

St. Francis Xavier University
Department of Sociology

Sociology 102: Contemporary Topics

Syllabus: Fall Semester 2017-18

Dr. John Phyne
Annex 110A

Class Times: Tuesday, 11:15 to 12:30 PM; Friday, 12:15 to 1:30 PM.

Office Hours: Monday, 12:00 to 2:00 PM; Tuesday, 9:30 to 10:30 AM; Friday, 10:30 to 11:30 or by appointment.

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Course Rules: In order to have a productive semester, the following rules will be used in this course. If you do not want to abide by these rules, I suggest that you drop this course as soon as possible:

1. Turn off all cell phones at the commencement of class. If you use a cell phone in class, I will ask you to turn it off. If you refuse, I will end the class and report the matter to the Dean of Arts. Cell phone usage in class is a disrespectful and disruptive act.
2. Laptops are not permitted for taking notes. These devices are disruptive to the classroom environment.
3. There are no extra assignments or tests. If you perform below your expectations, it is your responsibility to see me so you can improve on your performance in the next test.
4. Your grade is your unit of concern. It is your responsibility to keep track of your grade. I will not e-mail test results or calculate your grades for you. Come to class and collect your tests.
5. Academic Integrity: The Academic Integrity Policy may be found at: http://www.sites.stfx.ca/registrars_office/academic_integrity. Students do not need to be caught USING a device like a smart phone during a test or exam to be in violation of the policy. Simply having the unauthorized device on their person during the test or exam is a violation of the policy. In other words, put your cell phone away before the commencement of a test.
6. E-mail Policy: Please restrict your e-mails to necessary communications. These include extended absences from class (more than one week) and family emergencies. I refuse to use e-mail to cover lectures from missed classes. My office hours or the phone are be used to cover materials pertaining to the course. You can also see me after class.

Textbooks

John J. Macionis, Nijole V. Benokraitis and Peter Urmetzer, eds. *Seeing Ourselves: Classic, Contemporary and Cross-Cultural Readings in Sociology*. Fourth Canadian Edition. Toronto: Pearson, 2014.

Robert Brym, *Sociology as a Life or Death Issue*. Fourth Canadian Edition. Nelson Education, 2018.

Eric Klineberg, “Denaturalizing disaster: A social autopsy of the 1995 Chicago heat wave.” *Theory and Society*. Volume 28, pp. 239-295, 1999. (available in Moodle).

While the last item is an article and not a textbook, it is a requirement for your essay. Download this article from the Moodle page for the course.

Course Outline

This course takes the approaches used in *Sociology 101* and applies these to contemporary issues. The course is divided into four sections. *Section One* is an overview of the perspectives and methods introduced in *Sociology 101*. This serves as a refresher to sociological ways of thinking about the world. *Section Two* takes the approaches from *Section One* and applies these to the multiple dimensions of social inequality. Why does social inequality matter? Sociological research has demonstrated that high levels of inequality are reflected in more violence and shorter life spans. Hence, attention to the level of inequality within a society has implications for all of us. In this section, emphasis is given to the class, ethnic/racial and gender dimensions of inequality, and how these dimensions overlap. *Section Three* focuses upon the health and environmental risks in the contemporary world. Industrialization and modernity has resulted in longer life spans for most people, but we are not all equal when it comes to risks for certain diseases and access to health care to treat such diseases. Health care is not merely a medical issue, it is a reflection of the way we organize the societies within which we live. In this section, we will also look at environmental risks such as ‘natural disasters’ and global climate change. Natural disasters strike different populations in different ways. In many cases, marginalized populations are at greater risk when ‘natural disasters’ strike. Moreover, such disasters are influenced by global climate change, a phenomena that is affected by anthropomorphic factors such as industrialization. *Section Four* is an overview of the multiple dimensions of social change. Here attention is given to population changes and characteristics, the increasing urbanization of the world, and the role economic, political and cultural globalization plays in connecting our actions to the livelihoods of others.

A lot of territory will be covered in this course. Hence, it is important to ensure that you come to class and keep up with the assigned readings. My objective is to provide you with a critical focus on the contemporary world. I do not aim to give easy answers to complex issues. If you leave this course with more questions than what you had when you entered the course, I have done my job.

