

SOCI 334: Sociology of Anne of Green Gables



Mondays 12:45pm; Wednesdays 11:15am

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Office Hours: Mondays 11am-12pm; Tuesdays 9:30-11:30am; Wednesdays 2-3pm; or by appointment

A sociologist's job is to attempt to explain and make sense of the social world. We often do this by bringing empirical examples together to create theoretical explanations. We don't always agree; our explanations can vary even when we are looking at the same thing. That's one of the strengths of sociology.

In this course we're going to take a unique approach to theoretical explanations and empirical examples. To begin, we are going to look at a variety of ways to theoretically explain culture. Culture is a difficult concept to define. For now, we will use the basic definition that culture includes the norm, values, mores and folkways of groups of people. Secondly, we will be using the Canadian classic *Anne of Green Gables* (AGG) as our empirical example. The novel, its author and its spinoff incarnations will provide the path by which we can explore the sociology of culture. By the end of this course, you may not only find an affinity for the red-headed girl from PEI but also cultural theory.

Objectives

We could make a list of objectives for the course that includes all the standard items (eg critical thinking, understanding theory, etc.). The objectives I would like to put forward here are of course similar but take a slightly different bent.

First off, the one objective of this course is to expose you to different ways of thinking about culture. From this exposure, you will develop sociological vocabulary and conceptual frameworks

St. FX is located on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaw people.

to talk about cultural aspects. Furthermore, the objective is for you to be intrigued to see the social world around you in a new way, however slight that might end up being.

Secondly, this course will lead you to think about literature differently. Literature is a great gateway into culture. Not only does it tell us about the individual characters' lives, it also can be seen as an exercise in the sociological imagination that C. Wright Mills advocates. Here we see the intersection of biography, history and social structures. By using AGG as the empirical example you will learn how to develop your own sociological imaginations that you can take outside the classroom.

Lastly, this course will not only facilitate critical thinking but reflexive thinking. According to May and Perry (2018: 2), reflexivity means:

Reflexivity is a guard against what we might call a hypodermic realism: that is, the assumption that there is an unproblematic relationship between us and the world, including social scientific practices and its products, which results in a valid and reliable representation of the world. Reflexivity also guards against the opposite view – idealised openness – that reflects a fluid world in which choices and interpretive flexibility are as numerous as the number of people on the planet ... [it is] an examination of the foundations of thought themselves. The focus is on a second-order question concerning thinking itself and not-taking-things-for-granted.

This means that students will be thinking about the about how society “thinks.” It is looking at the taken-for-granted ideas of culture and challenging the status quo. AGG provides a way to initiate reflexivity, as what can be more taken-for-granted, be simpler and be more unassuming than a “girls’ book?”

In order for these objectives to be met, students must feel comfortable in the classroom and come prepared to discuss the topic at hand. This means that ideas are debated, not personalities. This means that all students come to class having done the assigned reading. This means that electronic devices are turned off and put away.

Academic Offences

Cheating is arguably the biggest academic sin one could commit. Cheating includes copying off a fellow classmate or plagiarism. Plagiarism is the passing off ideas that are not your own. This could be through direct copying or using a thesaurus to change a few words. At St FX, first offence means that you are placed on a list of plagiarists. Repeated offences could result in being asked to leave the university. The added penalty in this class is that you will receive a zero for the assignment. The easiest thing you could do is to not do it!

Accommodations

If you are a student who uses the Tramble Centre, please let Dr. Harling Stalker know as soon as possible so that we can make sure that accommodations can be put into place smoothly.

With illness, please contact Dr. Harling Stalker if you are going to miss more than two classes or require accommodation for assignment due dates and test times. If you are sick during the finals, you will need to contact the Dean's Office for any extensions.

Drop Date

Students may drop a course, online in Banner, on or before November 2. After this date students are not permitted to drop courses without permission from their Dean (please see 3.1 in academic calendar for policy regarding course drops).

Class structure

You are expected to read in this class. You will read AGG within the first two weeks of class starting. While there are many editions of AGG available I would recommend the one edited by Cecily Devereax. This is available at the Campus Store.

The readings are structured so that we will explore cultural theories in one to two classes and then use AGG to apply the theories. You will come to class having done the appropriate reading, grasped the general premise of the article, and be prepared to discuss it. Please feel free to bring questions about material that you didn't quite grasp. I like to engage in a dialogical approach to teaching, so questions are always welcome. Please don't feel intimidated by the readings. As a class we will make sure that everyone comes out with a strong understanding of the arguments.

In this class we will be using Microsoft Teams as our learning platform. There will not be a Moodle page for this class. The readings, except for AGG, will be found here. Teams is also where you will upload your assignments (except for the postcard one). If you have not received notification that you have access to the Team or have joined the class late, please let Dr. Harling Stalker know.

Evaluations

Postcard (5%): You will be given a blank card to create a postcard that you would send to a friend or relative explaining your favourite quote from AGG. You will be required to put the page number from which the quote comes from. If you are not using the suggested version of AGG you must provide the full bibliographical information. This is due September 21. If this is not handed in, no other work will be graded for the course. Late penalties of 5% per day will be used for late submissions.

Paper proposal (10%): You will write a 250-500 words paper proposal explaining what you will be doing for your term paper. Imagine that you are writing this for a special edition of the L.M.

Montgomery Institute's Journal on AGG and cultural theory. You will need to select a cultural theorist that is not covered in class and apply their theory to AGG. You will need to also include an initial bibliography, which must consist of at least 8 academic sources. This is due October 31. If this is not completed, the term paper will not be marked. Late penalties of 5% per day will be used for late submissions.

Term paper (25%): You are to write 2000-2500 words essay that explores a cultural theory not tackled in class and apply it to AGG. You will be expected to use ASA formatting and have a minimum of 8 academic sources. This is due November 23. Late penalties of 5% per day will be used for late submissions.

Midterm (25%): This will cover all material up to the time of the midterm and will be primarily essay based. It will take place October 19.

Final (25%): This will cover all material from the midterm on and will be primarily essay based. It will be scheduled by the registrar's office.

Participation (10%): This will reflect your attendance, preparedness, and contribution to the class.

Class Schedule

September

- 7th: Introduction to: Class, AGG, Sociology of Culture and Literature, Close reading
12th: “Culture and civilisation” traditions – Arnold and Leavis
14th: Culture industry – Frankfurt School
19th: AGG – Hersey Nickel
21st: Cultural materialism – Williams
POSTCARD DUE
26th: Popular culture – Bennett
28th: AGG – Cardinali Cormier

October

- 3rd: Ideology and Utopia – Ricoeur
5th: AGG – Tulloch
10th: THANKSGIVING
12th: Psychoanalysis – Lacan
17th: AGG – Slater
19th: MIDTERM
24th: Mythology – Barthes
26th: Simulacrum – Baudrillard
31st: AGG – Matheson
PAPER ABSTRACT AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

November

- 2nd: Class – Bourdieu
7th: NO CLASS
9th: NO CLASS
14th: AGG – Siourbas
16th: Feminisms – Radway
21st: Post-Feminisms – McRobbie

23rd: AGG -- Myles

PAPER DUE

28th: Race and Whiteness -- Ahmed

30th: Post-colonialism -- Fanon

December

5th: AGG -- Shields