

SOCL955: Practice Theory Course Outline

Dates: 27th, 28th, 29th, April and 2nd, 3rd May 2022 on Teams

Times: all times listed in this handbook are British Time.

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

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Credit: 20 Credits (10 ECTS Credits)

Assessment:

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

1 x 800-1,000 word blog (not including references), draft sent to Stanley Blue (s.blue@lancaster.ac.uk) 1pm Monday 11th April 2022, final version 1pm Wednesday 1st June 2022 (submit on moodle)

1 x 3,000-4,000 word (not including references) independent essay, submitted 1pm Wednesday 1st June 2022 (submit on moodle).

NOTE: Everyone needs to submit a draft blog by Monday 11th April 2022, whether you are taking the course for credit or not. These will be made available to the whole class.

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 27th April and 3rd May 2022 participants and course convenors will meet 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 an 800-1,000 word draft blog response to a particular idea presented across several of the recommended texts. The idea is to produce a short, accessible text that engages with one specific idea or topic, and that is written for a non-specialist audience. The blog should not focus on your dissertation. In thinking about the audience, you should identify an actual web site to which you could post your text. The deadline for the draft blogs to be sent to Stan (s.blue@lancaster.ac.uk) is **1pm Monday 11th April 2022**. 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 on moodle by 1pm Wednesday 1st June 2022.

The second marked piece of assessment will be a 3,000-4,000 word (not including references) 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. To be submitted on moodle by 1pm Wednesday 1st June 2022.

Further details on the blog and other preparatory exercises will be included in a virtual 'suitcase' sent to participants by 15th March 2022.

There will be a pre-meeting on Teams for all course participants on **15th April from 4.00-5.00pm**. This is a chance to meet before the course gets going, to say a word about what you hope to get from the experience, and to ask any questions, especially about the work you are asked to do in preparation for the course.

All of the information in this handbook, and also pre-recorded lectures, many of the readings, and links to submit the draft blogs and assessment, are available on MOODLE, Lancaster University's online learning environment. On registration you will be given access to the site. If you have any problems, please contact Stanley Blue s.blue@lancaster.ac.uk or Elizabeth Shove, e.shove@lancaster.ac.uk

Official Content Awareness Statement: There are some topics, issues and content on this module that might be uncomfortable, unsettling or even on occasions distressing for some students. This content is included because it is important to the module and there is no intention to cause distress. Please talk to the module convenor should you have any worries or concerns about this.

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.
Optional 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.
- **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.
Optional 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.' P25-29, 52-97, 112-22.
- 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.
Optional 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).

Optional 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: Routledge. 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 podcast with Ted Schatzki <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/socialpractice/videos-and-podcasts/>
- **Prepare** some notes on the big questions listed in the synchronous programme, informed by the lectures and readings for this session.
- **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 one other participant's draft blog (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 list of participants and groups on moodle).

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).

- **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.
Optional 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.
Optional 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**
- **Prepare** some notes on the big questions listed in the synchronous programme, informed by the lectures and readings for this session.

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.
Optional reading: Schatzki, T. (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.

Optional 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/>
- **Prepare** some notes on the big questions listed in the synchronous programme, informed by the lectures and readings for this session.

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. As well as engaging with questions of research method we address matters of power and governance.

- **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.
- **Read:** Watson, M. (2017) Placing power in practice theory, in Hui A, et al. 2017. *The Nexus of Practices: Connections, Constellations, Practitioners*. London: Routledge (online)
- **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.
Optional reading: Blue, S. Shove, E., Carmona, C. and Kelly, M. P. 2016. Theories of practice and public health: understanding (un)healthy practices, *Critical Public Health*, 26:1, 36-50, DOI: [10.1080/09581596.2014.980396](https://doi.org/10.1080/09581596.2014.980396)
- **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.
Optional reading: Spurling N., et al. 2013. [Interventions in Practice: Reframing Policy Approaches to Consumer Behaviour](#). Sustainable Practices Research Group.
- **Review** the practice theory methodologies blog - <https://practicetheorymethodologies.wordpress.com/> Discover different interpretations of the methodological challenges of working with practice in contributions by [Elizabeth Shove](#), [Stefan Laube](#), [Susann Wagenknecht](#) and [Dale Southerton/Jo Mylan](#)
- **Watch** recorded chats on [putting practice theory into practice](#): methods and experiences

Day by day guide to the SYNCHRONOUS PROGRAMME

27th April 2022 - 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 welcome 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). Elizabeth to chair.

