

# McGill University

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

Time: Friday, 3:35pm-5:25pm

Fall Term 2023

Room: Leacock 808

**Prof. Axel van den Berg**

Office Hours: by appointment

Leacock 816, tel. 398-6846

e-mail: [axel.vandenberg@mcgill.ca](mailto: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 t1 0 0 131 72. the term begins or during the first

Routledge.

**Articles:**

Abend, Gabriel, 2008. "The Meaning of 'Theory'", *Sociological Theory*, 26 (2):173-199.

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. 1<sup>st</sup> Introduction: Major Issues in Contemporary Sociological Theory; reading: Abend, "The Meaning of 'Theory'"
- \*Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> Archer. *Being Human*, Introduction and Part I (pp. 1-117)

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 sessions 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 a discussion leader. This means that you will initiate the discussion of the week's readings. 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.

**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