

St. Francis Xavier University
Department of Sociology

KEY ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGY (SOC1 102)

Winter 2017

Lecture Room: NH248

Mondays: 2:15pm – 3:30pm

Wednesdays: 2:15pm – 3:30pm

Instructor: Stephen Marmura

Email: smarmura@stfx.ca

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:00am – 11:00am; Thursdays 10:00am – 12:00pm;
Fridays 10:00pm – 11:00am; or by appointment

Office: Annex 111C

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The types of social issues and contexts examined by sociologists vary widely. This course builds upon the foundations established in SOCI 101, by introducing students to some of the discipline's major sub-fields and areas of contemporary research. We will consider a range of diverse and intriguing areas of sociological investigation including religion, deviance, gender relations, social movements, race and ethnicity, and processes of globalization. Students are encouraged to think critically about these and related areas of the social world, while gaining greater insight with respect to the forces and circumstances shaping their own beliefs, attitudes, motivations and values.

Required prerequisite: To gain credit for this course, students must have successfully completed SOCI 101.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS:

Murray Knuttila and Andre Magnon. *Introducing Sociology: A Critical Approach*. 5th edition. Oxford, 2012.

John J. Macionis, Nijole V. Benokraitis and Peter Urmetzer. *Classic, Contemporary, and Cross-Cultural Readings in Sociology*. 4th Canadian Edition. Pearson, 2014.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Class Participation:

While there is no specific grade for class participation in this course, students are expected to attend class regularly and repeated absences will be noted. Keep in mind that lectures and course readings are meant to *complement* one another, and I will often refer to material in class which moves beyond the examples provided in your textbook. You are expected to be familiar with *all* course material. Lectures are critical for gaining a better appreciation and understanding of the various perspectives provided in your text, as these vary considerably from chapter to chapter. In addition, a considerable amount of class time will be devoted to discussion. This is an important way for students to more fully digest course material and gain deeper insight with respect to readings and lecture material.

You alone are responsible for keeping your own course notes. I do not provide these online and I do not email them to students. In addition, I will sometimes make announcements in class concerning adjustments to readings, test content, and/or assignment requirements. If you have missed a class for a legitimate reason (e.g. a documented absence due to medical concerns) and want to go over what was covered during the lecture in question, then please come and visit me during my office hours.

Quiz: 10% of final grade
Date: Jan. 30 (in class)

Mid-Term test: 30% of final grade
Date: Feb. 27 (in class)

Critical Response Paper:
20% of final grade (due: last day of class)

Final Exam: 40% of final grade
Date: TBA

A general outline for the response paper is provided at the back of this syllabus.

Please note: For reasons of both security and practicality *I do not email individual grades* on tests, papers or exams to students. Such requests will not be responded to. If you were absent when a test or paper was handed back, want to look over a final exam (these are not handed back) or want to discuss a grade, then please come and see me during my office hours.

COURSE OUTLINE

Jan. (4) (9, 11) Contemporary Sociological Theory

Chapter 8

Abu-Graib and Insaniyat (response paper reading)

Arshin Adib-Moghaddam

<http://www.monthlyreview.org/1207adib-moghaddam.htm>

Jan. (16, 18) Religion

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

Max Weber (287-292)

Canada's Mythical Religious Mosaic: Some Census Findings

Reginald W. Bibby (293-297)

Women and Islam

Jane I. Smith (298-304)

Jan. (23, 25) Class and Status Inequality

Chapter 11

Jan. 30 Quiz 10%

Feb. 1) Class and Inequality cont.

Experiences of Social Class: Learning from Occupational Therapy Students

Brenda Beagan (227-233)

The Economy and Society

Jim Stanford (234-239)

Feb. (6, 8) (13, 15) The Polity, Political Power and Social Movements

Chapter 12

Feb. (20, 22) *Study Break*

Feb. (27) Deviance and Social Control

The Functions of Crime

Emile Durkheim (122-124)

Canadian Cannabis: Marijuana as an Irritant/Problem in Canada-U.S. Relations

Paul Gecelovsky (134- 137)

Mar. (1) Mid-term exam 30%

Mar. (6, 8) Deviance cont.

Chapter 16

Mar. 13,15) Gender and Sexuality

Chapters 6 & 13

Mar. (20, 22) Ethnic and Race Relations

Chapter 17

Mar. (27, 29) Globalization

Chapter 18

Apr. (3, 5) The Environment

Why Humanity Faces Ultimate Catastrophe

(Thomas Robert Malthus: 389-392)

Fool's Paradise

(Ronald Wright: 393-397)

How Many Energy Servants Are Supporting Your Lifestyle?

(Sarah S. Mosko: 398-403)

Critical Response Paper

Value: 20% of your final grade

Length: 5 – 7 pages (double-spaced; 12 pt. font)

Due Date: April 5 (in class)

During your undergraduate studies, you will frequently be required to provide 'critiques' or critical appraisals of specific articles, essays or books. The main purpose is for you to demonstrate your capacity to think analytically and logically, while drawing upon both your own creative insights, and relevant sociological concepts and frameworks. For the purposes of this assignment you are expected to write a response to the article, *Abu Ghraib and Insaniyat*, by Arshin Adib-Moghaddam. This article, which was one of the assigned readings for the first week of class, is available at the following Web address (or Google the title): <http://www.monthlyreview.org/1207adib-moghaddam.htm>

General Guidelines:

Your responses are to take the form of short essays. Because space is limited, avoid spending too much time summarizing content. Instead, try to succinctly convey a general sense of what the article is about, while providing the necessary context for the specific points and arguments you wish to raise in the course of your critique. Keep in mind that writing a strong paper requires the development of a clear thesis statement in your introduction. This provides the reader with a sense of the position you are taking, while allowing you to tie your points and arguments together in a coherent manner. You should also refer to any ideas that you feel are relevant taken from your textbook and/or raised in class as this will make for a stronger paper. You may consult journal articles or other academic resources if you wish, although this is not required. Any sources which you cite (including textbook) should be listed in a reference section at the end of your paper.

The questions below may serve as useful points of reference in terms of what to consider when writing your response papers. Please note that this is a general guideline only – i.e. do not answer these questions in an overt, step-by-step manner. They are intended as prompts to help you keep on track, and you will likely find yourself thinking along these or similar lines intuitively.

- What is the author's central argument or objective in writing this article?
- What other arguments or evidence is offered in support of this (central) argument or objective?
- What is the significance of the author's position in terms of its larger sociological implications?

- How does the author's position clash or overlap with some of the sociological perspectives considered in this course?
- What other conclusions might be drawn from the same evidence presented by the author and/or what counterarguments or objections could be raised from a different perspective?
- How convincing or important do you find the author's argument(s) overall?

Citing and Referencing Sources:

The Sociology Department page of the StFX Web site provides citation and reference style guidelines for the American Sociological Association (ASA). Look under the 'Current Students' heading to find this. You may use another citation style if you wish (e.g. Chicago style, American Psychological Association – APA). My main concern is that you are consistent with whichever style you choose.

Please Note: Students are expected to be familiar with the academic integrity policy concerning plagiarism as set out in the StFX Academic Calendar.