



## McGill University

### **SOCI-652A: CURRENT SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY**

Time: Tuesday, 10:35am-12:25pm, Room: Leacock 738

Fall Term 2014

#### **Prof. Axel van den Berg**

Office Hours: by appointment

Leacock 738, tel. 398-6846

e-mail: axel.vandenberg@mcgill.ca

#### **Course Description:**

In this seminar we consider some of the central issues in contemporary sociological theory by critically examining a number of recent programmatic statements representing contending schools of thought. Students are expected to have basic background knowledge of classical and modern sociological theory and the issues they deal with. If you think your background is insufficient, you are *strongly* encouraged to read a basic introductory sociological theory textbook before the term begins or during the first weeks of the term.

All books assigned should be available in the McGill Bookstore as well as on reserve in the McLennan library. The article can be found on the WebCT site for this course.

#### **Books:**

Mouzelis, Nicos. 2008. *Modern and Postmodern Social Theorizing*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reed, Isaac A. 2011. *Interpretation and Social Knowledge: On the use of Theory in the Human Sciences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Archer, Margaret S. 2000. *Being Human: The Problem of Agency*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hacking, Ian. 1999. *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Nichols, Lawrence T., ed. 2007. *Public Sociology: The Contemporary Debate*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.

#### **Article:**

Loyal, Steven and Barry Barnes. "'Agency" as a Red Herring in Social Theory," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 2001, 31, 4, Dec, pp. 507-524.

### Course Plan:

- Sept. 4<sup>nd</sup>. Introduction: Major Issues in Contemporary Sociological Theory
- \*Sept. 9<sup>th</sup>. Mouzelis, *Modern and Postmodern Social Theorizing*
- \*Sept. 16<sup>th</sup>. Mouzelis, *Modern and Postmodern Social Theorizing II*
- \*Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup>. Reed. *Interpretation and Social Knowledge*
- Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>. Reed. *Interpretation and Social Knowledge II*
- \*Oct. 7<sup>th</sup>. Archer. *Being Human* and Loyal and Barnes, "Agency as Red Herring"
- Oct. 14<sup>th</sup>. Archer. *Being Human II*; **paper outline due**
- \*Oct. 21<sup>st</sup>. Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?*
- Oct. 28<sup>th</sup>. Hacking, *The Social Construction of What? II*
- \*Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>. Nichols, *Public Sociology*
- Nov. 11<sup>th</sup>. Nichols, *Public Sociology II*
- Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>. Term paper presentations
- Nov. 25<sup>th</sup>. Term paper presentations

### Requirements and Assessment:

On the days marked by an asterisk, students will hand in a brief (no more than 3 pp.), typewritten review of the reading assignment for that day. These reviews together account for 25% of your final grade. Second, you will be writing a term paper on a topic to be decided in consultation with me. No later than October 14<sup>th</sup> you will hand in a brief outline of the planned paper with a preliminary bibliography which will be treated as part of (i.e., graded with) the term paper. The topic need not be highly theoretical but you will be expected to address some aspect of the seminar's main themes and apply the methods of critical analysis (questioning logical consistency, underlying assumptions, and so on) used in the course on the literature that you will be reviewing. The last two sessions of the course will be devoted to your term paper presentations. The final version of your term paper will be due on the last day of the term. It will contribute 50% to your final grade.

The remaining 25% of your grade will be determined by your participation in the seminar. You will be expected to come prepared to start off the discussion with your own questions and insights at each meeting of the seminar and I will regularly call on each student to give his/her comments.

**In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.**

### **Remise des travaux en français**

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

Les étudiants de ce cours peuvent rédiger tous leurs travaux (incluant les examens) en français, mais doivent pour ce faire obtenir la **permission préalable** de la professeure. **Aucune permission rétroactive ne sera accordée.**

### **Plagiarism**

French version:

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) ).

English version:

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information).