

SOCI 427: Sociology of Friendship
St. Francis Xavier University
Department of Sociology
Winter 2014

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Course Description

This advanced course in social theory invites you to engage with scholarly debates on the meaning and significance of friendship in contemporary societies. Throughout the course you will have the opportunity to consider recent sociological research on friendship practices as well as the original works of ancient and early modern social and political theorists whose ideas on friendship are still generating lively debate in sociology. The course will cover the work of philosophers such as Aristotle and Montaigne, the writings of early social theorists such as Adam Smith, Durkheim and Simmel, as well as contemporary theoretical works on friendship. As we read the different theorists we will not focus on friendship in isolation, but instead investigate how the theme of friendship opens us to broader questions with a bearing on human bonds such as intimacy, the self, gender, the meaning of the public and the private, social solidarity, exchange and reciprocity, and social inequality. The problem of friendship will also raise the question of other forms of social bonds such as strangerhood, acquaintanceship, enmity, and love relations.

Course Evaluation

25% Critical Reflection Papers (5 at 5% each)

5% Essay Proposal

35% Essay

25% Take-Home Exam

10% Seminar Participation

Critical Reflection Papers:

You will be expected to write short papers on five of the twelve weeks of readings. Each paper will consist of a concise and careful examination of the readings assigned for the week and will be due in class on the day the readings are discussed. Papers will not be accepted outside of class. The papers should be between 500 to 750 words. In each paper you will be expected to, a) present a summary of the author's arguments and discuss the strengths and weaknesses; b) offer your own reflection on an issue or theme in the readings which you believe deserves attention; c) relate ideas in the readings to themes in the course; and d) raise questions which you would like to see discussed in the seminar. Students will be expected to discuss their critical reflection papers in class.

Essay Proposal:

An essay proposal will be due in class no later than March 5. You are welcome to hand it in earlier. The proposal should offer an overview of the topic or problem you have chosen for your essay, provide a description of your argument, state how your essay will be organized or structured into sections, and list between 5 and 10 scholarly sources, preferably in ASA style.

Essay:

The essay will be due no later than Friday, April 4. You will be able to choose and develop your own topic, but it must be related to course themes. Your essay may address either a theoretical problem related to friendship and social bonds or you may take a more empirical focus. If you wish to do original research (such as interviews) you need to apply for ethics approval through the Department of Sociology. Each paper will be around 3000 words (12 pages) and formatted according to ASA style guidelines.

Seminar Participation:

Seminar classes require a high level of participation from students. Unlike a lecture class, you and your fellow students will be providing much of the content of the course. Please bring the readings to class, and be prepared to offer your questions and insights. Being prepared for class with thoughtful comments on the day's readings is a requirement for this course. Students submitting critical reflection papers will be asked to read sections of their responses, but all students should have questions and comments prepared on the day's readings.

Take-Home Exam:

There will be a take home exam during the regular exam period.

IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION AND POLICIES

Late Policy

Late papers submitted without prior permission will incur a late penalty of 5% of the total assignment per day, including weekends.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Since this course requires you to complete a written assignment, you should familiarize yourself with standards for proper referencing of all materials cited (i.e. books, journals, newspaper articles, internet resources etc.). Students who attempt to pass off someone else's work as their own (plagiarism) will be dealt with through the university policy on academic honesty. Please ensure that you fully understand this policy (see section 3.8 in the calendar).

Special Accommodations

If you develop a prolonged illness or encounter a personal crisis that will impact your participation in the course, please contact me as soon as the problem becomes apparent. Your best strategy for dealing with anything that may prevent you from completing the course in a way that is satisfactory to you is to discuss your concerns with me as soon as they become apparent so that we can work out a way of responding to them.

Other Accommodations

If you are a student with physical, learning, or psychiatric disabilities that require reasonable accommodation in teaching style or evaluation, you should speak with me early in the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

LECTURE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Jan 8 Introduction to the Course – Why study Friendship?

Overview of the course and syllabus

Jan 15 Aristotle on Friendship

Aristotle. 1991. "Nicomachean Ethics (Books VIII and IX)." Pp. 27-50 in *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship*, edited by M. Pakaluk. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.

Pahl, Ray. 2000. "What is Friendship?" Pp. 13-44 in *On Friendship*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Jan 22 Aristotle on Friendship, Continued

Aristotle. 1991. "Nicomachean Ethics (Books VIII and IX)." Pp. 50-69 in *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship*, edited by M. Pakaluk. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.

