



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Foundations of Sociology (Soci. 101:11) Fall 2020 Syllabus

Instructor: Donna MacDonald. (pronouns she/her)
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Class schedule: Tuesday 9:45-11 and Thurs 8:15-9:30
Office hours: ON MOODLE – Collaborate (send email to book a time)
Tuesday 11am-12pm (noon) Thursday 10am-12pm -(noon)

Or by appointment

Course Description

One part of a two-part introduction to the discipline of sociology, this course provides students with the foundations of sociological theory, methods and historic considerations which are applied in SOCI 102. In this course you will be introduced to the sociological perspective, to theoretical orientations, to the methods used to study human behaviour and to the concepts that guide the thinking and research of sociologists. You will learn about the development of sociology as a field of research and learn various theoretical perspectives central to the study of society.

Underlying the discipline of sociology is the Sociological perspective. This point of view brings the world to life in a new and instructive way. You will learn about the role of society in your life and the lives of others. You will learn how the general social categories into which we happen to fall shape our particular life experiences. The sociological imagination allows sociologists to make connections between personal experiences and larger social issues.

You will be introduced to three major historical theorists in the social sciences: Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim as well as contemporary social theorists. The theories will be examined by highlighting the historical context in which the theories were written as well as key concepts that can be applied to social issues today.

You will see how sociologists have helped change and mold the social world we know today, and sociology continues to be an exciting topic to study because it teaches people how they fit into the bigger picture of society. We can look at ourselves through a sociological perspective to see how we classify ourselves and how others classify us. This is an invaluable tool for living and working in an increasingly diverse and globalized world. While one aim of this course is to give you a sampling of the diversity of perspectives and insights in sociology, another is to introduce you to what all sociologists have in common—that they all approach the study of

human behaviour socially. Our central focus throughout this course will be the question of what it means to think sociologically about the issues of our world.

Sociology looks beyond normal, taken-for-granted views of reality, to provide deeper, more illuminating and challenging understandings of social life. Through its particular analytical perspective, social theories, and research methods, sociology is a discipline that expands our awareness and analysis of the human social relationships, cultures, and institutions that profoundly shape both our lives and human history.

Sociology is an immensely challenging and exciting discipline. It involves the systematic study and explanation of social life, groups and societies. Studying Sociology can give you new ways of seeing the world, encouraging you to question aspects of it you had previously taken for granted. Sociology can provide you with the ‘tools’ to become a better informed and more socially aware member of society by asking you to think critically.

Overall course objectives:

1. Learn the sociological perspective & develop critical thinking skills
2. Develop (or enhance) an interest in social & political issues, and current affairs
3. To see key influences on today’s thinking by examining the history of social thought
4. Distinguish between the major sociological paradigms and understand their theoretical foundations.
5. Understand how sociologists go about studying society
6. Identify how the sociological perspective illuminates understanding
7. Evaluate ideas and debates using the sociological perspective.

Required Texts:

Required Textbooks:

Ravelli, Bruce & Michelle Webber. 2019. “Exploring Sociology: A Canadian Perspective”. Fourth Edition. Toronto: Pearson. (Third edition is also acceptable)

Electronic copies of readings will be available on Moodle or through the St. FX library

Evaluation

October Quiz 1	35%	Oct. 20
Response assignments	20%	(on Moodle)
Final Exam	45%	Date determined by registrar’s office

- *Class Preparation:* You are expected to read all the required readings through the course so as to develop a sense of Sociology. It is expected that you will reflect and contemplate the readings by

asking your own questions and examining your personal experiences. This class primarily follows a lecture format however, I expect student interaction and in-class discussion.

Class room etiquette/policies

- Be respectful of your classmates and avoid class disruption (leaving class early, late, talking, whispering).
- This class should be free from discrimination and harassment in accord with the *StFX Discrimination and Harassment Policy* which can be found at <http://www.mystfx.ca/campus/stu-serv/equity/>.
- Regular attendance at class is advised. (see calendar section 3.7) http://sites.stfx.ca/registrars_office/academic_calendar.
- Students are responsible for material discussed in class even when they are absent. Be sure to take notes as not all material covered in class will be in the readings. Always bring a pen and paper to class. Note taking tips: <https://lss.info.yorku.ca/resources/note-taking-at-university/#Intro>
- Avoid electronic devices in class

Class schedule and readings: The readings are available on your Moodle site –We will follow the order of the readings listed below. I reserve the right to change readings (with early notification). Examples from various chapters and videos not listed below will also be included (and announced in class). DATES are approximate.

September 15-24

What is Sociology? What are the origins of Sociology? What is the Sociological Perspective?

- Chapter 1 Ravelli & Webber and Section on Emile Durkheim in Chapter 2
- Mills, C. Wright. 1959. [excerpt from: “The Promise.” From *The Sociological Imagination* by C. Wright Mills. 1959: Oxford University Press - Pp. 1-8

September 29-Oct 1

Applying the Sociological perspective

- Brym, Robert. 2008. “Hurricane Katrina and the Myth of Natural Disasters.” Pp. 53-78 in *Sociology as a Life or Death* Issue. Toronto: Pearson.
- Chapter 1 continued Ravelli & Webber.

October 6

Early Social Theories

- Chapter 2 Ravelli & Webber.

October 8

Culture

- Chapter 5 Ravelli & Webber
- Miner, Horace. 1956. "Body Ritual among the Nacirema." *American Anthropologist* 58(3): 503-507.
- Harris, Marvin, 1992 [original 1953]. "The cultural ecology of India's sacred cow". *Current Anthropology*. Vol 33, 1:261-276.

October 13-15

Socialization

- Chapter 6 Ravelli & Webber
- Goffman, E. 1956, *The Presentation of the Self*. Edinburgh. (Pp. 1-10)

October 20 – QUIZ in class

October 22 -29

Methods

Chapter 4 Ravelli & Webber

November 3-12

Contemporary theory.

- Chapter 3 Ravelli & Webber

November 17-Dec 3

Inequality

- Chapter 7 Ravelli and Webber
- Bourgois, Philippe. 2009. "Poverty at Work: Office Employment and the Crack Alternative." Pp. 227-239 in *Conformity and Conflict*, edited by J. Spradley and D. McCurdy. Upper Saddle River, NJ:
- Pearson. Sennett, Richard and Jonathan Cobb. 1981. "Some Hidden Injuries of Class." Pp. 223-233 in *Down to Earth Sociology*, edited by J. M. Henslin. New York: The Free Press.
- Ritzer, George, *The Mcdonaldization of society*

FINAL EXAM DATES are arranged by the registrar's office and will be announced at a later date. Exam dates are firm. When booking flights plan to book after the exam period as this is not an approved excuse. A dean's excuse is required should anyone miss an exam and usually only in extreme circumstances. Exam period: Dec 5-15 (schedule available on Oct. 9)

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

Dr. Suess - *The Lorax*