

**HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**  
***Philosophy 3880F: Social Ontology/Social Construction of Institutions – J. Epp***  
**Course Outline, Fall 2018**

Wed. 6:30-9:30 pm  
HC-W101

**Instructor: Jennifer Epp**  
**Office: V126**  
**Office hours: Tues. 1:00 - 3:00 pm**  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Social ontology can be understood as the study of the social components of reality. This statement implies that there are both natural and social components to reality, a claim is itself in dispute. So, alternately, we might say that social ontology is the study of the nature of social reality.

Questions in this field include: What are the parts of our social world/s? How do those parts relate to each other? What is the source of their existence? Are social worlds, or aspects of them, constructed? If so, how? Could they have been constructed differently? Can they be changed? Are there natural kinds or other aspects of social reality that are not constructed? Do social worlds or aspects of social reality depend on minds for their existence or are they mind-independent? If they are mind-dependent in what way? Are the minds in question individual or collective? How does the operation of power influence social reality? What do language, ideology, representation, ignorance, emotion, memory, and conversation or dialogue have to do with “what there is” or “what there could be?”

The course will address these questions in part by focusing on the construction of indigenous identities and experiences in North America. We will pay particular attention to Anishbaabeg ethics, epistemology, and ontology, on its own terms and in the context of settler colonialism.

**COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) To develop student’s abilities to identify, understand, construct and critique philosophical arguments. In order to meet this objective, students will enhance their oral and written communication skills, active listening skills, analytical ability and potential for creative problem solving via written assignments, collaborative exercises in interpretation, and class discussion.
- 2) To familiarize students with a central debate in contemporary metaphysics and to illuminate connections between metaphysics and social and political philosophy. In order to meet this objective, students will read relevant literature and engage in written exegesis, conceptual analysis, and respectful debate within class. Class discussions will directly address connections between different areas of philosophical thought and touch on philosophical methodology.

- 3) To provide students with resources that may help them to identify, and think critically about, assumptions about “the way things are” in their social milieus. In order to meet this objective, students will consider critiques of common discourses in western culture, learn some history of social change in both Europe and North America, and they will be introduced to Anishnaabeg ethics, epistemology, politics, and world views in contrast to settler colonial society.

## **CLASS METHODS**

Class will include interactive lecture time, as well as time for group exercises, and class discussion. Students will sometimes act as peer instructors. Participation is highly encouraged and students are expected to come to class prepared to ask questions, find answers, and discuss the readings.

## **TEXTS**

All readings can be found either on-line through Western Libraries, in the Resources section of OW, or through the Bookstore at Western. Readings not posted on OWL include:

*As We Have Always Done* by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, available online via UWO Libraries here: <http://alpha.lib.uwo.ca/record=b6994626>

*Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back* by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, will be available for purchase in the Bookstore mid-semester and is available as an e-book here: <https://allitup.ca/books/D/Dancing-On-Our-Turtle-s-Back>

## **REQUIRMENTS:**

<b>Written Assignment</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Group Work</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Learning Assessment (including exam)</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Reflection</b>	<b>25 %</b>

These assignments may take several different forms; for example, the group work may take the form of a presentation, video, collaborative writing, etc. All assignments may be completed separately (except for the group work) or in groups. Students will decide upon the type of writing, group work, assessment, and reflection they will create in consultation with their instructor. The instructor will then provide assignment instructions and expectations/rubrics based on that choice, which will be posted in the Assignments section on OWL. Students will also choose due dates for each assignment, to be finalized within the first two weeks of class. Possibilities will be discussed in detail in the first class.

## **ASSIGNMENTS:**

Submit all written assignments to the **Assignments** section of OWL. If you have trouble submitting through OWL e-mail your assignment to [jepp6@uwo.ca](mailto:jepp6@uwo.ca) to prevent it from being counted as late.) **No paper copy of the assignments** is needed. Details and evaluation criteria for all assignments will be provided in the **Assignments** section of OWL.

