

St. Francis Xavier University
Department of Sociology

Sociology 101.17: Introduction to Sociology I
Syllabus: Fall Semester 2018-19

Dr. John Phyne
Annex 110A

Class Times: Tuesday: 11:15 AM to 12:30 PM; Friday: 12:45 to 2:00 PM.

Office Hours: Monday: 2:00 to 4:00 PM; Tuesday: 2:00 to 4:00 PM; Friday: 11:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

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Course Rules: In order to have a productive semester, the following rules will be used. If you do not want to abide by these rules, 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 that I no longer tolerate. My lectures are not on your cell phone.
2. Laptops are not permitted. These devices are also disruptive to the classroom environment.
3. There are no extra assignments or tests: If you perform below your expectations, it is your responsibility to contact me for assistance. I will not provide extra assignments or tests. Furthermore, if you perform below your expectations, do not wait until the last two weeks of class to contact me.
4. 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. 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.
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.

Course Outline

This course introduces students to the social scientific study of society. The major objective is to get students to place their own circumstances within a wider social context. Students will gain an understanding of social structures, social institutions, social norms, values and beliefs, and social interaction. These concepts form the basic building blocks of sociological analysis. At the end of the course, students should be able to think sociologically, and grasp some of the basic tools necessary for engaging in sociological analysis. The course is divided into three sections: *First*, students are introduced to the nature of sociological analysis and its relevance for understanding the world within which we live. We focus upon the four major perspectives in sociology as ‘lenses’ for viewing the social world. These include: functionalism, political economy (or conflict theory), symbolic interactionism and feminism. This section also considers the methods used by sociologists to investigate patterns of social interaction and social institutions. *Second*, we explore ‘culture’ as a set of beliefs, norms, values and practices influencing everyday life. *Third*, we focus upon social inequality. This includes social stratification, gender inequality, race and ethnic relations, and development and underdevelopment. The last topic is a focus upon relations between the Global North and the Global South.

Textbook

Robert Brym, ed. **New Society**. 8th Edition. Toronto: Nelson Education, 2017.

Evaluation

- 1) **Test 1**: Tuesday, October 2, 2018. Two essay questions worth 50 marks each. This test is worth **30 per cent** of your final grade.
- 2) **Test 2**: Tuesday, November 6, 2018. Two essay questions worth 50 marks each. This test is worth **30 per cent** of your final grade.
- 3) **Class Participation: 10 per cent** of your final grade. This grade consists of both class attendance and participation. The use of a cellphone in class will count as non-attendance. Students will be asked to address questions in class on Friday that are raised in class on Tuesday.
- 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

All required readings are from your textbook.

Section One: Sociological Perspectives and Research Methods (Four weeks)

There are several perspectives in sociology. Here, we cover the ‘classic approaches’. Each approach provides a unique perspective for investigating the social world. The objective is to understand each of these perspectives as opposed to indicating that this is ‘the right way’ to think about the social. Sociology has its roots in the early 19th century. This was a time when the use of science to observe and explain the world around us became widely accepted. Sociologists cannot conduct lab experiments like natural scientists. They live in the society that is being studied. Nevertheless, they observe what is going on around them and seek patterns in social behaviour and social institutions. In the process, they use methods of research such as face-to-face interviews, ethnography, social surveys and historical materials in order to interpret the social world and draw conclusions on ‘what is going on’.

Robert Brym, “Chapter 1: Introducing Sociology”, pp. 2-29.

Neil Guppy, “Chapter 2: Research Methods”, pp. 30-56.

Section Two: Engaging with the Social World: Culture, Communication and the Media (Three weeks)

Sociologists argue that we learn how to be members of society. However, we do not necessarily know the norms, values and beliefs of other societies or even subcultures within our own society. We normally accept what are taken as suitable social practices and use these as a yardstick to measure the validity of social practices in other cultures and societies. The objective here is to get you to place your norms, values, beliefs, and practices in a wider social context. Communication and the mass media are critical institutions and practices connected to how culture is produced and disseminated. In addition, some groups are institutions are better positioned than others in influencing what are the suitable norms, values, beliefs and social practices at a given point in time within a society.

Robert Brym, “Chapter 3: Culture”, pp. 59-79.

Sonia Bookman, “Chapter 6: Communication and the Mass Media”, pp. 125-144.

Section Three: The Multiple Dimensions of Social Inequality (Six weeks)

Contemporary societies are characterised by multiple dimensions of social inequality. These include inequalities based upon social class, gender, race and ethnicity, and the divisions between the Global North and the Global South. In many cases, these dimensions overlap, and can include other aspects of inequality such as age and sexual orientation. Social inequalities are historically derived and often serve as bases for social conflict in contemporary societies. Many of these conflicts are rooted in large differences in material inequality (one aspect of social class) and/or struggles to gain equal rights in institutions such as workplaces and the political arena. A major theme in this section of the course is that inequalities are not ‘natural’, but are a reflection of the ways different societies are organised across time and space.

Marisa Young, “Chapter 8: Gender Inequality”, pp. 174-195.

Vic Satzewich, “Chapter 9: Race and Ethnic Relations”, pp. 196-222.

Anthony Winson, “Chapter 10: Development and Underdevelopment”, pp. 223-244.