

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

**Sociology 101.17: Introduction to Sociology**

**Fall Semester 2019**

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Annex 110A

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*Class Times:* Monday: 12:45-2:00 PM; Wednesday: 11:15 AM to 12:30 PM.

*Office Hours:* Monday: 10:30 AM to 12:00 Noon; Tuesday: 1:00 PM to 3:30 PM;  
Wednesday: 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM or by appointment.

**Course Guidelines:** In order to have a productive semester, the following guidelines will be used. If you do not want to abide by these guidelines, 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 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 see me so you can improve on your performance in the next test.

4. Please keep track of your grades. I will not e-mail test results. 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](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.

7. **Read the course syllabus:** If you e-mail me with a question pertaining to something that is clearly pointed out on the course syllabus, I will just direct you to the syllabus. Make sure that your e-mails are necessary and constructive. Lazy e-mails will receive very brief or no responses.

## 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 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. Culture is partially produced through a process that sociologists refer to as socialization. This process links individuals to society. Finally, culture is reflected in social processes such as communication and social institutions like the mass media. The latter is a powerful means for conveying both dominant cultural trends and trends that run counter to the mainstream. *Third*, we focus upon the power of social institutions. These institutions (families, workplaces and educational institutions) inform our interactions as we move through our life course and through society.

## Textbook

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

## Evaluation

There are 4 examinations:

*Test 1: 10 marks.* Monday, September 23. This consists of one compulsory essay question. The test will take place during the first 35 minutes of class.

*Test 2: 30 marks.* Wednesday, October 23. This consists of 3 essay questions worth 50 marks each. Question 1 is compulsory. This will be based upon all material since the beginning of the term. You will have the entire class within which to write the test.

*Test 3: 30 marks.* Wednesday, November 13. This consists of 3 essay questions worth 50 marks each. Question 1 is compulsory. This will be based upon all lecture and reading material after test 2. You will have the entire class within which to write the test.

*Test 4: 30 marks.* This consists of 3 essay questions worth 50 marks each. Question 1 is compulsory. This will be based upon all lecture and reading material after test 2.

## Required Readings

All required readings are from your textbook.

### *Section One: Thinking About The 'Social' (4 classes)*

There are several perspectives in sociology. Here, we cover the 'classic approaches': functionalism, political economy (or conflict theory), symbolic interactionism and feminism. 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 uncover 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 concerning 'what is going on'.

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

### *Section Two: Engaging with the Social World: Culture, Socialization, Communication and the Media (8 classes)*

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. This social context is influenced by the processes and social institutions connected to socialization or how we learn to become members of society. 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.

Lisa Stroschein, "Socialization", pp. 80-100.

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

*Section Three: Moving Through Society: The Power of Social Institutions (9 classes)*

In the first part of the course, we learned from the sociologist C. Wright Mills that the sociological imagination includes the interplay among biography, history and society. This is especially apparent in the interconnection among families, workplaces and educational institutions. The nature of these institutions changes as societies shift from pre-industrial to industrial to post-industrial forms. More recently, globalization has impacted upon the structure of such institutions. For example, increasing numbers of family members are commuting to work in different places nationally and internationally. Global economic forces shape the nature and types of work we engage in. Finally, educational institutions in the Global North are influenced by the increase in international students. This latter phenomenon emerged as universities faced declining domestic enrolments as a result of collapsing birth rates. If one travels back 100 years, the interconnection among these institutions looked quite different. Thus, while we have choices, we exercise these within a context we did not choose.

Sandra Colavecchia, “Chapter 11: Families”, pp. 246-267.

Sandy Welsh, “Chapter 12: Work and Occupations”, pp. 268-296.

Scott Davies, “Chapter 13: Education”, pp. 297-320.