**SOCL955: Practice Theory Course Outline**

**Dates: 28th, 29th, 30th April and 3rd, 4th May 2021 on Teams**

**Course Convenor/s:** Elizabeth Shove, Stanley Blue and Ted Schatzki

**Email/s:** [e.shove@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:e.shove@lancaster.ac.uk)

Postgraduate Coordinator: Emma Taylor

Email: [e.taylor9@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:e.taylor9@lancaster.ac.uk)

**Credit:** 20 Credits (10 ECTS Credits)

**Assessment:**

If you are taking the course for credit, there are two pieces of assessed work:

1 x 1,000 word blog, draft submitted 1pm Tuesday 20th April 2021, final version 1pm Wednesday 2nd June 2021;

1 x 4,000 word independent essay, submitted 1pm Wednesday 2nd June 2021 .

**NOTE: Everyone needs to submit a draft blog by Tuesday 20th April 2021, whether you are taking the course for credit or not.**

**The course**

The course includes a programme of asynchronous preparation– recorded lectures, podcasts, short interviews, required readings, and intellectual exercises - that participants need to study, watch, and carry out in advance. There will be no time to do this during the live dates of the course.

Between 28th April and 4th May 2021 participants and course convenors will meet up on Teams. The synchronous programme includes discussions of lectures, group presentations and activities , fieldwork, and consultations with other participants and with the convenors. Assessment will be based on two pieces of work. The first is a a 600-1,000 word draft blog response to a particular idea presented across several of the recommended texts. The deadline for the draft blogs is 1pm Tuesday 20th April 2021. Participants will receive two lots of feedback (from a peer and from a course tutor) to help inform the final version of their blog, which they will submit after the course.

The second marked piece of assessment will be a 4,000 word scholarly essay on a topic of the author’s choice. The only restriction topically is that the essay address something to do with practice theory. For instance, the essay could be a theory piece that explores a theoretical concept or theme, or it could be a research piece that connects the author’s current research to themes discussed in the course.

Further details on the blog and other preparatory exercises will be included in a virtual ‘suitcase’ sent to participants by 1st March 2021.

All of this information, pre-recorded lectures, many of the readings, and links to submit the draft blogs and assessment are available on MOODLE, Lancaster University’s online platform. On registration you will be given access to the site. If you have any problems, please contact the postgraduate administrator, Emma Taylor.

**Day by Day Guide to Preparation in Advance**

**Day 1. The Place of Practice Theory in Contemporary Theory and Research**

The first day provides conceptual and historical background to the family of approaches to social life known as practice theory. The readings, lectures and synchronous sessions stake out and examine the place of practice theory in the wider theoretical landscape, both historical and contemporary. Delimiting this place will reveal key features of practice theories and of its principal alternatives.

* **Watch** Lecture: Ted Schatzki - positioning practice theory. This lecture examines the place of practice theories in the wider historical and contemporary landscape of social theory. It considers the general ontology that practice theories promulgate and contrasts this with prominent past and present alternatives. It also discusses the set of features that make theories of practices distinct from other theoretical approaches to social life.

Suggested reading: Schatzki T, 2018. ‘On Practice Theory, or What’s Practices got to do [got to do] with it?’, in Education in an era of schooling: Critical perspectives of educational practice and action research. C. Edwards-Groves et al. (ed), Singapore: Springer, 151-65. Schatzki T. 1996. Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 6, ‘The Emergence of Practice’ and ‘Practices and Sociality’.

* **Watch** Lecture: Elizabeth Shove – practice theory and behaviour change. This lecture situates practice theory in relation to theoretical approaches that underpin much contemporary policy, in particular those that treat individuals and their beliefs and values as the source of change. Suggested reading: Shove E. 2009. 'Beyond the Abc: Climate Change Policy and Theories of Social Change.' Environment & Planning A 42 (6): 1273-1285.
* **Work through** the 'charting variety' exercise (it is in the suitcase) and make three powerpoint slides showing how you would position the 5 selected texts in relation to each other.
* **Prepare** a model of your current research and make one powerpoint slide showing the result. Also include your name and institutional affiliation (see guidance notes).

