



The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 2105a UW 001
Sociology of Youth Fall 2016
Wednesdays 9:30-11:30
NCB 113

Instructor: Prof. James Côté

Office Hours: by appointment (SSC 5208) or Skype

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Course Description

This course provides a general coverage of the literature, debates and issues related to the sociological study of youth by contrasting a critical perspective on youth with more conservative, descriptive perspectives in terms of mass education, the workplace, the family, technological influences, youth culture, and politics and public policy. In each case, the relevant debates and issues in the youth studies field will be examined. The critical perspective examines how the period of youth is a socially constructed age status that serves dominant interests at a macro level, with both positive and negative consequences for youth at a micro level. As such, the critical perspective provides a useful point of view of how young people are located in terms of the 'big picture' of contemporary society.

Prerequisite(s)

None.

Antirequisite(s)

None.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, student should be proficient at:

- understanding the origin and perpetuation of stereotypes about youth.
- knowing the difference between critical and conservative approaches.
- grasping the connection between institutional re-structuring the transition to adulthood, including the education system, workplace, and family.

- developing an appreciation of the risks associated with the transition to adulthood and the role of youth culture and new technologies in the transition.
- gaining insights into how social and political consensus is manufactured, especially through popular culture.
- acquiring an understanding of how political engagement and public policy could enhance the lives of youth.
- attaining an understanding of how public policy could enhance the lives of youth.

Required Text(s)

Textbook: Côté, James (2014). *Youth Studies: Fundamental Issues and Debates*. Palgrave.

Recommended readings will be available for download on the course OWL. Your knowledge of these readings will **not be** tested on the exams but these readings will help you to understand the lectures better.

Method of Evaluation

A midterm exam and a **cumulative** final exam will determine the final course grade. All questions are multiple-choice format. The exams will be based on lecture material, class discussions, and the assigned textbook readings.

Important considerations in deciding whether to take this course:

(1) If you are taking this course because you think it is an “easy A” or a “bird course,” you should be aware of the standards of the Sociology Department. The following are the grade-distribution guidelines faculty members must follow in the Department of Sociology for courses at this level:

2100 and 2200 level: A’s not to exceed B’s; Means in the range of 66-70%

(2) If you have trouble with multiple-choice tests, or have issues with this being the only assessment method, this is not the course for you. I do not need to hear later in the course, or on teaching evaluations, that other testing methods should have been used. Furthermore, I am the final arbiter as to whether or not a particular question on the exams is “fair.”

(3) Because of the amount of material, the two 2-hour exams could not possibly have enough questions covering everything. Accordingly, the selection of test questions constitutes a sampling of concepts, facts, theories, theorists, and statistics. ***Thus, all material covered in the readings and lectures are ‘fair game’ for test questions.*** You need to have your own study strategies for approaching these tests, but the advice I give is that when studying from the readings, you should retain what you would need to know to explain ***with authority*** in 5-10 minutes some theory or line of research to someone. For example, consider how you might ***explain convincingly*** to your parents how much you’ve learned about something you are really interested in. When explaining something with authority, you must have supporting statistics and facts available for immediate recall, so it is not unreasonable that you should know these things for exams in a university-level course. Someone with a good working knowledge of the material will know what statistics need to be retained for recall in explaining something with authority. While multiple-choice questions may not always assess your knowledge at the

broadest level (e.g., the applications of a specific theory), they will assess your knowledge of the facts associated with that knowledge.

Evaluation Breakdown

The midterm is worth 40% (60 multiple-choice questions) and the final is worth 60% (90 multiple-choice questions). The multiple-choice questions are drawn roughly 50% from classes and 50% from the textbook, with some overlap. Practice questions will be provided before the midterm. The final is cumulative, with 30 questions assessing material from before the midterm (covering some material that some students found difficult on the midterm) and 60 questions assessing material after the midterm.

How to Contact Me

E-mail: cote@uwo.ca

How to get important information

Course OWL website.

Important Policies

Make-up exams

You should note that make-up exams are not routine in this course. Moreover, I will not agree to provide make-ups so students can go on family holidays, attend weddings or birthday parties, go to other people's graduations, or otherwise pursue various personal/hedonistic activities.

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:

http://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:

http://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:

My lectures assume that students have **completed the readings** listed below for each week **in advance of class**. **This is especially important if you do not have a background in sociology**. To help in preparation and note taking, by 4:00 PM on the day before each weekly class, the PowerPoint slides for that class will be posted on the course OWL site, both in PPT and PDF. **You should print out a copy of these slides and bring the printout to class**. The PDF version will have three slides per page with lined spaces on which to make crib notes, so this format saves paper.

