

Department of Sociology  
University of Calgary

SOCI 601.86

## The Social Organization of Knowledge

Winter 2013

Instructor: Dr. Liza McCoy

Office: SS 934

Email: mccoym@ucalgary.ca

Phone: 403-220-6856

Office hours: Wednesdays 1-3 pm; and by appointment

### Course Description

Socially organized practices of knowledge play a central role in coordinating human activities in all social domains. In this course, the focus is on authoritative, professional, scientific and administrative practices of knowledge, especially those forms that are mediated by visual, numerical and written modes of representation. We will be reading some theoretical work and a lot of empirical studies (historical and contemporary) that investigate forms and practices of knowledge in different times, settings and discourses. These will be drawn from a range of analytic projects, such as institutional ethnography, Foucauldian studies of governmentality, ethnomethodology, and science and technology studies. As we consider this material, we will – individually and collaboratively – examine text-based knowledge practices that we ourselves participate in. The course will therefore also have a methodological dimension.

- § What do specific knowledge practices involve? (What are people actually doing? How is this organized?)
- § What are the interpretive frameworks and classificatory schemes, the modes of vision, methods of calculation, devices, textual procedures, etc. through which specific forms of knowability are produced?
- § How do specific knowledge practices take shape within extended relations of discourse, coordination and control?
- § How do these knowledge practices coordinate particular work processes or domains of action?
- § What are the experiences of the people involved – as creators, users, and objects of knowledge?
- § How are these ways of knowing worked out, disputed, subverted and changed? Or, how are they framed and operated in ways that make challenge difficult?

### Required Readings

A collection of book chapters and journal articles. See list of readings below.

## Assignments and Assessment

1. “Thinkwriting” Journal. Most weeks (10/13) you will do one piece of “thinkwriting” in which you consider material from the readings and class discussions in relation to your own experience as a person who participates in socially organized practices of knowledge. In some cases, explicit assignments will be given. Entry length should be approximately 2-4 pages. The journal will be graded in two parts: 5 entries turned in on February 26, and another 5 entries turned in on April 2. (Part I – 15%; Part II – 15%)

2. Presentations on assigned readings. Each student will make an in-class presentation on four of the assigned readings (on separate days, preferably two in each half of the semester). The presentation should briefly summarize the topic, method and argument of the piece, relate it to other readings and course topics, and offer your critical evaluation of it. This presentation should be delivered in an informal, conversational style, bearing in mind that everyone has already read the piece; the objective of your presentation should be to focus and inspire discussion. After your presentation you will give me your outline, notes, or written summary. (5% each; 20% of your final grade)

3. Empirical research project. You will investigate a particular text-mediated (verbal, visual, numerical) practice of knowledge, ethnographically exploring the work processes and/or interpretive schemata through which specific texts are produced or activated. Your research may involve document analysis, an interview, and/or reflection on your own experience. You will have an opportunity to workshop your developing research and analysis at the last class, April 9. Your final papers (20-25 pp.) are due on April 16. This project, and the methodological know-how you need to carry it out, will be discussed in class. (50%)

Thinkwriting entries	30 %
Presentations on readings	20 %
Empirical research paper	50 %

## Grading

Your final letter grade will be determined according to the following schedule:

Percentage Grade	Letter Grade
95-100	A+
90-94	A
85-89	A-
80-84	B+
75-79	B
70-74	B-
less than 70	F

## **Official University and Departmental Policies**

***Emergency Evacuations:*** In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom/lab, please proceed to the assembly point by the food court located on the lower level of the Professional Faculties Building.

***Ethics in Research:*** Students are advised that any research with human subjects--including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation--must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

***Academic Misconduct:*** Plagiarism, cheating and other academic misconduct are regarded as serious academic offences. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct.

***The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP)*** legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside an instructor's office or the Department main office. Term assignments must be returned to students individually, during class, or during the instructor's office hours; if a student is unable to pick up her/his assignment s/he may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

***Safewalk:*** The University of Calgary provides a "safe walk" service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.

***Academic Accommodation:*** Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, telephone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. **It is a student's responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.**

## **Provisional Schedule of Topics and Readings (subject to revision)**

### ***January 8 Introduction to course***

No readings.

### ***January 15 Theoretical and methodological framing***

Miller, Peter, and Nikolas Rose. 2008. Governing economic life. Ch. 1 in *Governing the Present: Administering economic, social and personal life*, pp. 26-52. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Reckwitz, Andreas. 2002. Toward a theory of social practices: A development in culturalist theorizing. *European Journal of Social Theory* 5(2): 243-263.

Smith, Dorothy E. 1990. Textually-mediated social organization. Ch. 7 in *Texts, Facts, and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling*, pp. 209-224. London and New York: Routledge.

Swidler, Ann and Jorge Ardití. 1994. The new sociology of knowledge. *Annual Review of Sociology* 20: 305-329.

### ***January 22 History, part 1***

Ong, Walter. Orality and literacy: Writing restructures consciousness. Ch. 8 in *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, pp. 105-117. London and New York: Routledge.

Porter, Theodore M. 1995. How social numbers are made valid. Ch. 2 in *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life*, pp. 33-48. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Noirel, Gérard. 2001. The identification of the citizen: The birth of republican civil status in France. Ch. 2 in *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World*, ed. Jane Caplan and John Torpey, pp. 28-48. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Torpey, John. 1998. Coming and going: On the state monopolization of the legitimate “means of movement.” *Sociological Theory* 16, 3: 239-259.

### ***January 29 History, part 2***

Daston, Lorraine and Peter Galison. 2010. Epistemologies of the eye. Ch. 1 in *Objectivity*, pp. 17-54. New York: Zone Books.