### **ANONYMOUS GRADING:**

To avoid bias I grade your work **anonymously whenever possible**. **Use student numbers, not your name, on these assignments. Do not include your name on a title page, header, or in a document name.**

- Title saved documents like this: **student number, assignment name**. E.g. for the essay: “250111111, First Essay”

**OWL:** check the **Announcements** section of OWL regularly.

### **PLAIGIARISM:**

Work submitted to the Assignments section in OWL is automatically sent to Turnitin.com (a plagiarism checking service). Papers are not graded until they are submitted and checked there.

You may not submit assignments, or portions of assignments, that have been prepared for other courses. All instances of suspected plagiarism will be taken very seriously. Make sure to **cite all direct quotes, use quotation marks, cite all ideas that you got from somewhere else even if you are not using quotes, and include a bibliography or footnotes of any external resources that you use in anything submitted for this class.**

### **ACCESSIBILITY:**

Your success in this course is important to me and there are many ways to learn. Please discuss your learning needs with me during office hours or at another arranged time. Together we will find ways to make the class accessible for you. We usually think of disability in relation to accessibility, but I also accommodate for employment and family responsibilities. Talk to me, to the Student Development Centre, or to your academic counsellor as soon as possible if you have any accessibility or accommodation concerns.

I encourage disabled students to use the Services for Students with Disabilities provided by the Student Development Centre including the provision of note-takers, learning strategies assistance, assignment and exam accommodation, and sign-language interpreters. The Accessibility Services Office is located on the fourth floor of the Western Student Services Building, room 4111, visit the Accessibility Services website at <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/> for more information. In addition, you can call (519) 661-2147.

### **LATE POLICY:**

Late papers or other work will be accepted with a penalty of 2% per day (weekends included), but will not be accepted after the last day of class without accommodation from an academic counselor. If, at any time, accommodation is required for any assignment worth more than 10% you must see your academic counselor promptly.

**Reading List**  
**Phil 3800, 2018 G**

	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Article</b>	<b>Author</b>
Sept. 12	<p><b>Part 1.</b> What is Social Ontology?</p> <p><b>Part 2.</b> Creating Our Own Institution</p>	<p><b>Part 1. Introduction:</b></p> <p>“What is Ontology?” <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTsaZWzVJ4c">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTsaZWzVJ4c</a></p> <p>Recommended: “The Structure of the Social Atom”</p> <p><b>Part 2. Assignments, Class Processes and Readings, Agenda Setting.</b></p> <p>“VTaiwan: Public Participation Methods on the Cyberpunk Frontier of Democracy” <a href="https://civichall.org/civicist/vtaiwan-democracy-frontier/">https://civichall.org/civicist/vtaiwan-democracy-frontier/</a></p> <p>“The Simple but Ingenious System Taiwan Uses to Crowdsource its Laws” <a href="https://www.technologyreview.com/s/611816/the-simple-but-ingenious-system-taiwan-uses-to-crowdsource-its-laws/">https://www.technologyreview.com/s/611816/the-simple-but-ingenious-system-taiwan-uses-to-crowdsource-its-laws/</a></p> <p>Recommended: “Building Community: Processes for Groups”</p>	<p>The Class</p> <p>Kent Löfgren</p> <p>Margaret Gilbert</p> <p>Liz Barry</p> <p>Chris Horton</p> <p>Starhawk</p>
Sept. 19	<p>Parts and Processes: Creating Institutional Facts</p>	<p>“Social Ontology and Political Power”</p> <p>Topic: The role of language and collective intentionality in creating institutional facts and political power.</p> <p>Recommended” “Social Institutions” esp. section 1. <a href="http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/social-institutions/#AccSocIns">http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/social-institutions/#AccSocIns</a> and any chapter from <i>The Construction of Social Reality</i> or <i>Making the Social World</i></p>	<p>John Searle</p> <p>Seumas Miller</p> <p>John Searle</p>

