SOC 711: SEMINAR IN SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE
Fall 2019

Course Description
The sociology of knowledge is primarily concerned with the dependence of knowledge upon socio-cultural positions. It examines the social and group origin of ideas, arguing that the entire “ideational realm” (“knowledges,” ideas, ideologies, mentalities) develops within the context of a society's groups and institutions. Its ideas address broad sociological questions about the extent and limits of social and group influence through an examination of the social and cultural foundations of cognition, perception, and knowledge production. Despite significant changes over time, classical and contemporary studies in the sociology of knowledge share a common theme: the social foundations of thought. Ideas, concepts, and belief systems share an intrinsic sociality explained by the various historical and cultural contexts in which they emerge.

The primary objective of this course is to introduce, discuss, and critically evaluate five distinct perspectives on the sociology of knowledge. Accordingly, this seminar is divided into five thematic sections: (1) social construction of reality/phenomenological perspectives; (2) poststructuralist perspectives; (3) feminist/intersectionality perspectives; and (4) global South/indigenous perspectives; (5) ideological & technological perspectives. We will cover such important social theorists as Berger & Luckman, Foucault, Lyotard, Smith, Hill Collins, Haraway, de Sousa Santos, Connell, Wodak, Zuboff, and others.

Critical of the antiquated disciplinary framework of the social sciences inherited from late 19th-century Europe, this seminar is designed to foster the kind of transdisciplinary approach that is required to make sense of the complexity of the sociology of knowledge and their concrete institutional manifestations. Indeed, this course has been designed to respond to help students apply theoretical insights developed in this seminar to their specific research interests across the social science disciplines as well as the established subfields within sociology.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)
The SLOs for this course are closely aligned with the Sociology Department’s posted MA Program and PhD Program student learning outcomes (SSLOs). These can be found here: http://www.sociology.hawaii.edu/documents/uhm-soc-ma-phd-slo.pdf
The five main student-learning outcomes of this course are:
• To understand the main dimensions, dynamics, and issues of sociology of knowledge and its historical evolution in modernity (MA SSLOs 1,2,5; PhD SSLOs 1,2,4;)
• To gain the ability of contrasting and comparing key concepts, themes, and debates in the literature on the sociology of knowledge (MA SSLOs 1,2; PhD SSLOs 1,2,6);
• To acquire the empirically informed knowledge and skill to analyze a broad spectrum of contemporary manifestations of knowledge systems and with a critical eye toward the workings of asymmetrical power relations in contemporary societies (MA SSLOs 1,2; PhD SSLOs 1,2)
• To appreciate the role of both ideational and material forces in complex knowledge dynamics in modern capitalist societies (MA SSLOs 1,2; PhD SSLOs 1,2)
• To produce empirically and theoretically informed written and oral work that reflects a contextual understanding of various dimensions and perspectives of knowledge production in contemporary globalizing societies (MA SSLOs 1,2,5; PhD SSLOs 1,2,4,7).

**Readings: Primary Sources (required)**
The following paperback books are available for purchase in the U.H. bookstore. Feel free to get cheaper e-book versions of these books (if available), but do not use different editions since we'll need to use the same textual references in class.

**Books:**


**Articles and Book Chapters:**


5) Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (University of Minnesota Press, 1979), Introduction, Chapters 1-5, and Appendix (pp. xxiii-17; 71-82): [https://monoskop.org/images/e/e0/Lyotard_JeanFrancois_The_Postmodern_Condition_A_Repor t_on_Knowledge.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/e/e0/Lyotard_JeanFrancois_The_Postmodern_Condition_A_Repor t_on_Knowledge.pdf) (on Laulima)

6) Dorothy Smith, “Women’s Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology,” *Sociological Inquiry* 44.1 (1974), pp. 7-13 (on Laulima)


**Course Structure and Requirements**

Let me encourage you to maintain an exploratory mind and create your own active learning environment—not solely interacting with me, but with each other as well. I EXPECT REGULAR STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION. Students must be willing to engage in class discussions. I will facilitate student discussions by creating a safe context that allows you to speak up freely. But I do not accept the equation of subjective experience or unreflective
“common sense” with “truth.” Be prepared to engage with the questions raised in this seminar, regardless of students’ own preferences. Most of all, I am interested in preparing students for independent research which requires a tolerant, reflective mind, best summarized by Immanuel Kant’s dictum, *Sapere aude*—“Have the courage to use your own understanding!”