Lewis, C.S. 1993. "Friendship—The Least Necessary Love." Pp. 39-47 in *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader*, edited by N. Badhwar. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Jan 29 Contemporary Sociological Approaches

Blatterer, Harry. 2013. "Friendship's Freedom and Gendered Limits." *European Journal of Social Theory* 16(4): 435–456.

Silver, Alan. 1997. "Two Different Sorts of Commerce: Friendship and Strangership in Civil Society." Pp. 43-76 in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice*, edited by Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Allan, Graham. 1989. *Friendship: Developing a Sociological Perspective*. San Francisco, CA: Westview Press. Pp: 13-29.

Feb 5 Friendship and the Self

Cocking, Dean, and Jeanette Kennett. 1998. "Friendship and the Self." *Ethics* 108(3): 502–527.

Montaigne, Michel de. 1958 [original 1580]. "On Friendship." Pp. 91-105 in *Essays*. Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books.

Carrier, James. 1999. "People Who Can Be Friends: Selves and Social Relationships." Pp. 21-38 in *The Anthropology of Friendship*, edited by S. Bell and S. Coleman. New York: Berg.

Feb 12 Friendship, Sex and Gender

Rawlings, William. 2009. "Talking with College Students about Frontiers and Frustrations of Cross-Sex Friendships." Pp. 109-136 in *The Compass of Friendship*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Roseneil, Sasha. 2006. "Foregrounding Friendship: Feminist Pasts, Feminist Futures." Pp. 323-341 In *The Sage Handbook of Gender and Women's Studies*, edited by K. Davis, M. Evans and J. Lorber, 323–341. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Foucault, Michel. 1997. "Friendship as a Way of Life." Pp. 135-40 in *Michel Foucault: Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*, edited by Paul Rabinow. New York: The Free Press.

Feb 19 Transformations of Intimacy

Seidman, Steven. 2013. "Intimate Life in the 'West'." Pp. 318-29 in *Contested Knowledge: Social Theory Today*, fifth edition. Malden, MA. Wiley-Blackwell.

Giddens, Anthony. 1992. *Transformations of Intimacy*.

Klinenberg, Eric. 2012. "Going Solo: American Consumers Stay Single," *Fortune Magazine*, February 6. Available Online at: <http://finance.fortune.cnn.com/2012/01/25/eric-klinenberg-going-solo/>

Feb 26 Reading Week – No Classes

March 5* The Commercialization of Personal Relations

Wittel, Andreas. 2001. "Toward a Network Sociality." *Theory, Culture & Society* 18(6): 51–76.

Hochschild, Arlie. 2003. "The Commodity Frontier." Pp. 30-44 in *The Commercialization of Intimate Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Van Dijck, José. 2013. "'You Have One Identity': Performing the Self on Facebook and LinkedIn." *Media, Culture and Society* 35(2): 199-215.

**Essay Proposal Due in Class*

March 12 Gifts and Exchange

Mauss, Marcel. 1990 [original 1923]. *The Gift: The Form and Reason For Exchange in Archaic Societies*. New York: Routledge. Pp. 1-46.

Hochschild, Arlie. 2003. "The Economy of Gratitude." Pp. 104-118 in *The Commercialization of Intimate Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

March 19 Friendship and Social Solidarity

Wallace, Ruth and Shirley Hartley. 1988. 'Religious Elements in Friendship: Durkheimian Theory in an Empirical Context.' Pp. 93-106 in *Durkheimian Sociology: Cultural Studies*, edited by J. Alexander. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Durkheim, Émile. 2008 [original 1912]. "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life." Pp. 72-80 in *Readings in Social Theory: The Classic Tradition to Post-Modernism*, edited by J. Farganis. Toronto: McGraw Hill.

Durkheim, Émile. 1973 [original 1898]. "Individualism and the Intellectuals." Pp. 43-57 in *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society*, edited by R. Bellah. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

March 26 Friends and Strangers

Simmel, Georg. 1971 [original 1908]. *The Stranger*. Pp. 143-179 in *On Individuality and Social Forms*, edited by D. N. Levine. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2004. "Rethinking Strangeness: From Structures in Space to Discourses in Civil Society." *Thesis Eleven* 79: 87–104.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 1998. "Citizen and Enemy as Symbolic Classification: On the Polarizing Discourse of Civil Society." *Real Civil Societies: Dilemmas of Institutionalization*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

April 2 Political Friendship

Schwarzenbach, Sibyl. 2005. "Democracy and Friendship." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 36(2): 233-254.

Devere, Heather, and Graham M. Smith. 2010. "Friendship and Politics." *Political Studies Review* 8(3): 341–356.

Mallory, Peter. 2012. "Friendship and Strangership: Rethinking Political Friendship through the Work of Adam Smith." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 33(6): 591–605.