**Required Reading**

* Reckwitz A. 2002. 'Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing.' *European Journal of Social Theory* 5 (2): 243-263.
* Warde A. 2005. 'Consumption and Theories of Practice.' Journal of Consumer Culture 5 (2): 131-153.
* Shove E, et al. 2012. The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday Life and How It Changes. London: Sage. (online).
* Bourdieu, P. 1990. The Logic of Practice. Richard Nice (tr). Stanford: Stanford University Press, Book I, ‘Critique of Theoretical Reason.’ P25-97.
* Giddens, A. 1979. Central Problems in Social Theory. Berkeley: U California Press, chapters 2-3, ‘Agency, Structure’ and ‘Institutions, Reproduction, Socialisation’.
* Lave, J. and E. Wenger (1991). Situated Learning: legitimate peripheral participation. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
* Schatzki T. 2002. The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Change. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press. Chapter 2, ‘Social Practices’. (online)

**Day 2. The material world in practice**

Social theory and research have an uneven relationship to the material dimension of human life. While disciplines such as economics (e.g., land and natural resources) and anthropology (e.g., reproduction and material provision) have always paid attention to this dimension, many others are only recently showing interest. Many approaches to social life have primarily focused on individuals and relations among individuals, thereby eliding matters of materiality. Practice theories, by contrast, have long been concerned with material things, processes, and events. You will discuss the lectures and readings with reference to a selection of big questions (see the synchronous programme).

* **Watch** lecture: Ted Schatzki on materiality. This lecture provides an overview of how practice theories conceptualize material, materials, and materiality and how they incorporate these phenomena into their accounts of social phenomena. It approaches this topic starting from the magical quality of the word “materiality,” using this to open up consideration of some of the wide range of ways that contemporary theory conceptualizes material states of affairs. Practice theory approaches will be thereby juxtaposed with alternatives such as those put forward in Marx, in ANT and in the work of Tim Ingold.  
  Suggested reading:  
  Ingold, T. 2007. ‘Materials Against Materiality.’ *Archaeological Dialogues* 14 (1): 1-16.  
  Latour, B. 1992. ‘Where are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts.’ In *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, Wiebe E, Bijker and John Law (ed), Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 225-58.
* **Watch** lecture: Elizabeth Shove on infrastructures and practices. What are infrastructures and how do they enable, reproduce and transform multiple social practices? This lecture considers the status of infrastructures, along with other material relations between practices and resources (that are consumed) and appliances (that are interacted with directly).

Suggested reading: Shove, E. and Trentmann, F. 2018. (eds). *Infrastructures in Practice*. London: Routledge. Introduction and chapter 1.; Shove, E. (2017), *Matters of Practice*, in Hui, A. et al. (eds), *The Nexus of Practices.* London: Routlege. Shove, E, M. Watson and N. Spurling. 2015. ‘Conceptualizing connections: Energy demand, infrastructures and social practices’. *European Journal of Social Theory* 18 (3): 274-87.

* **Listen** to p*odcast with Ted Schatzki* <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/socialpractice/videos-and-podcasts/>
* **Listen** to some of the other podcasts and think about their structure and how they organize the discussion as well as the kinds of questions that do and those that do not work well in them.
* **Read and provide written comments** on two other participants’ draft blogs (circulated in advance)
* **Required reading**: you will be assigned **ONE** of the following readings – to be the basis of a podcast with the authors (see synchronous programme).

Shove E. 2009. 'Beyond the Abc: Climate Change Policy and Theories of Social Change.' *Environment & Planning* A 42 (6): 1273-1285.

Shove, E. 2017, ‘Matters of practice’ Chapter 11, in Hui A, et al. 2017. The Nexus of Practices: Connections, Constellations, Practitioners. London: Routledge (online)

Schatzki T. 2010. 'Materiality and Social Life.' *Nature and Culture* 5 (2): 123-149.

Schatzki, T. (2016). "Keeping Track of Large Phenomena." *Geographische Zeitschrift* 104(1): 4-24.

Blue, S. 2017. ‘Institutional Rhythms: Combining Practice Theory and Rhythmanalysis to Conceptualise Processes of Institutionalization’. *Time and Society* April 7.

Blue S, et al. 2016. 'Theories of Practice and Public Health: Understanding (Un)Healthy Practices.' *Critical Public Health* 26 (1): 36-50.

**Day 3. Complexes of practices, organisations, institutions and large social phenomena**

Day 3 considers ways of conceptualizing the diversity of relations among practices, focusing on how practices combine to form more extensive complexes and how large and small phenomena are constituted. You will discuss the lectures and readings with reference to a selection of big questions (see the synchronous programme).

A second theme taken up on Day 3 has to do with matters of method and methodology: What does it mean to conduct research that is informed by theories of practice, and What can we learn from researchers who have done this? Both strands will feed into the fieldwork that will be conducted over the week end.