The course readings and assignments have been carefully selected to generate broad in-class discussions and insightful oral presentations. During student presentation weeks, class meetings will follow this basic structure:

1) One student engages as discussion leader of one or two of the assigned readings (see course schedule). S/he is expected to select and analyze major arguments in the readings (30 min) and also raise critical questions for discussion and lead class discussion (20-30 min; 50-60 min total).

2) Instructor’s response to discussant and class discussion (10 min)

3) Short break (10 min)

4) Instructor’s lecture on assigned readings of the week plus class discussion (70-80 min)

Students are required to select a topic of their choice (in consultation with me) for a 20-page research paper (Font 12; not counting the cover page and bibliography at the end of the paper) that relates the materials of this seminar to a topic of the student’s interest. An abstract/outline of the paper (1 page) plus a preliminary research bibliography (10-15 entries), will be due Week 13 (November 21). At students’ request, I will provide feedback on ONE outline or draft of their term paper between November 28 and December 5 (face-to-face consultation in my office only—no email drafts).

In your research paper, you must raise a clear research question and then engage your selected texts and topics with as much sophistication as possible. You should indicate how your textual analysis relates to your chosen topic and how it reveals something of political significance about the larger theme/context from which it is taken. Thus, you should engage in a careful textual analysis of your themes and texts and cite appropriate, short textual passages (full footnotes or endnotes). *No book reports or summaries please!* You are expected to incorporate in your papers external research (books, journal articles, and reviews). I am happy to give you recommendations for additional secondary sources. If you wish such advice, please talk to me about it BEFORE you get to work on your paper. Your papers represent an exercise in political interpretation. Your research paper is due on Monday, Dec 16 at noon. PLEASE SUBMIT AN ELECTRONIC COPY OF YOUR RESEARCH PAPER TO MY EMAIL ADDRESS: manfred@hawaii.edu. No late papers will be accepted unless there is a legitimate and documented reason.

Finally, each student will be responsible for serving as discussion leaders of our weekly reading assignments. You will focus on concrete arguments in the reading and cite self-selected textual passages taken from the reading(s). You will prepare handouts that include summaries of the readings (in hardcopy or visual form such as PowerPoint presentations), critical comments and several discussion questions to help lead the seminar. Visual materials like Power Points, video clips, or other web-based materials are welcome.
Regular class attendance is required. Please inform the instructor in advance if you have to miss class for really important reasons!

A Note on Grading
You must complete all assigned written and oral work in order to pass the seminar. Any student found guilty of plagiarism will fail the seminar (see academic dishonest section below). Your in-class presentation will count for 15%, your participation/attendance for 10%, and your research paper for 75%. Thus, your seminar grade will reflect your presentation, participation, and the overall quality of your written work. Students who participate regularly during our class discussions will receive extra credit—meaning that if you find yourself between two grades at the end of the semester, you will receive the higher grade.

Please be advised that overparticipation and the monopolization of class discussion at the expense of your peers may hurt the quality of the course, especially if such actions tend to derail the thematic agenda. I reserve the right to cut off discussion at any point in order keep us on track and help all students to engage with the relevant materials. A significant element in academic study is the ability to learn to listen to other voices. For the purposes of this course, you should interpret the grades you receive in the following terms:

1) Discussant Presentations:
An “A” will only be given to presentations that are clearly superior in form as well as content. Typically, such presentations of self-selected textual passages are coherent, well organized, and adhere to the given time frame. “A” students show their critical and careful reading of the text(s) and generate genuine interest and excitement for their topic. They lead discussions effortlessly, distribute speaking time fairly, and stay focused on their theme.

2) Research Paper:
Much of the above pertains to term papers as well. In addition to treating the subject in a sophisticated and creative manner, “A” papers exhibit elegant and clear prose. Such papers draw connections between non-obvious points; they are well organized and furnish adequate citations of primary and secondary sources without losing their own unique and distinct voice. An “A” paper in a graduate seminar should add a new wrinkle to the existing body of texts/literature. If this grade is to mean something, just doing a “good job” will result in a “B.” To get an “A,” you must demonstrate your ability to go beyond the expected. No late papers will be accepted.

Office Hours
Monday, 9:30 – 11:00 am; and by appointment.
Students are encouraged to see us during office hours on a regular basis. Please clarify any difficult readings and/or other problems as soon as they arise. Don't wait until the last few weeks of the semester.

