



## **SOCIOLOGY 383**

### **Ethnomethodology**

**Winter 2020**

**Class Time: Tuesday 2.30 – 5.00 pm, Classroom: SJ1 3020**

#### **Instructor and T.A. Information**

Instructor: Dr. Kieran Bonner

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#### **Calendar Description**

*Ethnomethodology is a study of the methods and practices people use to produce and recognize social actions. Topics may include greetings, the sex/gender distinction, science and common sense, breaching experiments, and jury deliberation.*

#### **Course Description**

Ethnomethodology is the study of the methods and practices people use to produce and recognize "intelligible" social actions and descriptions. This requires thinking outside the box of common sense and the dictates, prejudices, methods and practices of social science analysis as conventionally conceived. The course focuses on the organization of practical actions and practical reasoning as contingent ongoing accomplishments of everyday life. It will take up the issue of the difference in formal analytic sociology between the practitioner (member) and the analyst (sociologist) and show ethnomethodology's discovery of the practitioner as analyst. It will then address one offspring of ethnomethodology, Blum and McHugh's Reflexive Analysis, which develops the analyst/practitioner figure. Students will engage in the practice of attempting to describe ordinary social activity as if it were happening for the very first time.

We will begin the course by introducing students to an overall theme of the two different epistemological approaches to knowledge creation: Knowledge by Discovery and Knowledge by Interpretation. We will then proceed to elaborate on phenomenological, ethnomethodological, and reflexive analytic concepts to demonstrate the methods that radically interpretive approaches use to understand society.

This is a seminar course that requires a significant amount of preparation and participation on the part of the student. Students can propose to develop one of the exercises into a major paper. If such a proposal is not seen as feasible, students will do a take-home exam on the material covered in class.

As with my other courses, the fundamental intellectual interest concerns the issue of how we collectively understand and change ourselves. In particular, we will be concerned with the problem

of speaking well and acting well, both with regard to the question of theory and practice of various theoretical positions in sociology, and with our own talk and action in class. Be prepared to have your own assumptions disturbed, to be required to question what you take for granted, and, fundamentally, to think about and take responsibility for your own talk. As a nurtured Socratic confusion (aporia) is part of the experience of learning, you will need to be able to sustain your spirit despite at times feeling that your head is spinning, that the fog is thick, or that you are lost. All such feelings are a normal response to the course material.

### Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- A. Understand the debates about knowledge creation
  - Understand the epistemological assumptions underlying the different models of Discovery and Interpretation
  - Understand the practical research implications that follow from these assumptions
- B. Address solutions to capturing the complexity of social life
  - Engage in experiments and analysis of everyday phenomenon
  - Examine the implications of such experiments
- C. Develop the capacity to think ‘outside the box’
  - Develop imaginative ways for understanding everyday action as oriented
  - Develop the rigorous discipline to make data based claims
- D. Understanding reflexivity as a theorist’s and member’s resource
  - Understand the ‘uninteresting essential reflexivities of accounts’
  - Understand the relation between ethics and reflexive analysis

### Reading:

Required: Harold Garfinkel 1967. *Studies in Ethnomethodology*.

Recommended: John Heritage 1991 *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*

### Other Readings Available on LEARN or Course Reserve

- Wallace and Wolf, Heritage, Garfinkel, McHugh et al, Pollner, Lynch

### Course Requirements and Assessment

Assessment	Date of Evaluation (if known)	Weighting
Analysis of Breaching Experiment (2-3 pp.)	Jan 21	5%
Analysis of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Breaching Experiment (3-4 pp.)	Feb 11	15%
Motive Discourse Analysis Exercise (5 pp.)	Mar 3	20%
Final Paper or Take-Home Exam	April 3 (distributed Mar 24)	40%
Online Assignment (5 Response to Question = 5%, 10 Response to Responses = 5%)	Ongoing	10%
Participation (including Class Exercises)		10%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

### First Assessment Exercise

1. Review the reading (Garfinkel) before you do the exercise. As stated in class, do a small breaching exercise along the lines described in Wallace and Wolf. Write down exactly what was said in response. Then address the way the response is an attempt 'to assemble an appearance of order.' There is no required length but I would expect it to be between 2 - 3 typed double spaced pages. (5%) – Due Jan 21
2. Redo Exercise 1 in light of feedback (15%) – Due Feb. 11
3. Motive Discourse Analysis Exercise (20%) – March 3

### Online Assignments

1. **Response to Readings:** over the course of the term, each student will respond to 5 of 10 or so questions, 2 before Reading Week and 3 after Reading Week (as a guideline and ideally). These responses should be approximately 200 words in length. The questions will be based on the theories, readings, concepts, as they apply to everyday life and **all 5 are worth a total of 5%**. This is a completion exercise. The questions will be posted after the class and **the response is due on the following Monday by noon.**
2. **Response to Responses:** students are also required to respond to another students' response once a week. You must do 10 responses, as a guideline and ideally 5 before and 5 after Reading Week and they should be a paragraph in length (80 words approximately). **These are due on Monday by 10 pm.** These are completion assignments and **you will get 5% for completing all 10 responses.**