* **Watch** lecture: Ted Schatzki on complexes of practices and large social phenomena. The distinction between micro and macro phenomena is prominent in social thought. Sometimes disciplinary divisions are even defined by reference to this distinction (e.g., micro and macrosociology). Practice theories, however, have little truck with this infamous distinction. Instead of thinking in terms of levels, they tend to think of social life qua fields or plenum of practices as encompassing just one level. They also tend to spread these fields or plenum out, largely across the surface of the earth. This more horizontal way of thinking suggests twofold: that it is valuable to think of social phenomena as composed of smaller and larger bundles or complexes of practices and that a myriad of relations link practices into complexes and complexes into constellations.   
  Suggested reading: Schatzki, T. (2016). "Keeping Track of Large Phenomena." Geographische Zeitschrift 104(1): 4-24.
* **Watch** lecture: Stan Blue on institutional rhythms: Taking the hospital as an example of an ‘institution’, this lecture follows Zerubavel (1979) in unpacking the temporal rhythms of hospital life, how these hang together, and how they thereby reproduce institutions and ways of delivering healthcare. The aim is to reveal multiple qualities beyond the temporal that matter for practice-orders, to investigate how they become organised as they do, and to think more about how relationships between practices, and hence the total practice complexes that make up institutions, are strengthened and weakened, made and broken.  
  Suggested reading: Blue, S. and Spurling, N. (2017) ‘Qualities of connective tissue in hospital life’: Chapter 2 in Hui A, et al. 2017. *The Nexus of Practices: Connections, Constellations, Practitioners.* London: Routledge (online)
* **Listen** to the Practice theory podcast with [Paula Jarzabkowski](https://soundcloud.com/practice-theory-podcast/4-paula-jarzabkowski-on-large-phenomena)
* **Review** the practice theory methodologies blog <https://practicetheorymethodologies.wordpress.com/>
* **Watch** recorded chats on [putting practice theory into practice](http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/socialpractice/links/): methods and experiences

**Day 4. The Dynamics of Social Life**

Day 4 takes up the dynamics of social life, focusing on the processes, mechanisms and principles responsible for change. Questions to be examined include How do social practices and combinations of them come to be? How do such arrangements persist (or not)? What is involved in their demise? And what has all this to do with change? You will discuss the lectures and readings with reference to a selection of big questions (see the synchronous programme).

* **Watch** lecture by Ted Schatzki: Dynamics is a major topic and concern in social research and thought. It also encompasses a large range of more specific topics, including change, causality, explanation, maintenance, intervention, governance, and power, as well as repetition, novelty, and dissolution. This lecture will examine basic concepts of dynamics and focus on the nature of change, causality, and explanation. Explanation is one of the basic cognitive goals pursued in social science, change is one of the principal phenomena regarding which explanations are sought, and causality is what must be uncovered to provide them. The session will ask how theories of practices understand change and causality and provide explanations.   
  Suggested reading:  
  Schatzki, T. R. (2019*). Social Change in a Material World: How Activity and Material Processes Dynamize Practices.* London: Routledge, chapters 4 & 5, “Social Dynamics I: chains of activity” and “Social dynamics II: material events and processes”.  
  Spaargaren, G. et al. (ed). 2016. *Practice Theory and Research: Exploring the Dynamics of Social Life*. Abingdon: Routledge, chapter 12, ‘Conclusion: the relevance of practice theory for researching social change’.
* **Watch** lecture by Stan Blue: How do people learn new practices? Equally, how do new recruits and old-hands change the practices of which they are a part. This lecture uses examples from sports and leisure practices to work through Lave and Wenger’s (1991) argument that learning is situated (in practice) and depends on forms of structured, legitimate, and at first peripheral, participation. What are the ‘internal learning structures’ that different kinds of leisure and working practices have? Questions such as these generate others about the dynamics of practice: how does a practitioners’ participation in a practice change? What are the boundaries of legitimate participation? How do those internal structures and boundaries themselves evolve? The lecture concludes by examining Kemmis’ (2019) argument that ‘learning’ is contained in practice architectures and that a turn to practice decenters the very idea of learning – instead what matters is how practitioners are caught up in chains and complexes of activity that define who they become.   
  Suggested reading: Lave, J. and E. Wenger (1991). Situated Learning: legitimate peripheral participation. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.  
  Kemmis, S. (2019) A practice sensibility. London: Routledge.
* **Listen** to podcast with Stephen Kemmis <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/socialpractice/videos-and-podcasts/>

**Day 5. Working with theories of practice in research and policy**

The last day of the course reviews some of the challenges involved in working with theories of practice in research and policy. It also goes into detail on matters of power and governance. The day begins by considering what practice theories might contribute to conceptualizing power and governance before focusing on the role of practice theory *within* public health and energy policy.

