

SOCIOLOGY 101

Introduction to Sociology I

St. Francis Xavier University
Winter Term 2021
Mondays 11:15—12:05, Tuesdays 13:15—14:05, Thursday 12:15—13:05
Gilmora Hall 001

Peter Lenco
O Nicholson Tower 615 | T 4876 | E plenco@stfx.ca
Office hours: Mondays 12:00—14:00, Wednesdays 11:00—13:00 and Fridays 10:00—12:00

Course Description

This course introduces students to the origins and development of sociological thinking and research, beginning with the foundations of the discipline in the nineteenth century. Students are then introduced to the concepts and methods within sociology. The objective is to explore the extent and limits of our capacity to change the social world by reference to sociological research in both a Canadian and global context.

Sociology covers many areas of human activity and experience, everything from big ideas (such as post-industrialization) and abstract notions (like modernity) to the minutiae of everyday life (like grabbing a coffee at Tim Hortons). In its broad scope sociology uses both macro and micro perspectives: thinking about big structures (society, religion) and also individual characteristics (personal feelings). This implies a great many widely differing theories and approaches, many of which are mutually exclusive or contradictory. In other words, these theories and approaches are less a bag of analytical tools and more deep commitments as to what we think society is and how we should go about learning about it. Methodologies also run the gamut from computer modelling to ethnography. Altogether this fosters exciting debates and controversies that make sociology a fascinating area of study. In this course we will encounter some of these diverse themes, including the changes in society and approaches to science that led to the development of sociology as a distinct discipline, its ongoing evolution, its four key theoretical perspectives, and the basic methods of sociological investigation. But beyond this, sociology and thus this course simply addresses a multitude of fascinating and challenging topics – including cell phones, strip clubs, Mcjobs and Kraft Dinner – that for most students amount to an energizing, enjoyable experience. If there is one main goal of this course, it is perhaps that students come to see the appeal of sociology and have fun with it.

By the end of the course students will have acquired a basic understanding of the foundations and scope of sociology as well as a familiarity with the ideas of some of its key thinkers. All of the readings are primary sources so students will improve their ability to engage with technical, social-scientific literature. Finally, and no less importantly, students will develop their ability to discuss complex topics, improve their group work skills, and some time will be spent enhancing students' ability to read and to write effectively in an academic setting.

Course Form

The classes will consist of informal introductory lectures with room for questions and open discussion. Please note that the lectures will not be summaries of the texts, but are rather meant to supplement the texts and initiate analysis. Indeed, the goal of the classes will be to engage with the texts in a rigorous and thoughtful manner. We will also make extensive use of group discussions and problem-based learning. There are a number of guidelines that we will all follow to help ensure success for all in this course:

- If you have a question about the course, consult this syllabus carefully. There is a good chance you will find all the information you need.
- We will adhere to the highest standards of personal communication and strive to be 100 per cent present for each other, which means listening attentively to whomever is speaking, no use of mobile devices, laptops, etc.
- There will be few slides and no overhead-presentations on the readings, so do be ready to take your own notes. To succeed in this course you need to engage with all aspects of it: readings, lectures and discussions. These last are an important way for you to explore – and so get to know and use – the variety of material. In sum: come to class and be ready to focus and participate.
- For reasons of class size but especially fairness there will be no make-ups or alternative assignments, unless for specific reasons you need accommodation (see below). Each student is responsible for what happens in class. If you are obliged to be absent, find another student who can catch you up.
- Please note that all aspects of this course adhere to the principle of equitable learning. Therefore I invite each member of the class to strive to promote a respectful, safe and equitable learning environment, free from any form of discrimination and harassment, both in person and online. Feel free to discuss any concerns regarding our learning environment with me, either in or before/after class, during office hours, or by phone or email.

Text

There is one textbook for this course (which is also used in SOCI 102 with me), available at the Campus Store:

Macionis, John, et al., eds. 2014. *Seeing Ourselves: Classic, Contemporary, and Cross-cultural Readings in Sociology*. 4th Canadian ed. Toronto: Pearson.

Evaluation

Attendance/Participation—10%
Reading reflections (due 4 February, 11 March)—20%
Midterm (18 February)—20%
Paper (due 30 March)—20%
Final Exam—30%

Attendance for the course is mandatory. Be sure to contact me in advance if you are going to be absent for any length of time (see Accommodation below). Participation is an important element of the course (not just for your participation mark), and students should make every effort to ask questions and to engage in discussions and group work.