### Class Participation and in class exercises

Participation is graded based on four criteria: attendance, class participation in discussion, online discussion and discussion response papers. Attendance: periodic attendance checks will be tracked through the in-class exercises. In order to succeed in this course you need to do the readings, participate in class, write clearly and submit assignments on time. An overarching criterion is development in the course. By development here I mean a commitment to engaging the material. If you demonstrate development in the course through increased participation in class and improved discussion responses this is graded more favourably than a contribution that wanes throughout the term. **As a rule of thumb (or rubric as it is called now), if you attend and participate well, your grade will reflect the highest mark you have received in a graded assignment. If it is average, it will reflect your average grade; if low, it will reflect your lowest grade or even less.**

### Course Outline / Class Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Readings
1	Jan 7	Overview of the Course. Knowledge Creation: Discovery vs. Interpretation	Headings Posted on Learn
2	Jan 14	The Phenomenological Tradition in Sociology – <b>Due next week:</b> Sample breaching experiment: See p. 2	Wallace and Wolf, Ch. 6. 262–292;
3	Jan 21	Heritage. “Actions, Rules, Contexts” <b>Exercise 1 Due</b> – Discussion	Heritage Ch 5
4	Jan 28	The Uninteresting Essential Reflexivity of Accounts.	Garfinkel. Ch 1
5	Feb 4	Studies of the Routine Grounds of Everyday Activities.	Garfinkel, Ch. 2
6	Feb 11	Harvey Sacks “On the Analyzability of Stories by Children” – <b>Exercise 2 Due</b>	Harvey Sacks
7	Feb 18	<b>READING WEEK</b>	<b>READING WEEK</b>
8	Feb 25	Factual versus Grammatical approaches to understanding motive. A Case Study of Grammatical Analysis	McHugh et al, <i>Motive</i> – Workshop a particular example
9	Mar 3	Analysis of Motive Discourse. – <b>Exercise 3 Due: Motive</b>	Bonner: <i>Reason Giving</i> . McHugh et al, Ch. 2 Addendum to Motive
10	Mar 10	‘Pollner and Lynch Debate	Bonner: <i>Reflexivity...</i>
11	Mar 17	Pollner and Lynch Debate “Corruption Analysis	Meetings re Final Paper Bonner: <i>Data, Methods</i>
12	Mar 24	Birth News Analysis	Bonner: Garfinkel, Ch. 5
13	Mar 31	Ethical Evaluation of Action (Bonner)	Bonner: <i>Arendt...</i>

**This is a tentative course outline in the sense that student interest and the emerging course conversation may require the introduction of new material, spending more time with existing material or even returning to material covered earlier. The outline, therefore, is not so much a contract as a proposal.**

**Notes:**

**Email is not conducive to discussion and not an alternative way to receive class material.**

Discussion of assignments, class material or sociological questions is welcome at class, during office hours or by appointment. Appointments should be made during office hours or in class for another time. **This course is registered on UW LEARN. Please activate your UW email account.**

**UW POLICY REGARDING ILLNESS AND MISSED TESTS**

[The University of Waterloo Examination Regulations](#) state that:

- A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the "[University of Waterloo Verification of Illness](#)" form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services or on the link provided above. If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor.
- If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor.
- The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may on religious grounds require alternative times to write tests and examinations.
- Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.

**Late Work**

Late Penalty – 5% (out of 100%) per day including weekends.

**Electronic Device Policy**

Uses of electronic devices are not encouraged and they should not interfere with student learning.

**Attendance Policy**

Students will be spontaneously asked to respond to the readings, which will also serve to note attendance. Another method of attendance taking is having students respond in class to questions posted online.

**Important Information**

**Academic Integrity:** To maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Federated University and Affiliated Colleges are expected to promote honesty,

trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.

**[Academic Integrity Office \(UW\)](#)**: A resource for students and instructors.

**Discipline**: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline](#). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [University of Waterloo Policy 71 \(Student Discipline\)](#).

**Grievance**: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Students who decide to file a grievance should refer to [University of Waterloo Policy 70 \(Student Petitions and Grievances\)](#). For more information, students should contact the Associate Dean of St. Jerome’s University.

**Appeals**: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline or University of Waterloo Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) if a ground for an appeal can be established. In such a case, read [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Appeals](#).

**Note for Students with Disabilities**: The [AccessAbility Services \(AS\) Office](#), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS Office at the beginning of each academic term.