



Western University
SOCIOLOGY 1026G 001
Controversies in Sociology
Winter 2017

Thursdays 10:30am-12:30pm, SSC 3006

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Course Description:

Sociology seeks to introduce us to the non-obvious aspects of social relations and interactions. It teaches us to look beyond the taken-for-granted meanings of social living, to use common sense but also to go beyond it. In pursuing sociological knowledge one encounters many vigorous debates and there is much controversy as participants to the debates all advance their own theories and explanations for the way things are. Because the issues we treat are so close to our conceptions of ourselves and our societies, controversies in sociology touch all of us in myriad ways. We all presume we 'know' what we are talking about so sociology problematizes ways of knowing, for example, theology vs. science, and suggests that certainty may not always be that certain. A distinctive feature of sociological thinking is its insistence on the claim that social behaviour is more socially structured than it is individually volitional. Human behaviour is just too patterned to be the result of happenstance, but this is not easily accepted by the population at large given the culture that socializes them to an individualistic ethic. In all of this the concept of ideology stands front and centre. As filters through which we grasp social reality, ideologies are mobilized belief systems and can come in the form of economic, political, religious, national, educational and even deeply held racial and gendered 'truths.'

In this course we will explore some of these ideologies and the controversies they inform. We will define sociology broadly as the study of social order, social disorder and social change, and in this context we will examine ideologies of order or conservative ideologies, ideologies of disorder or anarchist ideologies, and ideologies of change or radical ideologies. In sociology the functionalist theory of social inequality is best understood as ideologically conservative, while the conflict theory of social inequality could be understood as ideologically radical. While functionalism sees inequality as natural, integrative and functional, conflict theory is diametrically opposed, sees inequality as socially engineered and potentially disruptive. So where do we stand? What, for example, is our government's

take on the inequality that characterizes First Nations individuals and communities? Are Residential Schools un-Canadian?

Prerequisite(s): None

Antirequisite(s): None

Learning Objectives:

1. to get the students to move beyond common sense understandings of their world;
2. to get the students writing in a sophisticated manner about issues of social import;
3. to get the students to appreciate the importance of theoretical thinking;
4. to get the students to transcend an individualistic and volitional mind-set, and to appreciate the importance of structural explanations of social behaviour.

Learning outcomes:

1. The student will have developed some clear critical reading, thinking and analytical skills;
2. The student will learn the difference between reading for information and reading for style;
3. The student will appreciate the importance of keeping abreast of the news;
4. The student will develop library research skills;
5. The student will learn how to construct an argument and defend it;
6. The student will learn the importance of logic, evidence, clarity and consistency in arguing;
7. The student will learn that Canada and the United States are not the centre of the universe.

Required Text(s):

Required readings

The required readings for this course are all included in the official course pack, which is for sale in the book store. The table of contents follows:

Course Pack Controversies in Sociology (SOC 1026F 001) Professor Antón Allahar

1. Srigley, Ron. 2016. "Pass, Fail: an inside look at the retail scam known as the modern university." *The Walrus*, April 2016.
2. Allahar, Anton L. 1986a. "Sociology: the Science of Society" (pp.8-33) in *The Social World*. Lorne Tepperman and R.J. Richardson (eds.); Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
3. McIntosh, Peggy. 1998. "White privilege and male privilege; a personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in women's studies." (Pp. 94-105) in *Race, Class and Gender; an Anthology*. 3rd ed. Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins (eds). Toronto: Wadsworth.
4. Allahar, Anton L. 1986b. "Ideology, Social Order and Social Change" (pp.607-632) in *The Social World*. Lorne Tepperman and R.J. Richardson (eds); Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

