

# SOCI 431

## Issues in Social Theorizing: Expanding the Social

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**Instructor: Dr. Steve Garlick**

### **Course Description<sup>1</sup>:**

This seminar course will introduce students to a series of recent moves in social theory that attempt to expand our field of concern beyond the human and its attributes of rationality, language, and culture. Taking up these theories, we will consider a range of questions such as: Do nonhuman actors have a place in sociology? What role do affect and emotion have in social life? How should we understand the agency of nature within the social? To what extent are bodies socially constructed? And how can sociology better respond to the complexity of the ecosystems in which human life is embedded?

Broadly speaking, the course will be concerned with the emergence of new materialist theories over the past twenty years, although we will also consider possible points of convergence with Indigenous modes of theorizing. We will discuss some of the most influential contemporary theoretical work that falls under the rubrics of biopolitics, complexity theory, posthumanism, and affect theory.

### **Course Objectives:**

Our objectives this term are: (1) to gain a solid understanding of several major currents of twenty-first-century social theory that are pushing sociology in new directions; (2) to become familiar with important concepts (e.g., biopolitics, complexity, posthumanism, affect) and related debates; and (3) to gain experience in *theorizing* (i.e., creating and using theoretical concepts to produce new insights into contemporary social phenomena). All of the coursework that students will undertake is designed to develop their abilities to theorize for themselves.

### **Course Pre-requisites:**

SOCI 210 – Classical Social Theorizing is *required* before taking this course, as well as a minimum of third-year standing and a declared Major in Sociology; *or* permission of the instructor.  
SOCI 309 – Contemporary Social Theorizing is *recommended* prior to taking this course.

### **Required Resources:**

All required readings will be made available via CourseSpaces.

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<sup>1</sup> This outline is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. A detailed course outline will be made available in August before the first day of class. Only that outline is to be considered official.