

Sociological Evidence for Everyday Life (SOCB28)

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This course designed to impart life lessons from the findings of *empirical social science*.¹ It is not a collection of anecdotes, obscure references, bedtime or ghost stories, personal opinions or preferences, or pandering musings about how you – or I, for that matter – have been right all along. The course is designed to give you insights into empirically guided ideas for living – on happiness; where good ideas come from; how to get a job – as well as how to avoid claptrap that presents itself as giving you empirically guided ideas for living, but is just nonsense. In that spirit, we’re both going to dig into research that provides some empirically guided ideas for living, and we’re also going to *question even that research* and the potential for assumptions and blind spots which may be baked into it. The goal is to develop a knowledge base of sociological evidence that relates to real life, but without losing site of the humility that must come with that knowledge base.



Required Texts: All required readings are available on our course Quercus page (you’re welcome!)

Course Goals:

- *Students will be able to convey comprehension of the findings of empirical sociological studies.
- *Students will be able to diagnose the methodologies of empirical works, as well as identify and discuss their strengths and limitations.
- * Students will be able to distinguish between theories, findings, and explanations for those findings.

Student Expectations:

- Students **will** attend all scheduled meetings on time and prepared.
- Students **will not** falsify illness or injury to themselves, family, or friends if attendance is missed.
- Students **will** complete the readings assigned before class and to a level in which they would feel comfortable being a central discussant in an informed group discussion of them.
- Students **will not** skip the reading, skim the reading, or give up on the reading if they find it initially confusing or hard.
- Students **will** respect each other, and our collaborative learning environment in the course.
- Students **will not** plagiarize.

¹ “Empirical” in this sense is not a codeword for “quantitative.” Rather, it is being used in accordance with its true definition, meaning a focus on *data driven findings* rather than theory-, logic-, or normatively-driven arguments (which can, of course, also be valid and useful, but are not the focus of this course).

Assignments and Grade Breakdown:

Reading Quizzes – 10%: Every week at exactly 11 minutes after the hour there will be a reading quiz administered through <https://kahoot.it/>. Students will enter their **last name followed by the first two letters of their first name** as it appears on their student ID (failure to correctly enter your information will result in a zero score). The lowest score from the semester will be dropped.

Tutorial Engagement – 10%: Showing up to tutorial is the minimum expectation. Please see the “In-Class Expectations” section below for what engagement in your tutorial section means.

Article Analyses – 15%: Twice during the semester students will write a 500-750 word analysis of the findings and methods of an assigned article. Instructions for this can be found on the course Quercus page.

Midterm Exam – 30%: Toward the middle of the semester students will take a mixed-modality (multiple choice, short answer, fill-in-the-blank) midterm exam.

Final Exam – 30%: At the end of the semester students will take a mixed-modality (multiple choice, short answer, fill-in-the-blank) final exam. About 85% of the material will come from the second half of the course.

University of Toronto: What Grades Mean

All grading in this course abides by the University of Toronto’s grading policy. Fractional final grades will be rounded up from the tenths column (\geq). Save for this standardized adjustment grades will under no circumstances be changed for being “close.” The standard grade cut-points can be found at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/general/grading-policy>.

In-Class Expectations

Mere “participation” – how much you do or don’t talk, sit up or fall asleep – isn’t really what most of us want from our students. Instead, most of us hope to see students accept our invitation to “the life of mind” by adopting a “scholarly attitude.” Having a “scholarly attitude” involves developing intellectual curiosity and a genuine engagement with the ideas presented in the course. Students with a scholarly attitude take the student role seriously and demonstrate their commitment to academic pursuits by actively engaging in the material, reflecting deeply on the readings, raising thoughtful questions and comments in class, bringing unsolicited materials to share that are directly relevant to the topics being covered, come early and/or stay late to raise their own questions about the material, and generally go above and beyond the requirements of the course. Students who lack a scholarly attitude passively complete the readings and responses, occasionally engage in other activities during lecture (playing with phones, texting, daydreaming, and so on), and are primarily concerned with obtaining a particular grade in the course. Having a “scholarly attitude” is rewarded in many small and large ways.

Cellphones and Laptops in Class

After the reading quiz cellphones should be turned off or to vibrate. When facing the board laptops are allowed to the furthest left side of the room. If there are no more seats available all the way to the left please sit one-row over. If you are using a laptop and there are still seats to your right I will ask you to move over.

The reason for this policy is because a wealth of research suggests that both directed and non-directed laptop use in post-secondary education significantly weakens student performance. The effect is large enough to drop the user’s grade from a B+ to a B-. For directed use, the speed of typing on a laptop prevents students from processing and adjudicating main points in the note-taking process, thereby weakening their knowledge acquisition and retention. Hand-writing your notes is better for your grasp and retention of material.

Assorted Policies having to do with Email

Email is a good tool for information or a question that requires two or less sentences to communicate, and two or less sentences to answer. For anything longer than this please speak to me during the break, before or after class, or during

office hours. Email the TA with any questions about the course. Questions that are not emailed to the TA will either be forwarded to the TA or deleted. Questions that are answered in the syllabus will be responded to with the word “syllabus.” Your emails will be responded to within 48 hours, not including weekends. If your question has not been responded to in 48 hours, please forward it to me after that period. Do not expect a response outside of normal business hours (e.g. a question emailed on Friday night will be responded to by the end of the working day on Tuesday).