5. Allahar, Anton L. 1994. "Social Change in Global Context" (pp.594-626) in *The Social World*, 3rd. edition. L. Tepperman, James Curtis and R. Jack Richardson (eds.) Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson (Primis).
6. Hebron, Lui and John F. Stack Jr. 2011. *Globalization; debunking the myths*. Toronto: Longman. (Chapters 1-2).
7. Macpherson, C.B. 1965. *The real world of democracy*. (Chapter 1).
8. Allahar, Anton L. and James E. Côté. 1998. *Richer and Poorer*. Toronto: James Lorimer (Chapter 1).
9. Bastide, Roger. 1968. "Color, Racism, and Christianity" (pp.34-49), in John Hope Franklin, (ed). *Color and Race*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
10. Tang-Nain, Gemma. (1991) "Black Women, Sexism and Racism: Black or Anti-Racist Feminism?" in *Feminist Review* (37):1-22.
11. Jordan, June. 1998. "A new politics of sexuality." (Pp.437-441) in *Race, Class and Gender; an Anthology*. 3rd ed. Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins (eds). Toronto: Wadsworth.
12. Gluckman, Any and Betsy Reed. 1998. "Where has gay liberation gone?" (Pp. 442-446) in *Race, Class and Gender; an Anthology*. 3rd ed. Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins (eds). Toronto: Wadsworth.
13. Allahar, Anton L. 2010. "The political economy of 'race' and class in Canada's Caribbean diaspora." *American Journal of Political Economy* (8)2: 54-86.
14. Callahan, Gene and William Anderson, 2001. "The roots of racial profiling." Reason Magazine online. (www.reason.com/news/printer/28138.html) retrieved 7/10/2008
15. Cole, Desmond. 2015. "The skin I'm in." www.torontolife.com/informer/features/2015/04/21/skin-im-ive-interrogated-police-50-times-im-black/
16. Edmundson, Mark. 1997. "On the uses of a liberal education" (pp.39-49). *Harper's Magazine*. September.
17. Côté, James E. and Anton L. Allahar. 2007. *Ivory Tower Blues*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press (Chapter 1). (Pp. 16-55).
18. Côté, James E. and Anton L. Allahar. 2011. *Lowering Higher Education*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press (Chapter 1). (Pp. 9-26).

Method of Evaluation:

Assignment #1: in-class quiz (15%). Short answer questions. February 2nd.

Assignment #2: in-class test (30%). Multiple choice and True/False. March 9th.

Assignment #3: 1500-2000 word (6-8 pages) written essay (20%).

Assignment #4: essay proposal (5%). Please do not squander these 5%. In the end you will need them.

Assignment #5: final exam in exam period; short answer and essay format (30%). The material to be covered for the final exam will be announced in class well ahead of the final exam.

Essay proposal: The essay proposal is due on March 2nd.

In-class quiz: The quiz will cover material from the first 4 weeks of class. February 2nd.

In-class test: This test covers all the material covered from the first 9 weeks of class including material covered on the quiz. March 9th.

Essay assignment: The essay is to be 6-8 pages long, double-spaced, and is due in tutorial no later than March 16th. In the proposal you are expected to choose your topic and have it cleared by the TA before beginning to write the essay.

The Essay Assignment

Ours is a society of about 34 million people that is described by most Canadians as a good society, a fair society, an equal society and a democratic society. In spite of this, however, we have a major problem with social inequality in the country. There are people who are rich and comfortable, some who are not rich, but have many conveniences, and over 5 million who live beneath the poverty line.

In this essay you are to do three things: (a) contrast the main features of the functionalist and conflict theories of social inequality, (b) say how a sociologist would explain the existence of riches and poverty in the 'good, fair, equal and democratic society,' (c) choose and describe one group that is classed poor (single mothers, Natives, blacks, youths, immigrants etc.) and say why you think that group does not rebel against their unequal conditions of life.

In-class quiz and test: The in-class quiz will be held in class on February 2nd and the in-class test will be held in class on March 9th. You will be tested on all readings, lectures and tutorial discussions to that point. Missed mid-term exams may be made up providing that the appropriate reasons (medical, family emergency etc.) are provided. No accommodation will be given for vacations that have been arranged or paid for, so don't even ask. The make-up can take the form of a multiple choice or an essay.

How to Contact Me:

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Important information:

PLEASE NOTE:

- This course is taught the old fashioned way. There is no course web site, no course web page, and I do not post notes or lectures on the web. These encourage absences from class.
- I deliver traditional lectures from the front of the class and there is a good deal of class discussion.
- Students are expected to come to class having done the readings for the day. I don't know what **cold calling** is so as lectures develop be prepared to be called on to answer questions on the relevant materials.
- Laptop computers are very distracting to everybody, including the users, so you are asked to please come to class with pen and paper to take notes.