* **Listen** to the podcast with Matt Watson on power. <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/socialpractice/videos-and-podcasts/> Power and governance are important topics in contemporary social theory. This reading and the related podcast consider how practice theories approach these topics. They raise the question of what role power has in the dynamics of practices and in analyses of them: whether power can itself be a cause and provide an explanation of anything or whether power is itself an effect of what causes and explains things in social life.   
  Suggested Reading: Watson, M. (2017) Placing power in practice theory, in Hui A, et al. 2017. *The Nexus of Practices: Connections, Constellations, Practitioners.* London: Routledge (online)
* **Watch/listen** to the dialogue between Stan Blue, Elizabeth Shove and Mike Kelly on some of the practical and also conceptual challenges involved in promoting ‘practice oriented’ public policy.
* **Watch** lecture by Elizabeth Shove – how the DEMAND (Dynamics of Energy, Mobility and Demand) centre sought to feed practice theoretically inspired research into the energy sector.

Suggested reading: Spurling N., et al. 2013. [Interventions in Practice: Reframing Policy Approaches to Consumer Behaviour](https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/32468813/FULL_TEXT.PDF). Sustainable Practices Research Group.

**Day by day guide to the SYNCHRONOUS PROGRAMME**

**28th April 2021 - Day 1: The Place of Practice Theory in Contemporary Theory and Research**

The introductory sessions set out the structure of the module, what students can expect, what participation involves, and how the assessment is organised. Participants, both students and staff, will introduce themselves, and there will be an opportunity to ask questions about any aspect of the module. Students will work together to compare and position different aspects of practice theory and to think about how these relate to other areas of social theory.

**11.00-12.30**: Introductions: Following a brief introduction to the course, all participants (staff and students) introduce themselves by showing a slide of the model they have made of their current research. (1 minute each).

**12.30-14.00**: Lunch time. Teams of 6 participants (podcast teams) to have lunch together and to discuss each other’s research.

**14.00-14.45**: More detail on the structure of the course, assessment and questions. (Stanley Blue)

**15.00-17.00:** (with a break at a convenient point): Charting variety – In this session, we will work together to position a selection of texts in relation to each other using the slides that participants made prior to the live sessions. The aim is to develop and deepen an understanding of where practice theories connect with and depart from each other and from related social theories. (Stanley Blue, Ted Schatzki, Elizabeth Shove).

The core texts to be positioned are:

Bourdieu, P. 1990. The Logic of Practice. Richard Nice (tr). Stanford: Stanford University Press, Book I, ‘Critique of Theoretical Reason.’ P25-97.

Giddens, A. 1979. Central Problems in Social Theory. Berkeley: U California Press, chapters 2-3, ‘Agency, Structure’ and ‘Institutions, Reproduction, Socialisation’.

Lave, J. and E. Wenger (1991). Situated Learning: legitimate peripheral participation. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Shove E, et al. 2012. The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday Life and How It Changes. London: Sage. (online).

Schatzki T. 2002. The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Change. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press. Chapter 2, ‘Social Practices’. (online)

Themes around which the texts will be positioned include: take on ‘agency’; representation of relations between practices; take on change over time and history; conceptualization and significance attributed to materiality; what a practice is.

**17.00-17.30:** Break

**17.30-18.00**: Introducing the practical exercises: making podcasts and the fieldwork. Describing what is involved, when the work will be done and how it will be shared. (Elizabeth Shove).

**29th April 2021 Day 2: The material world in practice**

Day 2 is designed to give participants an overview of how practice theories have analyzed the complicated presence of material entities, events, and processes in social existence and the complex relationship of human activities and social processes to them.

**9.30-11.00**: Online meeting with other members of your ‘podcast pod’ to compare notes on the reading that will be the subject of your author interview/podcast. Decide how you are going to organize your half hour interview with the author; gather and prepare possible questions/topics; think about how to introduce the podcast; and decide how the interviewing, recording and editing will be organised.

**11.00-13.00**: Blog consultations: Scheduled meetings of 15 minutes with either Stan, Elizabeth or Ted. This is also time in which pairs of participants review and comment on each other’s work (one to one sessions).

**13.00-14.00**: Lunch time. Teams of 6 participants (fieldwork teams) to have lunch together and to start thinking about the fieldwork.