<p>Sept. 26</p>	<p>Social Construction: Of what? By who? How?</p>	<p>“Why Ask What?” from <i>The Social Construction of What?</i>  Topic: Social matrixes, looping, and the construction of human “kinds”  Recommended: “Social Construction: the “Debunking” Project”   Recommended: “Naturalistic Approaches to Social Construction” esp. section 1.  <a href="http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/social-construction-naturalistic/">http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/social-construction-naturalistic/</a></p>	<p>Ian Hacking    Sally Haslanger   Ron Mallon</p>
<p>Oct. 3</p>	<p>Social Construction: Of what? By who? How?</p>	<p>“But Mom, Crop-tops Are Cute!” Social Knowledge, Social Structure, and Ideology Critique  Topic: Beliefs can create social facts/realities but they can also be critiqued.   Recommended: any chapter of <i>Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique</i>.</p>	<p>Sally Haslanger    Sally Haslanger</p>
<p>Oct. 17</p>	<p>Meaning, Feeling and Significance: Relating Objectivity and Subjectivity</p>	<p>“Inescapable Horizons” (Chapter 4)  <a href="https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B0_FjdluRK7uYTg0ZjYxNzYtOGRiZi00ZDk2LTlhZmYtZTY3M2VhYWQ5ZjNm/edit">https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B0_FjdluRK7uYTg0ZjYxNzYtOGRiZi00ZDk2LTlhZmYtZTY3M2VhYWQ5ZjNm/edit</a>   Topic: Authenticity and meaning are only possible within a social world. Significance is dialogical.   Recommended: Excerpts from <i>Truth and Method</i></p>	<p>Charles Taylor       H. G. Gadamer</p>
<p>Oct. 24</p>	<p>Gender and Constructed Ignorance</p>	<p>“Coming to Understand”   Topic: Ignorance is not always lack of knowledge. It can be created and enforced.</p>	<p>Nancy Tuana</p>
<p>Oct. 31</p>	<p>Alternate Constructions: Anishnabe Culture, History, and Resurgence</p>	<p>“Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States”   Topic: the who, how, and what of construction in a particular set of cases.</p>	<p>Bonita Lawrence</p>

		Recommended: “A Mikmaq Woman”  Recommended: “Colonialism/Postcolonialism”	Pamela Palmater  William Mack
Nov. 7	De/Constructing Political Orders: Colonialism and “Indian” Identity in North America	“Land as Pedagogy” from <i>As We Have Always Done</i>  Topic: Nishnaabeg constructions of self and community, relationships, knowledge, theory, and education.	Leanne Betasamosake Simpson
Nov. 14	Alternate Constructions: Nishnaabeg Culture, History, and Resurgence	“Expansive Dispossession” (41-44) and “Nishnaabewin as Grounded Normativity” (22-25) in <i>As We have Always Done</i> .  “Theorizing Resurgence from Within Nishnaabeg Thought” and “Gdi-Nweninaa: Our Sound, Our Voice” in <i>Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back</i> .	Leanne Betasamosake Simpson
Nov. 21	Alternate Constructions: Anishnabe Culture, History, and Resurgence	“Protecting the First Hill” in <i>Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back</i>  “Past and Future”  Recommended: “Remembering for the Future” especially the section on “Vulnerable Rememberers”	Leanne Betasamosake Simpson  A. Brett Commanda  Sue Campbell
Nov. 28	Alternate Constructions: Anishnabe Culture, History, and Resurgence	“Resurgence in Our Political Relationships” in <i>Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back</i> OR (individual choice) “Nishnaabeg Internationalism” and “Nishnaabeg Anti-Capitalism” in <i>As We Have Always Done</i> OR (individual choice) “Shi-Kiin: New Worlds” in <i>Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back</i>	Leanne Betasamosake Simpson
Dec. 5	De/Constructing Political Orders: Worldviews based on Immanence or Estrangement	“Power-Over and Power-From-Within” and “Thought Forms: Magic as Language” and  “The PKOLS Reclamation” in <i>As We Have Always Done</i>	Starhawk  Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

		<p>Recommended: “Appendix A: The Burning Times: Notes on a Crucial Period of History”</p> <p>Topic: ruptured and replaced worldviews, identity/discourses (and constructed radical social change in Medieval Europe with reference to witch trials and the Enclosures in Britian).</p>	Starhawk
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**The Appendix to Course Outlines is posted on the OWL course site.**