12.30-14.00: Eating event. Teams of 6 participants (podcast teams) to meet together 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.' P25-29, 52-97, 112-22.

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 are: 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.

17.00-17.10: Break

17.10-17.30: Introducing the first practical exercise: making the podcasts. Describing what is involved, when the work will be done and how it will be shared. (Elizabeth Shove).

28th April 2022 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.

9.30-9.35 Brief run through of the programme for Day 2. Stan and Elizabeth.

9.35-11.00: 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: Eating event. Teams of 6 participants (podcast teams) to meet together to finish off the podcast preparations.

14.00-15.00: Three parallel discussions of materiality and practice (lectures and readings), guided by participants' responses to the following questions. How can material phenomena be called on to help change social practices?; How do material phenomena, including the human body, contribute to connections between social practices? Is materiality involved in your research, and if so what did you learn from the readings about it?

15.00-16.00: Three of the six podcast production teams conduct their half hour interviews with the authors: Ted, Elizabeth or Stan.

16.00-17.00: Three of the six podcast production teams conduct their half hour interviews with the authors: Ted, Elizabeth or Stan.

17.00-17.30 Plenary catch up and any questions so far. Ted to chair.

All six podcasts to be uploaded to Moodle by 21.00

29th April 2022 Day 3: Complexes of practices, organisations, institutions and large social phenomena

11.25-11.30 Brief run through of the programme for Day 3. Stan and Elizabeth.

11.30-11.50 Introducing the fieldwork (Elizabeth). 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.

11.50-14.00 Fieldwork teams to meet together to develop ideas and to plan their collective project. Also includes time for an eating event.

14.00-15.00 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).

15.00-16.00 Three parallel discussions of complexes of practices (lectures and readings), guided by participants' responses to three big questions. How do practice theoretical accounts of complexes and constellations differ from those that focus on systems, networks, and assemblages? How can practice theory conceptualize and explain institutions and organizations? Are large social phenomena real or are practices and the people carrying them all there is to social life?

16.00-17.30: A chance to listen to two of the six podcasts (three parallel sessions): choose which you want to hear.

17.30-18.00: Plenary session to discuss the challenges of producing the podcasts. (Stan to chair).

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

2nd May 2022 Day 4: The Dynamics of Practice

9.00-11.25: Time to compile and finalise your fieldwork presentations.

11.25-11.30 Brief run through of the programme for Day 4. Stan and Elizabeth.

11.30-12.30: Three parallel discussions of the dynamics of social practice (lectures and selected readings, guided by participants' responses to three big questions. How do practices emerge and disappear? How do forms of persistence and change mix and co-exist and what are the conditions under which these mixtures change? Can a practice theoretical account of social dynamics contribute to successful attempts to bring about social change?

12.30-14.00: Eating event. Fieldwork teams of 6 participants to meet 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

3rd May 2022 Day 5: Working with theories of practice in research and policy

This final day considers the relevance of practice theory in research and policy. Having addressed questions of power and issues of methodology we look 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.

11.25-11.30: Brief run through of the programme for Day 5. Stan and Elizabeth.

11.30-12.30: Questions of power, with special guest, Matt Watson. You will have listened to the podcast with Matt and read his chapter on power. In this session, Matt will briefly reflect on the place of power in practice theory and respond to your questions on this topic.

12.30-13.30: Eating event. Fieldwork teams of 6 participants to meet together and discuss the future: their own future, the future of the ideas they have encountered, the future of practice theory in general.

13.30-14.30: 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, guided by participants' responses to these questions. Are practice theoretical approaches excluded by current methods and styles of policy making? (consider with reference to specific fields or areas). Which methods and strategies for 'behaviour change' are compatible with practice theory? Can practice theories engage with 'big' issues of governance, inequality and power? If so, how?

14.30-15.00: Break

15.00-15.30: Working with practice theory in practice: sharing experiences of method and methodology – a session in which we discuss and reflect on the distinctive challenges of undertaking practice theoretical research. Informed by your reading on this topic, and by the issues you are confronting in your own research you can 'call in' to a radio show hosted by Stan with invited commentators, Ted and Elizabeth.

16.00-16.30: Feedback and reflection. Time to write a postcard sized email to someone you know who was not on the course but who might be interested and/or to your supervisor or to a colleague telling them what you gained from the course, what you didn't like about it and what could be improved. This is also time to give us some anonymous feedback on the course by filling in [this form](#).

16.30: Finale: capping it off. Group photo with everyone wearing some kind of hat/cap.