For the two reading reflections students are asked to write three pages (~1000 words) on any reading in the syllabus. There is no set template, I am merely looking for evidence of your thoughtful analysis. What caught your interest in the reading? Why is it important? How does it relate to other sociological themes and other readings? Avoid summaries or “rehearsals”; I am interested here in what you can do with the content, not with your ability to describe it.

The paper should be a formal analysis of one of the themes of the course (socialization, sexuality, etc.). Why is it of interest for sociologists and how do they go about addressing it? What else is at stake (culturally, economically, politically, etc.)? To help you along a list of sample questions will be posted on Moodle. Alternatively, students may develop their own paper topics, but I recommend checking with me before you do this. In all cases try to have a clear thesis statement and remember that papers that argue or try to establish a point are easier to write and easier to read. The papers should be approximately 1600 words in length.

There will be a brief midterm consisting of a choice of several short-answer questions. A closed-book, essay-style exam will be scheduled during the regular examination period. In the case of pandemic restrictions, these will be take-home assignments.

Guidelines for submission

Written assignments must be submitted in electronic copy only via Moodle fifteen minutes before class on the due date. Late assignments without valid (e.g. verified medical) excuse will be penalized five percentage points per business day. Follow the layout guidelines on the department website (under “Current Students”) and as per department guidelines, I urge you to use the American Sociological Association's citation and referencing system. Otherwise use one clear referencing system consistently, but I insist that you include page numbers when citing sources. It is up to you to track your own grades; they will not be posted electronically nor will I answer email queries regarding them.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of *any* source without acknowledging its author/creator and will not be tolerated in this course. Not only is it a serious breach of academic integrity, but it undermines the efforts of other course participants. Cases of plagiarism will be dealt with in the strictest possible manner and the instructor reserves the right to use all available technical assistance to discover plagiarists. You can read more about academic integrity in the current academic calendar in section 3.8. If you are unsure of anything, please come see me. Remember: there is no justification for plagiarism.

Contact

Please only email me (with “SOCL 101” in the subject line) if I can quickly read your email and then answer in a few words. Do write your emails in a professional manner with a salutation, a clear, properly punctuated body, a complimentary close, etc. For any communication more complex, students are welcome to phone or MS Teams during office hours. Generally no appointment is necessary. If you have difficulty with these times, simply contact me to set up an alternative arrangement.

Accommodation

Any student that requires accommodation of any kind should contact me at the earliest opportunity so that the appropriate arrangements can be made. Also, please contact me at the outset of any prolonged illness or personal matter that might detract from your performance in the course. My goal is to help students navigate this course to a successful conclusion but you are responsible for communicating any potential challenges to me. I am here to support you but I cannot do this if I do not have all the information in a timely manner.

Copyright

There will potentially be considerable online content for this course. I remind you that course materials are designed exclusively for use in SOCI 101 at StFX University only and are the property of the instructor, unless otherwise stated by the instructor. Copying any material for distribution, online posting, or selling of this material to third parties without permission is strictly prohibited subject to Canadian copyright law.

Outline

Week 1: 14 January	Introduction: What is sociology, anyway?	No reading.
Week 2 18, 20 January	The Sociological Imagination	<i>Seeing Ourselves</i> , Chapters 1 and 3.
Week 3 25, 26, 28 January	Sociological Research	<i>Seeing Ourselves</i> , Chapters 4, 5 and 6.
Week 4 1, 2, 4 February	Culture ► Attn: <u>1st reading reflection due 4 February</u>	<i>Seeing Ourselves</i> , Chapters 7 and 8.
Week 5 8, 9, 11 February	Society	<i>Seeing Ourselves</i> , Chapters 9, 10 and 11.
Week 6 18 February	► Attn: <u>Midterm</u>	No reading.
Week 7 22, 23, 25 February	Socialization	<i>Seeing Ourselves</i> , Chapters 12 and 13.
Week 8 1, 2, 4 March	Social Interaction in Everyday Life	<i>Seeing Ourselves</i> , Chapters 15 and 16.
Week 9 8, 9, 11 March	Groups and Organizations ► Attn: <u>2nd reading reflection due 11 March</u>	<i>Seeing Ourselves</i> , Chapters 18, 19 and 20.
Week 10 15, 16, 18 March	Deviance	<i>Seeing Ourselves</i> , Chapters 21, 22 and 23.
Week 11 22, 23, 25 March	Sexuality	<i>Seeing Ourselves</i> , Chapters 24, 25 and 26.
Week 12 29, 30 March	Social Stratification ► Attn: <u>Paper due 30 March</u>	<i>Seeing Ourselves</i> , Chapter 28, 29 and 30.
Week 13 5, 6, 8 April	Conclusion and review	No reading.