**Academic Conduct and Plagiarism**
Students are expected to abide by the university's policies regarding academic integrity. Actions that are academically dishonest include, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of information, interfering with the education of another student. Violation of these policies will not be tolerated and will result in serious consequences including receiving no credit for the assignment, a failing grade, or, in serious cases, it might lead to suspension or expulsion. The university policy on academic dishonesty can be found at the UH Mānoa Student Conduct Code Policies Section IV Proscribed Conduct. For detail information, please consult the following website:
http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct_code/proscribed_conduct.php

**Disability Accommodation**
If you have a disability for which you need an accommodation, please make an appointment with the UH Manoa KOKUA Program (Disability Access Services) at (808) 956-7511, or via email kokua@hawaii.edu. For more information please access its website:
http://www.hawaii.edu/kokua/

**Subject to Change Statement**
This syllabus and schedule are provisional and are subject to change. It is at the discretion of the instructor to do so for the purpose of furthering the educational objectives of the course. While the instructor will notify students of any changes through class announcements and email communications, it is students' responsibility to check on the course syllabus periodically for changes.
COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 (Aug 29): Introduction to the Course; What Is Sociology of Knowledge?

Readings for week 1: D. McCarthy, “Sociology of Knowledge,” (required reading #1)

WEEK 2 (Sept 5): Sociology of Knowledge: Original and New Approaches


PART I: PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

WEEK 3 (Sept 12): THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY


Student Presentation #1 (on Berger and Luckmann)

WEEK 4 (Sept 19) THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY


Student Presentation #2 (on Berger and Luckmann)

PART II: POSTSTRUCTURALIST PERSPECTIVES

WEEK 5 (Sept 26): FOUCAULT: TRUTH, METHOD, POWER, GENEALOGY, SEXUALITY

Readings for week 5: Michel Foucault, The Foucault Reader, pp. 31-120; 340-73.

Student Presentation #3 (on Foucault)

WEEK 6 (Oct 3): FOUCAULT: PRACTICES, KNOWLEDGE, DISCIPLINES, BIO-POWER

Readings for week 6: Michel Foucault, The Foucault Reader, pp. 121-290.

Student Presentation #4 (on Foucault)

WEEK 7 (Oct 10): FOUCAULT III AND LYOTARD: POSTMODERNISM AND KNOWLEDGE

Readings for week 7: 1) Michel Foucault, The Foucault Reader, pp. 373-end; 2) Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Condition of Postmodernity (required reading #5)

Video: Foucault vs. Chomsky
PART III: FEMINIST/INTERSECTIONALITY PERSPECTIVES

WEEK 8 (Oct 17): FEMINIST STANDPOINT THEORY & SITUATED KNOWLEDGES
Readings for week 8: 1) Smith, “Women’s Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology” (required reading #6); 2) Haraway, “The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective” (required reading #7).
Student Presentation #5 (on Haraway)

WEEK 9 (Oct 24): INTERSECTIONALITY AND THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE
Readings for week 9: Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, Intersectionality (all).
Student Presentation #6 (on Hill Collins & Bilge)

PART IV: GLOBAL SOUTH/INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PERSPECTIVES

WEEK 10 (Oct 31): POSTCOLONIAL EPISTEMOLOGIES OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH
Readings for week 10: 1) Raewyn Connell et. al, “Toward a global sociology of knowledge: post-colonial realities and intellectual practices,” (required reading #8); 2) Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide (all)
Student Presentation #7 (on De Sousa Santos)

WEEK 11 (Nov 7): NO CLASS: INSTRUCTOR AT CONFERENCE

WEEK 12 (Nov 14): ECOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGIES OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH
Readings for week 12: Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide (Chapters 4-8; Conclusion)
Student Presentation #8 (on De Sousa Santos)

WEEK 13 (Nov 21): INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES
Student Presentation #9 (on Goodyear-Ka’opua)
1-page abstract and bibliography for research paper due.

WEEK 14 (Nov 28): NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING
PART V: IDEOLOGICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

WEEK 15 (Dec 5): IDEOLOGY, SURVEILLANCE, INFORMATION, DIGITALIZATION


Student Presentation #10 (on Zuboff)
1-page abstract and bibliography for research paper due.

WEEK 16 (Dec 12): SEMINAR SUMMARY & DISCUSSION

PLEASE SUBMIT AN ELECTRONIC COPY OF YOUR RESEARCH PAPER TO MY EMAIL ADDRESS: manfred@hawaii.edu. No late papers will be accepted without a legitimate reason.