# SOC\*6800 Advanced Topics in Sociological Theory

## Department of Sociology & Anthropology

## University of Guelph

## Instructor Information

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## Course Description

According to gender theorist Raewyn Connell, “theories don’t grow on trees.” This course takes this statement as a premise to both engage in the critical reading of social theory and in the exercise of theorizing. As such, the course will push you to take into consideration questions concerning knowledge production and its application to different contexts and research questions. To this end, I have selected readings that can be read through ongoing debates on Southern theory, postcolonial sociology, as well as feminist and critical race critiques. The course will also have as one of its main aims developing your skills to build theory by bringing together different theoretical approaches and expanding said approaches as you interrogate their ontological and epistemological assumptions, as well as your own. The focus of the course is primarily on contemporary social theory, although the selected works also address a variety of different empirical, normative, methodological concerns, not just theory. Most of the authors we will be discussing are sociologists though some are not; regardless, I have included them because the theoretical aspects of their work have had an innovative or profound impact on how we think about sociological issues.

## Learning Objectives & Outcomes

This course is about reading theory, which is not an easy task. Theory texts can sometimes be difficult and confusing. Therefore, one of the main objectives of this course is to guide you through critically reading theory for you to develop your own theoretical “toolkit” that you can engage in your own work. Second, this course is about participating in doing sociological theorizing. The best way to learn to make theory useful is by learning to link abstract theoretical arguments to questions and issues in which you are interested and care about. This process involves reflecting on your own practice of making sense of the world through the theoretical contributions of others, learning to put various approaches in dialogue with each other, as well as learning strategies for questioning and challenging texts and each other’s preconceptions and ideological commitments. Last but not least, it is my hope that at the end of this course you will both get a sense of what kinds of theoretical issues and theories sociologists are using today and start getting prepared for the Core Sociological Theory component of your QE.

## Readings

I will provide you with the titles of readings that are required for the course. However, it will be your responsibility to look for them, unless otherwise noted with CL, which means that they’re available on Courselink. This exercise is not to make you do “extra work” but rather to encourage you to go into journals that publish theory and browse through their issues. This is important to understand how theory is published, but also to get familiarized with the questions that are driving the sociological theorizing in sociology as a field. In addition, there may be books on reserve.

## Evaluation Components

This course has different evaluation components, including ongoing participation in class discussions, presentations, and written assignments.