

**St. Francis Xavier University  
Department of Sociology**

**SOCI 216: Canadian Society  
Winter 2017**

Instructor: Dr. Neal A. Smithwick  
Office: AX 111A  
E-mail: [nsmithwi@stfx.ca](mailto:nsmithwi@stfx.ca)  
Office Hours: Mondays 9:45-1:00; Thursdays 11:15-2:30; or by appointment.

Class Times: Mondays 8:15-9:30 a.m. and Thursdays 9:45-11:00 a.m.  
Classroom Location: J. Bruce Brown Hall, Room 337.

- Please use your St. FX e-mail to avoid having your message blocked by SPAM filters.
- Include “SOCI 216” in the subject line.
- Finally, in our academic environment, please practice writing e-mails formally, as you will need to do on a regular basis upon graduation. For example, use a simple greeting, do not use slang or abbreviations, and always sign off with your name!

**Course Description**

This course will introduce students to the study of Canadian society from a critical sociological point of view. This means that we will examine how Canadian society has become what it is today by focusing on the major issues and themes that are pertinent to particular historical and contemporary events. Students will be asked to make use of these themes and perspectives in their own analyses. To accomplish this goal, we will apply the sociologist’s analytic tools and techniques of synthesis in order to examine political, economic, and social issues in Canadian society. Specifically, you will learn how social class, power, gender, race, ethnicity, the state, and other social phenomena shape Canadian life, and why all members of society do not experience Canada in the same way. Thus, our selected topics under investigation include the experiences of First Nations, immigrant and refugee peoples, as well as phenomena and institutions such as poverty, social media, both the educational and health systems, food, the economy, energy and climate change.

**Learning Objectives**

A comprehensive understanding of Canadian society is not possible without understanding our position in the international context. Therefore, many of our selected topics, especially during the second half of the course, will be situated and compared with the global community. Since there remains an array of social issues in our social class-based capitalist society, there will be opportunity for students to focus on one major concept in order to explore its relevance in Canadian society, independently, OR to perform social service in the Antigonish community. Nevertheless, the main learning outcomes are to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of Canadian culture and national identity.
- Understand the historical and sociological explanations of Canadian society and its development.
- Apply a critical sociological perspective to a range of Canadian social issues.
- Gain an awareness of present-day issues that face Canadian society.
- Prepare either an accomplished research paper or service learning report of an issue/location of their choosing.

### **Course Organization and Expectations**

Due to the nature and sensitivity of topics in this course, we will engage in a variety of learning methods throughout the semester, including participating in small group discussions, conducting independent research, and writing two tests. The evaluation reflects the weighting of these components. For example, the number of topics and themes available to explore in a course on Canadian society is vast. Students are encouraged to explore a topic of their choosing, independently, or to participate in 20 hours of StFX's Service Learning program. This aspect of learning is reflected in the course evaluation, whereby 30% of the final grade will be earned. Similarly, students will earn grades based on the completion of course readings, discussing them in-class, and submitting in-class written reflections based on those discussions.

### **Required Readings**

Samuelson, Les and Wayne Antony. 2012. *Power and Resistance: Critical Thinking about Canadian Social Issues, Fifth Edition*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

### **Evaluation**

**It is simply unfair to alter the course evaluation for any individual. Therefore, under any conditions, there will be no alternative tests or assignments if you miss or do poorly on a requirement.**

- **Furthermore, it is your responsibility to track your own grades: Please do not contact the professor for such information.**

In-Class Critical Reflections	20% (weekly)
Mid-Term Test	25% (February 16)
Essay <b>OR</b> Service Learning Report	30% (April 6)
Final Exam	25% (TBA)

### **In-Class Critical Reflections**

There will be ten graded small group discussions held during class time throughout the semester. Students will arrive at class having both read the required readings and attending lectures, and then break off into groups of three. Students are expected to write a collaborative

critical reflection based on the prompts provided. **Each group must submit their reflection by the end of class in hand-written form (one reflection for each group).** Please include the name and student ID of each group member at the top of your reflection. **If you miss a discussion reflection, then there is no other option to make up these points.** Students do not have to work with the same people on any given discussion, so choose your group members wisely.

- Since these are in-class group discussions, each group is expected to brainstorm together *before writing up one hand-written copy to be submitted before the end of class.*

### **Mid-Term Test and Final Exam**

The Mid-Term Test (25%) and Final Examination (25%) will consist of a combination of questions, such as multiple choice and short answers. There will be a brief review before each of these evaluations, and all course content may be included.