When both of these things are done (reading the assigned material and printing the slides), in class you should then listen to what I have to say and if I say additional things that you think are noteworthy, you should write these down on the printout. I pace the lectures assuming that everyone has hardcopies of the slides in front of them, so do not attempt to write down everything I say during lectures. This format leaves ample time and opportunity for questions. If you do not understand something in the readings after giving it serious, independent thought, the best time to bring it up is during the classes when the material is presented and discussed, or beforehand by sending me an email. **Do not wait until the end of the course to bring up matters like this with me.**

Laptop use:

Schools at all levels that once embraced laptops—even supplied them to students—have been dropping them over the past few years. At the university level, professors have been banning them from their classrooms because they are distractions to other students, to teachers, and to the students using them, who can't resist checking their e-mail and social media. Research shows that students who use laptops tend to get lower grades (by 5%, or one half of a letter grade)

In the past, I have tried to accommodate laptops in this large, lower-level class, but have always had students abuse the privilege, so **NO LAPTOPS ARE ALLOWED IN CLASS UNLESS YOU HAVE PERMISSION FROM ME or SSD**. If you want permission from me, we will arrange an interview to discuss it.

It should go without saying that cell phones should be turned off and put off the desk, and that no texting should be done during class.

Week 1 (Sept. 14): Course introduction and overview

Week 2 (Sept. 21): The youth question

Required reading: *Youth Studies*, ch.1

Recommended reading: Jean Twenge & Stacy Campbell (2008). Generational differences in psychological traits and their impact on the workplace. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23, 862-877.

Week 3 (Sept. 28): Seminal Debates

Required reading: *Youth Studies*, ch. 3; for important background theory, read: ch. 2 “Adolescent Psychology” (pp. 33–34), “Cultural anthropology” (pp. 35–36)

Recommended reading: James E Côté (2014). *The dangerous myth of emerging adulthood: An evidence-based critique of a flawed developmental theory*. *Applied Developmental Science*, 18(4), 177-188

Week 4 (Oct. 5): Education

Required reading: *Youth Studies*, ch.4; for important background theory, read: ch. 2 “Functionalism and demography” (pp. 37–38)

Recommended readings: (1) Philip Babcock & Mindy Marks (2010). *Leisure college: The decline in student study time*. (2) Charles Murray (2008). Are too many people going to college? *The American: A Magazine of Ideas*. (3) James Côté (2014). “The decline in study time in American and British universities: Unraveling the paradox in two knowledge economies.” *Higher Education in the UK and the USA: Converging models in a global academic world?* Sarah Pickard (Ed.) (pp. 197–224). Brill: Leiden, NL.

Week 5 (Oct. 12): Work

Required reading: *Youth Studies*, ch.5; for important background theory, read: ch. 2 “Political economy” (pp. 38–41)

Recommended reading: (1) Andrew Sum & Joseph McLaughlin (2011). *Changes in the weekly and annual earnings of young adults from 1979 – 2010: Progress and setbacks amidst widening inequality*. CDF Policy Brief #3. <http://www.childrensdefense.org/library/misc/changes-in-the-weekly-and.pdf> (2) James Côté (2014). Towards a new political economy of youth. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 17(4), 527–543.

Week 6 (Oct. 19): In-class exam – 40% (written in the same room as the lectures)**Week 7 (Oct. 26): Family**

Required reading: *Youth Studies*, ch.6; for important background theory, read: ch. 2 “Late-modernism” (pp. 41–43) and ch. 2 “Interpretive/narrative approaches” (pp. 47–49)

Recommended reading: (1) Annette Lareau & Elliot B. Weininger (2007). *Class, culture and child rearing: The transition to college*; (2) Judith R. Harris (1998). *The nurture assumption: Why children turn out the way they do*, *New York Times on the web*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/h/harris- nurture.html?_r=2&scp=3&sq=socialization%20of%20children&st=cse&oref=slogin

Week 8 (Nov. 2): Media & technologies

Required reading: *Youth Studies*, ch.7

Recommended reading: (1) Sue Bennett, Karl Maton, & Lisa Kervin, (2008). The ‘digital natives’ debate: A critical review of the evidence. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 39, 775–86; (2) a study guide for Douglas Rushkoff’s *Program or be programmed* <http://dct-wsuv.org/hashnextchapter/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Rushkoff-Study-Guide.pdf>

Week 9 & 10 (Nov. 9 & Nov. 16): Youth culture

Required reading: *Youth Studies*, ch. 8; for important background theory, read: ch. 2 “Post-modernism and cultural studies” (pp. 43–45)

Recommended reading: (1) Joseph Heath & Andrew Potter (2002). “The rebel sell: If we all hate consumerism, how come we can’t stop shopping?” (2) Malcolm Gladwell (1997). “The Coolhunt.” *The New Yorker* <http://gladwell.com/the-coolhunt/>

Week 11 (Nov 23): Youth politics

Required reading: *Youth Studies*, ch.11

Recommended reading: *Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs. (2011). Fokus10 – on youth influence.* Stockholm: Author.

Week 12 (Nov. 30): Youth Studies’ future and policy

Required reading: *Youth Studies*, ch.12

Recommended reading: *The state of youth policy 2014*, www.youthpolicy.org

Week 13 (Dec. 7): No class unless a previous class has been cancelled.