Late Work Policy

Late work without a medical exemption form from the registrar that has been filled out by your medical professional will, in all cases, be docked ½ grade (e.g. “A” to “A-” for each 24 hour period it is late, and starting at the time it is due.

Turnitin

Students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Writing Standards

Writing is an important skill that can be used to communicate effectively. As is the case with any skill, one gets better with practice. The UTSC Writing Centre is an excellent resource available to every UTSC student. I suggest that students make use of this valuable resource. Please take a look at the link: http://www.utoronto.ca/courses/calendar07/Writing_at_U_of_T_Scarborough.html#

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student’s individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources (see http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesfor_students.html).

AccessAbility Services

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please approach AccessAbility Services as soon as possible and keep me in the know about how this develops. AccessAbility Services staff (located in Rm SW302, Science Wing) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations at 416-287-7560 416 or email ability@utsc.utoronto.ca. The sooner you let them know your needs, the quicker you can obtain help in achieving your learning goals in this course. The AccessAbility website is <http://www.utoronto.ca/~ability/>.

On Grading Curves: Although typically not done, the professor reserves the right to curve final grades upwards or downwards based on historic curves and averages.

Feedback on our Course

I value and seek your feedback on our course. To that end, I will distribute a mid-term evaluation near the halfway point of the course to hear from you anonymously. This assists me in making any necessary adjustments in my teaching practice for the rest of our time together.

Possible Changes to the Syllabus

Every class is a bit different. As a result unforeseen problems may emerge and we may have to make adjustments to the syllabus as we go. Over the term the syllabus may change. Make sure you are staying up to date on our course site.

Statement of Acknowledgement of Traditional Land

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Course Schedule

Articles for your article analyses have a double asterisk () in front of them** (if you write an article analyses for an article that does not a double asterisk in front of it the score will be zero)

Date	Assignments	Tutorial
Sep 3 Welcome to the Course	N/A	No
Sep 10 How to think Structurally	-Mills, C. Wright. 1959. "The Promise", excerpted from <i>The Sociological Imagination</i> . Oxford University Press. -Cottom, Tressie McMillan. 2019. "I Was Pregnant and in Crisis. All the Doctors and Nurses Saw Was an Incompetent Black Woman." <i>Time Magazine</i> (excerpted from <i>Thick: And Other Essays</i> , The New Press)	Yes
Sep 17 How to Get a Job	**Granovetter, M.S., 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> , 78(6): 1360-1380. - Erickson, B., 2003. "Social Networks: The Value of Variety." <i>Contexts</i> , 2(1), pp.25-31.	Yes
Sep 24 How to Have Good Ideas	**Burt, R.S., 2004. "Structural Holes and Good Ideas." <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> : 110(2): 349-399. **Pager, D., 2016. "Are Firms that Discriminate More Likely to go out of Business?" <i>Sociological Science</i> , 3: 849-859.	Yes
Oct 1 How to Look to What People Do More Than What They Say.	**Quillian, L., Heath, A., Pager, D., Midtbøen, A.H., Fleischmann, F. and Hexel, O., 2019. "Do Some Countries Discriminate More than Others? Evidence from 97 Field Experiments of Racial Discrimination in Hiring." <i>Sociological Science</i> , 6: 467-496. **Kang, S.K., DeCelles, K.A., Tilcsik, A. and Jun, S., 2016. "Whitened Resumes: Race and Self-Presentation in the Labor Market." <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i> , 61(3): pp.469-502.	Yes

Oct 8 Midterm Exam	In-Class Midterm	No
Oct 22 How to Identify Biased Expectations	**Thébaud, S., Kornrich, S. and Ruppner, L., 2019. "Good Housekeeping, Great Expectations: Gender and Housework Norms." <i>Sociological Methods & Research</i> , DOI: 10.1177/0049124119852395 **Pedulla, D.S., 2014. "The Positive Consequences of Negative Stereotypes: Race, Sexual orientation, and the Job Application Process." <i>Social Psychology Quarterly</i> , 77(1): 75-94.	Yes
Oct 29 How to be happy	**Phillips, D.L., 1967. "Social Participation and Happiness." <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> , 72(5): 479-488. **Robinson, J.P. and Martin, S., 2008. "What do Happy People Do?" <i>Social Indicators Research</i> 89(3): 565-571.	Yes
Nov 5 How to love yourself, but not too much	**Rivera, L.A., 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The case of Elite Professional Service Firms." <i>American Sociological Review</i> , 77(6): 999-1022. - "Me, Myself, and Ikea" <i>Hidden Brain</i> podcast, May 22, 2017. (audio file in the folder and streamable here: https://bit.ly/2KFiOEI)	Yes
Nov 12 How to make friends	**Ingram, P. and Morris, M.W., 2007. "Do People Mix at Mixers? Structure, Homophily, and the "Life of the Party". <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i> , 52(4): 558-585. - McCabe, J., 2016. "Friends with Academic Benefits." <i>Contexts</i> 15(3): 22-29.	Yes
Nov 19 How to create social change	**McAdam, D., 1986. "Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer." <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> , 92(1): 64-90. - "Radically Normal: How Gay Rights Activists Change the Minds of their Opponents" <i>Hidden Brain</i> podcast, April 8, 2019 (audio file in the folder and streamable here: https://n.pr/2G679Kh)	Yes
Nov 26	Wrapping Up	Yes