**14.00-15.30**: Three parallel discussions of materiality and practice (lectures and readings), guided by five big questions. (1) What differences do material phenomena make to social life?; (2)What of social life is not material (in some sense)? (3) How do material events and processes contribute to explanations of social phenomena? (4) Does attending to material phenomena provide insight into how to intentionally effect social change? (5) Does the fact that social phenomena have material dimensions have methodological consequences? Notes from the different groups will be shared on Whiteboard.

**15.30-16.30**: Three of the six podcast production teams conduct their half hour interviews with the authors: Ted, Elizabeth or Stan.

**16.30-17.30**: Three of the six podcast production teams conduct their half hour interviews with the authors: Ted, Elizabeth or Stan.

**17.30-18.00**: Plenary catch up and any questions so far.

All six podcasts to be uploaded to Moodle by 21.00

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**30th April 2021 Day 3: Complexes of practices, organisations, institutions and large social phenomena**

**10.45-12.30**: Blog consultations: Scheduled meetings of 15 minutes with either Stan, Elizabeth or Ted. This is also time in which pairs of participants review and comment on each other’s work (one to one sessions).

**12.30-14.00**: Lunch time. Teams of 6 participants (fieldwork teams) have lunch together to refine ideas about the fieldwork.

**14.00-15.00**: Three parallel discussions of complexes of practices (lectures and readings), guided by five big questions. (1) In what sense does society encompass organizations, institutions, and other large phenomena and not simply consist of a whole lot of people acting (in a material world)? (2) Is there anything about organizations, institutions, and other large phenomena that cannot be captured in the conceptual frameworks of practice theory? (3) Does the concept of practice need to be complemented by further concepts such as discourse or institution in order to provide rich analyses of social phenomena? (4) Do the complexes and constellations that practices form differ from the systems, networks, assemblages, and fields discussed in other contemporary social theories? If so, how? (5) Does explaining the characteristics and evolution of large social phenomena rest on mechanisms and principles that differ those relevant to explaining social practices? Notes from the different groups will be shared on Whiteboard.

**15.00-17.00**: A chance to listen to two of the six podcasts (three parallel sessions) and to discuss the challenges of producing them.

**17.00–18.30**: Preparing the field work –time for fieldwork teams to plan what to do.

Participants will work together in teams to identify and investigate an example of a changing practice, or of changing relations between practices, that are visible in the different locations where the group members currently reside. This is a practical exercise that involves working with the concepts and ideas introduced thus far in order to produce a distinctively practice-theoretically informed piece of research. The fieldwork teams will present their research (up to 20 minutes per group) on the Monday after the week end.

------------------------THE WEEK END------------------------

**3rd May 2021 Day 4: The Dynamics of Practice**

**9.00-11.30**: Time to compile and finalise your fieldwork presentations.

**11.30-12.30**: Three parallel discussions of the dynamics of social practice (lectures and selected readings, guided by five big questions. (1) Why do social scientists care so much about the dynamics of social life? (2) How do practices emerge and disappear? (3) Can a practice theoretical account of social dynamics contribute to successful attempts to bring about social change? (4) Does the concept of causality provide insight into why things change as they do in social life? (5) Can the persistence of practices and changes in practices be determined and understood the same terms? Notes from the different groups will be shared on Whiteboard.

**12.30-14.00**: Lunch time. Fieldwork teams to have lunch together and make last minute changes to the fieldwork presentations.

**14.00-15.30**: 3 x 20 minute fieldwork presentations in a plenary session

**15.30-16.00:** Break

**16.00–17.00:** 3 x 20 minute fieldwork presentations in a plenary session

**4th May 2021 Day 5: Working with theories of practice in research and policy**

As well considering the relevance of practice theory in research and policy, this final day looks back at the course as a whole, capturing some of the ideas and insights we have generated along the way and thinking about how these can be mobilized and developed in the future. There will also be a final opportunity to discuss assessment

**11.30-12.30**: Three parallel group discussions of the lectures and readings focusing on what differences practice theory might make to policy led by Stan, Elizabeth or Ted

**12.30-14.00**: Lunch time. Teams of 6 participants have lunch together and discuss the future: their own future, the future of the ideas they have encountered, the future of practice theory in general.

**14.00-14.30**: Re-packing the suitcase. Time for individual participants to work back through the reading list and course. The task is to identify 4 texts you definitely want to put back in the suitcase in preparation for your future adventures and travels. You can also pack three new or surprising ideas in your bag.

**14.30-15.00**: Break

**15.00-16.30**: Sharing experiences: revealing the lists of key texts selected in the previous session; plenary session on looking backwards and looking forwards. Questions and packing up.

**16.30:** Finale.