- I have a photographic memory and I know who is present at the lectures and who is not, and my TA will tell me about tutorial attendance. Those who are delinquent in attendance must not send me pleading emails at the end of the course requesting a few “extra” marks or points to pass.

As the course title indicates, this course deals with controversial issues and requires that we all must come to the encounter with open minds. If we fail to do so, the course objectives will not be met. We will be discussing themes that are historical, political, economic, religious, even social and interpersonal. In all of these exchanges I will presume we are all adults and no topic is out of bounds as long as we are respectful of one another. And while I am not interested in hearing anyone’s **opinions**, I do look forward to hearing your **arguments**. The distinction will be made clear on the first day of class.

Finally, the in-class test and the final exam will cover material from the readings, lectures, and tutorial sessions so if you choose to miss classes or tutorials you do so at your own peril. I am not able to say what proportion of the questions will come from the lectures, the readings or the tutorial discussions, so it is your responsibility to make sure you attend all lectures and tutorials and do all your readings. In these matters I make the assumption that we are all adults and it is not my place to chase after students to ensure that they do what is expected of them. This may have been your high school experience, but those days are now officially over. Missing classes and tutorials is a waste of your money and regarded as a direct insult to me and the Teaching Assistant.

Important Policies

Policies for Assignment Deadlines:

Late essays are penalized 3 marks (not 3%) per day for the first 5 days. After that late essays will not be read and you will receive a grade of zero for the assignment. This means you will have failed the course.

A Note on Plagiarism:

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (www.turnitin.com).

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.”

No electronic devices of any sort are permitted in the tests and examinations.

Policy on Laptops and other Electronics/Phones in Class:

Laptops are permitted in class but if it is observed that students are on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, they will be told to close the lid and they will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Be sure that all cell phones are turned off at the beginning of class.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness

Western’s policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html

Accessibility Options:

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar’s website: www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html

Scholastic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site: www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Mental Health

Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to Mental Health@Western (http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

Course Schedule and Readings:

Syllabus

Week 1: (January 5)

Setting the stage for our course. “Did high school prepare you for university?” “Who is to blame?”

Reading: Srigley, Ron. 2016. "Pass, Fail: an inside look at the retail scam known as the modern university." *The Walrus*, April 2016. Also available at: <https://thewalrus.ca/pass-fail/>

Week 2: (January 12)

Thinking Sociologically: questions of theory, method and empiricism.

What is structural thinking? Ways of knowing; belief vs. 'truth.' Ontology and epistemology.

"What do you know for sure?"

www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1iz_JyCWp8

Reading: Allahar, Anton L. 1986a. "Sociology: the Science of Society" (pp.8-33) in *The Social World*. Lorne Tepperman and R.J. Richardson (eds.); Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Reading: McIntosh, Peggy. 1998. "White privilege and male privilege; a personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in women's studies." (Pp. 94-105) in *Race, Class and Gender; an Anthology*. 3rd ed. Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins (eds). Toronto: Wadsworth.

Week 3: (January 19)

What are theories and ideologies? What is the relationship between theory and ideology?

Theories and ideologies of order (conservative) (functionalism, racism);

Theories and ideologies of disorder (disruptive) (anarchism, terrorism);

Theories and ideologies of change (radical) (feminism, Marxism)

Reading: Allahar, Anton L. 1986b. "Ideology, Social Order and Social Change" (pp.607-632) *The Social World*. Lorne Tepperman and R.J. Richardson (eds); Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Week 4: (January 26)

Economic controversies

"Is globalization the solution to world poverty or the cause of world poverty?"

"Where would the Third World be without us?"

Theories of social and economic change: social evolutionism, modernization and dependency.

Economic ideologies (free trade, protectionism, neo-liberalism, socialism)

Controversial practice: outsourcing of jobs.

Controversial question: Are sweat shops morally defensible?

Reading: Allahar, Anton L. 1994. "Social Change in Global Context" (pp.594-626) in *The Social World*, 3rd. edition. L. Tepperman, James Curtis and R. Jack Richardson (eds.) Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson (Primis).

Reading: Hebron, Lui and John F. Stack Jr. 2011. *Globalization; debunking the myths*. Toronto: Longman. (Chapters 1-2).

