until the Academic Dean has reviewed and signed the final grade report for the course. If course marks deviate from acceptable and appropriate standards, the Academic Dean may require grades to be adjusted to align them with accepted grading practices.

### **6. PREREQUISITES**

Unless you have either the prerequisites for a course or written special permission from the Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from the course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisite(s).

### **7. SUPPORT**

#### **Support Services**

The Brescia University College Registrar's website, with a link to Academic Advisors, is at <http://brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar-services/> . The website for the Student Development Centre at Western is <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/> .

#### **Mental Health and Wellness**

Students may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to your learning, such as increased anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, feeling down or lost, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. Services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about mental health and wellness at Brescia at <http://brescia.uwo.ca/life/mental->

[health-wellness/](#). Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Health and Wellness at Western, [http://uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/index.html](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html), for information about how to obtain help for yourself or others.

### **Sexual Violence**

All members of the Brescia University College community have a right to work and study in an environment that is free from any form of sexual violence. Brescia University College recognizes that the prevention of, and response to, Sexual Violence is of particular importance in the university environment. Sexual Violence is strictly prohibited and unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Brescia is committed to preventing Sexual Violence and creating a safe space for anyone in the Brescia community who has experienced Sexual Violence.

If you or someone you know has experienced any form of Sexual Violence, you may access resources at <http://brescia.uwo.ca/life/sexual-violence/>.

---

Portions of this document were taken from the Academic Calendar, the Handbook of Academic and Scholarship Policy and the Academic Handbook of Senate Regulations. This document is a summary of relevant regulations and does not supersede the academic policies and regulations of the Senate of the University of Western Ontario.