### **Research Essay OR Service Learning Report**

Students can choose whether they want to conduct their own academic research of a topic (of their choosing, but approved by the instructor) or participate in the “Service Learning” program that is organized by the university. **You must select which of the two options no later than January 16.**

- **Once you have selected your option, you will not be able to change your mind because the community will be counting on your stated commitment.**

### **Essay Option:**

You will produce a final draft of an academically researched and written essay of 2,500-3,000 words, according to the “Basic Academic Writing Guidelines” (provided). You will select your own topic about a present social issue in Canada (which you should discuss with the professor). You must refer to multiple peer-reviewed works apart from course readings. All academic writing guidelines will be provided to help you to conduct research and write academically. For example, utilizing proper citations and referencing, basic grammatical errors to be avoided, and even utilizing proper margins, fonts, etc. in all undergraduate academic writing.

### **Service Learning Report:**

Service learning is a teaching and learning method that integrates community service with academic course work. You will select a service placement from the available options (such as volunteering at a community-based program). Through your participation in service related to Canadian society, as well as critically reflecting on your experiences, you will not only gain a deeper understanding of inequality in our society but also a broader appreciation of sociology. Please be advised that your participation will be monitored by both the placement agency and the university. Failure to miss any commitment will be penalized, and once again note that **you cannot choose the essay option after January 16, without exception because the agency will depend on your committed participation.** Final reports will be 2,000-2,500 words, adopting all academic writing guidelines (provided) to help you write academically and to conduct related research.

- Megan Turner, from Service Learning at StFX, will visit our class on January 12 to discuss this option. For more information, here is the link:  
[http://sites.stfx.ca/service\\_learning/](http://sites.stfx.ca/service_learning/)

### Course Outline

Please note that, although each topic/reading will be covered, the following course schedule details may be altered in order to make unforeseen accommodations, such as university-imposed cancelation of classes (due to snow, for example). If this occurs, then students will still be responsible for course reading material.

Date	Topic	Readings/Assignments Due
Jan. 5	Introduction to Social Issues in Canada: A Critical Perspective. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course Schedule, Requirements &amp; Expectations.</li> </ul>	
Jan. 9 & 12	Identifying Social Problems in Canada.	Chapter 1. Jan. 12: Megan Turner, <i>Service Learning Program Manager</i> .
Jan. 16 & 19	Sociological Theories on Social Issues in Canada.	Chapter 2. <b>Jan. 19: Deadline for choosing the Service Learning Report option.</b>
Jan. 23 & 26	First Nations' Experiences in Canada.	Chapter 7.
Jan. 30 & Feb. 2	Immigrant and Refugee Experiences in Canada.	Chapter 8.
Feb. 6 & 9	Poverty as a Social Issue in Canada.	Chapter 5.
Feb. 13	Effects of Social Media in Canadian Society. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review.</li> </ul>	Chapter 13.
Feb. 16	<b>Mid-Term Test</b>	
Feb.27 & Mar. 2	Gender Issues in Canadian Society.	Chapters 3 and 9.
Mar. 6 & 9	The Canadian Educational System.	Chapters 15 and 4.
Mar. 13 & 16	The Canadian Public Health Care System.	Chapter 14.
Mar. 20 & 23	Issues of Food in Canadian Society.	Chapter 11.
Mar. 27 & 30	Canada's Economy in a Global Context.	Chapter 6.
Apr. 3 & 6	Energy and Climate Change Issues in Canada. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review.</li> </ul>	Chapter 12. <b>April 6: Essay/Report Due at the beginning of class: <u>HARD COPIES ONLY.</u></b>

## **Technology and Academic Conduct**

Although electronic devices are allowed in class, especially for annotating lecture content, it is expected that students not distract themselves and others by engaging in content outside of course materials. Think of your undergraduate studies as practice for entering the real world, in which using social media during work hours can often lead to you being fired! Furthermore, *cell phone usage is a very disrespectful and disruptive act, so please put them away prior to class.*

- The course includes a **Moodle** course page, but please do not e-mail the professor via Moodle (use the StFX web-mail). All topics are listed on Moodle to help you follow the course syllabus easily.
- Furthermore, there is a student discussion forum available on Moodle for you to communicate with one another outside of class. Please use this forum for whatever you want, such as asking questions that you may have missed in lectures, organizing study groups, seeking clarity or just to introduce yourself. This forum is for student communication, so I will not be monitoring them (in other words, I will not participate).

## **Accessibility and Accommodation**

St. Francis Xavier University supports academic accommodation for students with any sort of disability so that they may meet the learning objectives of their courses and be given the opportunity to be evaluated fairly on their mastery of course material. The **Tramble Room** welcomes students with documented disabilities and offers them a student-centred program of support. For more information about access and accommodation, please see:

[http://sites.stfx.ca/accessible\\_learning/](http://sites.stfx.ca/accessible_learning/).

- **For all students**, please feel free to speak with me about course material and how to succeed in academia. It is my pleasure to help you.