

York University
Department of Sociology
Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies

SOCI 4670 3.0 A (S1)

Social Self

Summer 2023

Course Director: Marcello Musto

Class Time: Monday and Wednesday 7:00 PM – 10:00 PM

Class Location: Monday: Ross Building S104, Wednesday: Ross Building S101A

Office Hours: By appointment

Email: marcello.musto@gmail.com

Course Syllabus

The course will centre on the analysis of some of the most important modern and contemporary perceptions of the social Self in Western societies, starting from 1492 and the discovery of the “other”. The selection of readings focuses on the examination of the characteristics and distinguishing features of the varied conceptions of social self-articulated by some classical works of liberalism, classical Marxism, the “new Left”, and mainstream North American sociology, among others.

Special attention will be dedicated to the 20th century. With the “revolutions” of psychoanalysis and of the liberation movements of 1968 – and after the huge impacts produced by mass media and technological inventions, which followed World War II – the idea of social self-changed dramatically. The second part of the course will critically analyse the differences produced in human sciences with respect to the perception of the “self”.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Class Participation	30%
Final Paper Proposal	15%
Presentation	20%
Final Paper	35%

Class Participation

This course is taught in bi-weekly seminars lasting 3 hours. Classes will be held in-person and online, both synchronous and asynchronous.

Attendance and informed participation at all class meetings (in person and online) is not only strongly recommended but required. Students are expected to attend class regularly, *complete the assignment readings on time*, and participate actively in class discussion. Participation will be marked for attendance and quality of participation.

Please note that food and the use of cell phone in classroom will not be allowed.

Final Paper Proposal

Students are free to propose their own final paper topic, but it must be related to one (or more) author(s), as well as key issues, included in the course. The final paper proposal should be 2 pages (about 1,000 words), plus bibliography. It should include the following information:

- indication of the tentative title of the paper and of the titles of the sections in which the text will be divided
- preliminary outline of the text
- 5 keywords concerning the themes and the concepts to be addressed
- a bibliography of at least 5 sources consulted or to be consulted

Final paper proposals will be due, in hard copy and by email, on June 12. The class that will take place that day will be dedicated to the presentation of your proposals (not less than 10 minutes for each student) and to a general discussion about that with your colleagues.

Please note that you cannot write the final paper on the same author(s) that you have chosen for your presentation.

Presentation

Each class will begin with a student presentation (not exceeding 30 minutes and not less than 20 minutes) on the assigned readings. Presenters should provide by email – the day before class – a 2-page summary of their presentation to the course director.

A good presentation is very important to stimulate discussion. Therefore, please avoid just reading from a paper, try to present interesting ideas, and raise questions for the engagement of others. Presentations should:

- give all the pertinent biographical information about the author(s) and the historical context in which the assigned texts were written
- reconstruct the argument of the author(s), and provide an overview of the assigned readings
- identify the key questions for discussion, and the controversies implied by the material
- critically analyze the texts (for example: what are the limitations of the position expressed in the readings?)

- Identify anything you found unclear or hard to understand
- conclude with three discussion questions for the group to consider.

Final Paper

Students are free to propose their own final paper topic in this course, but it has to be related to the authors and/or the writings contained within the course syllabus. The Final Paper should:

- from 3,500 (minimum) to 4,500 (maximum) words, including footnotes and bibliography
- be clearly structured (divided into at least 3/4 sections), and written with rigorous evidence (particularly with references to published works and not online websites)
- be argued with documentation from critical sources (1-2 books and/or articles per page is a good rule of thumb). These sources may include some of the assigned readings but must also include other ones discovered through original research.

Final papers will be due July 4, at 11:59 pm, by email. Late assignment will be penalized (10% each day). Warning: the paper must be entirely your own work. Be sure to meet all requirements of academic integrity (i.e., no plagiarism). See Senate Policy on Academic Honesty below).

Access to Readings

All of the required readings are available on-line (<https://marcellomusto.org/the-social-self/>) and many of the books selected for this course are also available in hard copy at Scott library.

Schedule of Classes and Readings

Day 1 – May 8, Mon: Introduction and Overview
In-person

Day 2 – May 10, Wed: The Self after 1492
In-person

(Pages: 1-26)

Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* [1982] (From chap. I: “The Discovery of America”, “Columbus and the Indians”; From chap. IV: “Typology of Relation to the Other”).

Day 3 – May 15, Mon: Veblen and the Self-Representation of the Leisure Class
Asynchronous Online

(Pages: 50-85)

Thorstein Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class* [1899] (excerpts).

Day 4 – May 17, Wed: Liberalism and the Perception of the Single Individual
In-person

(Pages: 27-49)

Stephen Hymer, *Robinson Crusoe and the Secret of Primitive Accumulation* [2011]
<https://monthlyreview.org/2011/09/01/robinson-crusoe-and-the-secret-of-primitive-accumulation/>

Day 5 – May 24, Wed: The Social Self After Psychoanalysis
In-person

(Pages: 86-120)

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* [1930]
<https://www.stephenhicks.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/FreudS-CIVILIZATION-AND-ITS-DISCONTENTS-text-final.pdf>

Day 6 – June 5, Mon: Theory of Alienation I: An Introduction
Synchronous Online

(Pages: 121-163)

Musto, Marcello (2021) "Introduction", in *Karl Marx's Writings on Alienation*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
https://ocul-yor.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_YOR/1jocqcq/alma991036388447905164

Day 7 – June 7, Wed: Theory of Alienation II: Marx vs. North American Sociology
Synchronous Online

(Pages: 164-203)

Marx, Karl (2021) "Capital and Its Preparatory Manuscripts", in *Karl Marx's Writings on Alienation*, Pages: 123-155, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
https://ocul-yor.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_YOR/1jocqcq/alma991036388447905164

Nettler, Gwynn (1957) "A Measure of Alienation", *American Sociological Review*, vol. 22, n. 6, Pages: 670-677.
https://ocul-yor.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_YOR/j50f41/cdi_proquest_miscellaneous_60538404

Seeman, Melvin (1959) "On the Meaning of Alienation", *American Sociological Review*, vol. 24, n. 6, Pages: 783-791.

https://ocul-yor.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_YOR/j50f41/cdi_proquest_miscellaneous_60609166

Day 8 – June 12, Mon: Final Paper Abstract: Presentations and Discussion
In-person

Day 9 – June 14, Wed: The Social Self at the Time of the 1968 Protests
Synchronous Online

(Pages: 204-218)

Herbet Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* [1955] (chapters TBA)

<http://freudians.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Marcuse-Eros-and-Civilization-Part-I-Under-the-Rule-of-the-Reality-Principle1.pdf>

Day 10 – June 19, Mon: The Self and the Mass Media
In-person

(Pages: 219-232)

Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* [1967] (chapters 1-53).

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/debord/society.htm>

Day 11 – June 21, Wed: Social Self as a Consumer
In-person

(Pages: 233-274)

Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society* [1974] (Part II: chapter I).

Day 12 – June 26, Mon: Feminist Perspectives
Asynchronous Online

(Pages: 275-327)

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* [1949] (extracts).