Video: TVO Best lecture, “Why is the whole world not developed?”

www.youtube.com/watch?v=3N6HEW9wnT8

Week 5: (February 02)

In-class quiz

Week 6: (February 9)

Political controversies

“Is liberal democracy right for all peoples?”

“Is democracy a prerequisite for economic development?”

Controversial practice: government spying on its own citizens (Edward Snowden) in the name of defending democracy.

Controversial question: should the Queen be the head of state in an independent, democratic Canada?

Reading: C.B. Macpherson. 1965. *The real world of democracy*. (Chapters 1-2).

Reading: Allahar, Anton L. and James E. Côté. 1998. *Richer and Poorer*. Toronto: James Lorimer (Chapter 1).

Week 7: (February 16)

Religious controversies

“Did God make me or did I make God?” “Did Charles Darwin kill God?” “Should religion be taught in schools?”

Controversial practice: teaching religion in schools; religion and social control.

Controversial question: is religion the opiate of the masses?

Reading: Bastide, Roger. 1968. “Color, Racism, and Christianity” (pp.34-49), in John Hope Franklin, (ed). *Color and Race*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Week 8: (February 23). STUDY BREAK

Week 9 (March 02). Essay proposal due today.

Gender and LGBT controversies

“How does mainstream feminism regard the woman of colour?”

“What’s the solution to the trans gender washroom debate?”

“Are homophobes insecure about their own sexuality?”

Reading: Tang-Nain, Gemma. (1991) “Black Women, Sexism and Racism: Black or Anti-Racist Feminism?” in *Feminist Review* (37):1-22.

Reading: Jordan, June. 1998. "A new politics of sexuality." (Pp.437-441) in *Race, Class and Gender; an Anthology*. 3rd ed. Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins (eds). Toronto: Wadsworth.

Reading: Gluckman, Any and Betsy Reed. 1998. "Where has gay liberation gone?" (Pp. 442-446) in *Race, Class and Gender; an Anthology*. 3rd ed. Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins (eds). Toronto: Wadsworth.

Week 10: (March 09)

In-class Test

Week 11: (March 16) NOTE: THE ESSAY ASSIGNMENT IS DUE TODAY.

Racial and ethnic controversies: Part 1

"Do biological races exist?" Are black people less intelligent than white people?"

Controversial practice: black focused schools.

Controversial question: are people of the same *kind* more comfortable with one another?

Reading: Allahaar, Anton L. 2010. "The political economy of 'race' and class in Canada's Caribbean diaspora." *American Journal of Political Economy* (8)2: 54-86.

Video: Rushton-Suzuki debate

Week 12: (March 23)

Racial and ethnic controversies: Part 2

"Is the police practice of carding racist?"

Controversial practice: racial profiling; should police collect crime statistics by 'race'?

Controversial question: Was the establishment of Residential Schools un-Canadian?

Reading: Callahan, Gene and William Anderson, 2001. "The roots of racial profiling." Reason Magazine online. (www.reason.com/news/printer/28138.html) retrieved 7/10/2008

Reading: Cole, Desmond. 2015. "The skin I'm in." www.torontolife.com/informer/features/2015/04/21/skin-im-ive-interrogated-police-50-times-im-black/

Week 13: (March 30)

Educational controversies: Part 1

"What is the idea of the university?"

"Grade inflation and the disengagement compact." "Dumbing down and the helicopter parent." Should everyone go to university? Is it elitist to suggest not?

Controversial practice: bell curving grades.

Controversial question: “Should universities be sites of job training?”

Reading: Edmundson, Mark. 1997. “On the uses of a liberal education” (pp.39-49). *Harper’s Magazine*. September.

Reading: Côté, James E. and Anton L. Allahar. 2011. *Lowering Higher Education*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press (Chapter 1).

Week 14: (April 06)

Educational controversies: Part 2

The corporatization of the university

Controversial practice: corporations and the commercialization of campus life

Controversial question: should universities accept money from private corporations?

Reading: Côté, James E. and Anton L. Allahar. 2007. *Ivory Tower Blues*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press (Introduction and Chapter 1).

Summary and conclusions. Exam review in tutorials.