Evaluation

- 1) Test 1: Tuesday, October 3, 2017. Two essay questions. This is worth **25 per cent** of your final grade.
- 2) Test 2: Tuesday, November 7, 2017. Two essay questions. This is worth **25 per cent** of your final grade.
- 3) Essay: Due in class (not under my door after class), Tuesday, November 14, 2017. I only accept hard copy; e-mail submissions are not permitted. The guidelines for your paper are in Moodle. These will be discussed in class on Tuesday, September 12, 2017. This is worth **20 per cent** of your final grade.
- 4) Test 3: Final Examination. Two essay questions worth 50 marks each. This examination is worth **30 per cent** of your final grade.

Required Readings

Read each chapter in the order in which it appears below. Please note that class lectures and required readings will be the basis for all of your tests. A failure to attend class and/or complete your readings will result in a poor grade.

Section One: Exploring Contemporary Topics (Two Weeks)

C. Wright Mills, “The Sociological Imagination”, pp. 1-6, in Macionis, et al., eds.

Max Weber, “The Case for Value-Free Sociology”, pp. 23-24, in Macionis, et al., eds.

Robert Brym, “Chapter 1: Sociology as a Life or Death Issue”, pp. 3-11.

Robert Brym, “Chapter 8: Sociology as a Vocation”, pp. 149-164.

Section Two: The Multiple Dimensions of Social Inequality (Three Weeks)

Social Class

John Porter, “The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada”, pp. 152 – 159 in Macionis et al., eds.

Melanie Rock, Lynn McIntyre, and Krista Rondeau, “Discomforting Comfort Foods: Stirring the Pot on Kraft Dinner and Social Inequality in Canada”, pp. 160-170 in Macionis et al., eds.

David P. Ross, Katherine J. Scott, and Peter J. Smith, “Introduction to the Canadian Fact Book On Poverty”, pp. 171-175 in Macionis, et al., eds.

Scott Davies, “Stubborn Disparities: Explaining Class Inequalities in Schooling”, pp. 312-23, Macionis, et al., eds.

Ethnicity and Race

Patricia Duhaney, “Why Is Our Educational System Still Guilty of Whiteness”, pp. 206-211 in Macionis, et al. eds.

Robert Brym, “Chapter 2: Hip Hop from Caps to Bling”, pp. 13-31

Robert Brym, “Chapter 7: Canadian Genocide”, pp. 125-146.

Gender

Arlie Russell Hochschild, “Marriage in the Stalled Revolution”, pp. 260-66 in Macionis, et al., eds.

Robert Brym, “Chapter 6: Gender Risk”, pp. 105-123.

Section Three: Health and Environmental Risks (Four Weeks)

Health Risks

Raisa Debra, “Getting What We Pay For: Myths and Realities About Financing Canada’s Health System”, pp. 337-343 Macionis, et al., eds.

Robert Brym, “The Social Bases of Cancer”, pp. 81-102.

Environmental Risks: Climate Change and Disasters

Ronald Wright, “Fool’s Paradise”, pp. 393-397 in Macionis, et al., eds.

Sarah S. Mosko, “How Many Energy Servants are Supporting Your Lifestyle”, pp. 398-403 in Macionis, et al., eds.

Robert Brym, “Hurricane Katrina and the Myth of Natural Disasters”, pp. 53-79.

Eric Klineberg, “Denaturalizing disaster: A social autopsy of the 1995 Chicago heat wave.” *Theory and Society*. Volume 28, pp. 239-295, 1999. (available in Moodle).

Social Change: Population, Urbanization and Globalization (Three Weeks)

Population

Thomas Robert Malthus, "Why Humanity Faces Ultimate Catastrophe", pp. 389-392 in Macionis, et al., eds.

Neena Chappell, Lynn MacDonald, and Michael Stones, "Canada's Aging Population", pp. 212- 219 in Macionis, et al., eds.

Frank B. Hobbs and Bonnie L. Damon, "Our Aging World", pp. 220-222.

Urbanization

Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life", pp. 360-366 in Macionis, et al., eds.

Donald H. Clairmont and Denis William Magill, "Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community", pp. 372-383 in Macionis, et al., eds.

Sean Condon, "No Place for Home", pp. 367-371 in Macionis, et al., eds.

Globalization

Marlise Simons, "The Price of Modernization: The Case of Brazil's Kaiapo Indians", pp. 434-440 in Macionis, et al., eds.

Gerardo Otero and Gabriela Pechlaner, "Is Biotechnology the Answer: The Evidence From NAFTA", pp. 253-259 in Macionis, et al., eds.

Peter Urmetzer, "Free Trade and the Third World", pp. 176-183 in Macionis, et al., eds.