Leuenberger, Christine and Izhak Shnell. 2010. The politics of maps: Constructing national territories in Israel. *Social Studies of Science* 40(6): 803-842.

Payne, Carol. 2006. Lessons with Leah: Re-reading the photographic archive of nation in the National Film Board of Canada's Still Photography Division. *Visual Studies* 21, 1: 4-22.

Pegler-Gordon, Anna. 2009. First impressions: Chinese exclusion and the introduction of immigrant documentation, 1875-1909. Ch. 1 in *In Sight of America: Photography and the Development of U.S. Immigration Policy*, pp. 22-66. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

### ***February 5 Classification and categories***

Bowker, Geoffrey C. and Susan Leigh Star. 1999. The kindness of strangers: Kinds and politics in classification systems. Ch. 2 *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*, pp. 53-106. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Godderis, Rebecca. 2011. Iterative generation of diagnostic categories through production and practice: The case of postpartum depression. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 35(4): 484-500.

Mäkitalo, Åsa and Roger Säljö. 2002. Invisible people: Institutional reasoning and reflexivity in the production of services and "social facts" in public employment agencies. *Mind, Culture and Activity* 9(3): 160-178.

Roth, Wolff-Michael. 2005. Making classifications (at) work: Ordering practices in science. *Social Studies of Science* 35(4): 581-621.

### ***February 12 Contemporary practices of counting and economy***

Espeland, Wendy Nelson. 2002. Commensuration and cognition. Ch. 4 in *Culture in Mind: Toward a Sociology of Culture and Cognition*, ed. Karen A. Cerulo, pp. 63-88. New York and London: Routledge.

Knorr-Cetina, Karen and Alex Preda. 2001. The epistemization of economic transactions. *Current Sociology* 49 (4): 27-44.

Martin, Aryn and Michael Lynch. 2009. Counting things and people: The practices and politics of counting. *Social Problems* 56, 2: 243-266.

TBA

### ***February 26 Contemporary visual practices in institutional work processes***

Daipha, Phaedra. Visual perception at work: Lessons from the world of meteorology. *Poetics* 38: 150-164.

Goodwin, Charles. 1994. Professional vision. *American Anthropologist* 96, 3: 606-633.

Walby, Kevin. 2006. Locating televisual and non-televisual textual sequences with institutional ethnography: A study of campus and apartment CCTV security work. *Culture and Organization* 12, 2: 153-168.

TBA

**March 5      *Reading, writing and learning in professional contexts***

Berkenkotter, Carol, Thomas N. Huckin and John Ackerman. 1991. Social context and socially constructed texts: The initiation of a graduate student into a writing research community. Ch. 8 in *Textual Dynamics of the Professions: Historical and Contemporary Studies of Writing in Professional Communities*, ed. Charles Bazerman and James Paradis, pp. 191-215. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Lymer, Gustav, Oskar Lindwall, and Jonas Ivarsson. 2011. Space and discourse interleaved: Intertextuality and interpretation in the education of architects. *Social Semiotics* 21 (2): 197-217.

Mykhalovskiy, Eric. 2003. Evidence-based medicine: Ambivalent reading and clinical recontextualization of science. *Health* 7(3): 331-352.

Stark, Laura. 2011. Meetings by the minute(s): How documents create decisions for Institutional Review Boards. Ch. 7 in *Social Knowledge in the Making*, ed. Charles Camic, Neil Gross, and Michèle Lamont, pp. 233-256. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

**March 12      *Institutional ethnography***

DeVault, Marjorie L. and Liza McCoy. 2012. Investigating ruling relations: Dynamics of interviewing in institutional ethnography. Ch. 26 in *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. J. F. Gubrium, J.A. Holstein, A. B. Marvasti, and K. D. McKinney, pp. 381-396.

Smith, Dorothy E. 2006. Incorporating texts into ethnographic practice. Ch. 4 in *Institutional Ethnography as Practice*, ed. D. E. Smith, pp. 65-88. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

TBA

**March 19      *Institutional processes from the standpoint of the ruled/excluded***

Brown, Debra J. 2006. Working the system: Re-thinking the institutionally organized role of mothers and the reduction of “risk” in child protection work. *Social Problems* 53, 3: 352-370.

Mykhalovskiy, Eric. 2008. Beyond decision making: Class, community organizations, and the healthwork of people living with HIV/AIDS. Contributions from institutional ethnographic research. *Medical Anthropology* 27, 2: 136-163.

Turner, Susan M. 2001. Texts and the institutions of municipal government: The power of texts in the public process of land development. *Studies in Cultures, Organizations and Societies* 7, 2: 297-325.

Smith, Dorothy E. 2005. Power, language, institutions. Ch. 9 in *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People*, pp. 183-201. Lanham, MD: AltaMira.

**March 26**      ***Modes of reasoning in professional contexts***

Atkinson, J. Maxwell. 1971. Societal reactions to suicide: The role of coroners' definitions. In *Images of Deviance*, ed. Stanley Cohen, pp. 165-191. New York: Penguin.

De Montigny, Gerald A. J. 1995. The power of being professional. In *Knowledge, Experience, and Ruling Relations: Studies in the Social Organization of Knowledge*, ed. M. Campbell and A. Manicom, pp. 209-220. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Holstein, James A. 1984. The placement of insanity: Assessments of grave disability and involuntary commitment decisions. *Urban Life* 13(1): 35-62.

Montgomery, Kathryn. 2006. Aphorisms, maxims, and old saws: Some rules of clinical reasoning. Ch. 7 in *How Doctors Think: Clinical Judgment and the Practice of Medicine*, pp. 103-120. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

**April 2**              ***Open session – topic to be determined***

TBA

**April 9**              ***Workshop: research presentations***

No readings