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.

The seminar will be conducted online using Zoom. All students will receive an invitation to attend those meetings. The seminar session will be recorded and uploaded to the MyCourses site so that those who will not be able to attend the meetings synchronously will be able to watch the recording of it at another time. Please read the Notice on Recorded Class Meetings on the MyCourses site.

For students who are unable to attend the seminar sessions synchronously we will try to find alternative ways of participating in the course. These might include writing comments on the previous week’s seminar discussion and submitting questions to be discussed.

Readings:

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

Books:


Articles:


Course Plan:


*Sept. 15. Reed. Interpretation and Social Knowledge

*Sept. 22. Reed. Interpretation and Social Knowledge II

Sept. 29. No Class


*Nov. 3. Harding, Objectivity and Diversity

Nov. 10. Harding, Objectivity and Diversity II

*Nov. 17. Haack, Defending Science

Nov. 24. Haack, Defending Science II

Dec. 1. Term paper presentations
Requirements and Assessment:

For the days marked by an asterisk, students will hand in a brief (no more than 3 pp.) review of the reading assignment for that day. These reviews are due the previous day (i.e., Mondays) at 12 noon, by email. 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 20th 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 analytical issue or problem 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 session of the course will be devoted to your oral 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 bring your own questions and insights to each meeting of the seminar and I will regularly call on each student to give his/her comments. Depending on the size of the class once or twice during the semester you will be the discussion leader. This means that you will introduce the week’s reading and initiate the discussion. This should be a short introduction of 5 to 8 minutes at most in which you will comment on the reading and raise questions to be discussed rather than summarize the reading. Students who cannot attend the classes synchronously can submit a short video instead.

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).

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

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/students/srr/honest/).

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/students/srr/honest/ for more information).