

**St. Francis Xavier University,  
Department of Sociology  
Sociology of Fear, Identity and Politics 436  
Course Outline 2014**

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Office Hours: Mondays (10-11 and 1-2) and Thursdays (8:30-9:30 and 11:00-12:00) or by appointment

**Course Description**

This course will examine the significance of fear in shaping and organising everyday life. More than simply a psychological situation, we will develop an understanding of the complexity of fear and its relationship to social order and cultural meanings. In particular, we will pay attention to the relationship between fear and identity formation (how we think of ourselves), as well as how we define and interact with others. We will also examine how fear is employed as a socio-political instrument.

We will start the course by establishing a history of the sociology of fear with emphasis on theories examining the relationship of fear to social modernity. We will look for instance, at theories that link fear with the rise of modern technologies, burgeoning city life and the growth of capital consumption at the turn of the century. Armed with these formative readings, we will proceed to look at more contemporary theoretical approaches to fear. Second, we will seek to understand how fear meets up with and informs aspects of social life and identity. Third, we will focus on case studies with an overall view to questioning how individuals and groups relate to fear in various contexts.

**Email policy**

I am pleased to communicate through email for matters requiring brief responses. However, students should make use of my office hours and ask questions in class. I do not have access to email on weekends or evenings. I do not provide information about lectures or grades over email.

**Students Services**

Please refer to the STFX Academic Calendar for a full description of student services and supports.

**Academic Integrity Policy**

It is the responsibility of all students to become familiar with the academic integrity policy set out in the STFX academic calendar. Failure to do so does not exempt students from these regulations.

**Laptops and cellular phones**

Laptops and other technologies are welcomed in class, provided they are being employed for the purposes of note taking, or other activities directly related to class work. Checking social

networking accounts during class is considered a disruption to other students. Cellular phones must be turned off during the class.

**Late Work:**

The deadlines for course work are firm. For all assignments, I deduct 2% per day up to 5 days (or 10%) at which point I will not longer accept the assignment for grading. Under no circumstances do I accept assignments by email.

**Required Texts**

Students may find the required readings through the library as the term progresses.

**ASA Style Guide Link:**

<http://www.asanet.org/page.wv?name=Quick+Style+Guide&section=Sociology+Depts>

**Grading Scheme:**

1. Critical Annotated Bibliography 30% (March 3<sup>rd</sup>)
2. Final Paper: 40% (March 24<sup>th</sup>)
3. Presentations: 30% All students will present their paper proposals either by February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup>. There are no make up dates for presentations. Students must sign up in advance for one of these dates.

**IF POSSIBLE, DOUBLE SIDE ALL YOUR ASSIGNMENTS!**

**1. Critical Annotated Bibliography (30%)**

**Approximate length: 6 pages**

**Due: March 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Each student must select 3 academic articles with relevance to the course and provide annotated evaluations of each. These articles may be related by topic, but not necessarily so. Students will compose a carefully crafted annotated bibliography of these articles, in order to establish why these articles should be included in the course offerings. You must convince me of the effectiveness, applicability and relevance to the course. In your review of the articles, be sure to:

- a) provide a clear overview of the relevant content of the article;
- b) demonstrate that critical thought and careful organization went in to your examination of the article and its relevance to the course
- c) explain why these articles are complementary to a course on fear
- d) what are the strengths and/or weaknesses of the articles
- e) relate the articles to other themes in class and raise questions.

Be very careful not to simply describe the articles, but demonstrate your own ability to critically assess their pedagogic value for use in an upper level, sociological classroom on fear.

**2. Presentation (30%)**

**Sign up for one of the two presentation dates: February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>.**

**Time allotment: approximately 10 minutes.**

For this assignment, students will prepare a brief presentation of their final paper. For this presentation, please include the following:

- A. A description of your topic ( see below under 'Final Paper' for options).
- B. A description of the topic, as it has been approached by others in sociology.
- C. The central theories, approach, concepts and terms you are considering using, and why.
- D. An outline of your paper. \*\*\*
- E. A bibliography (in ASA format only) of resources you will be using for your paper. \*\*\*
- F. Important questions that you are currently considering.

\*\*\*In order to complete the assignment, you must hand in both D and E to me on the day of your presentation.

### **3. Final Paper (40%)**

**Approximate length: 10 pages**

**Due: March 24th**

For this assignment, students will produce a paper tailored according to ASA formatting guidelines and dealing critically with one of the following sociological problems:

- A. Fear and age, sexuality, gender, race and/or class
- B. Fear and modern life
- C. Fear and film
- D. Psychiatry and the medicalization of fear
- E. Elite fear
- F. War, terror and the political uses of fear
- G. Fear of nature, fear of the city
- H. Pleasure and fear
- I. Pandemic and social contagion

### **Calendar of Readings and Assignments\*\***

**Note: I reserve the right to shift readings and assignments as best suits the pace of the class, or that makes room for special visits from guest speakers or other relevant events. Students should be reminded that it is their responsibility to keep abreast of such changes by attending all classes.**

**Week 1: What are we afraid of? January 6<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>**

Introduction to course

No readings.

**Week 2 : Contemporary fear culture** January 13th & 15<sup>th</sup>

Furedi, F. 2007. 'The only thing we have to fear is the 'culture of fear' itself', *Spiked*, April 11.

Giddens, A. (1999). The Self: Ontological Security and Existential Anxiety, In *Modernity and Self Identity*. Pp. 35-69. Cambridge: Polity Press.

**Week 3: Security and fear** January 20th & 22nd

Rose, N. 1999. Securitization of Habitat, Pp. 246-253, In *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge University Press.

Blakely, E. and Mary Gail Snider (1997). Divided We Fall: Gated and Walled Communities in the United States, Pp. 85-99 In Nan Ellin (Ed.) *Architecture of Fear*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

**Week 4 : Contamination and fear** January 27<sup>th</sup> & January 29th

Burke, A. 2006. "Do you smell fumes?": Health, Hygiene, and Suburban Life *English Studies in Canada* 32, 4: 147-168.

Film: [SAFE]

**Week 5: Presentations** February 3<sup>rd</sup> & February 5<sup>th</sup>

**Presentations all week**

**Week 6: Presentations** February 10<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>

**Presentations all week**

**Week 7: Moral Panic** February 17<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>

Goode, Eric. and Nachman Ben-Yehuda 1994. Moral Panics: An Introduction, Pp 31-65 In *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance*. Cambridge: Blackwell.

Film: *Bigger, Faster, Stronger*

**Mid-term recess Week of February 24th**

**Week 9: The other of fear** March 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>

Shaheen, J. (2003). How Hollywood Vilifies a People, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 588 (July), 171-193.

Guest speaker: Sara AvMaat

**\*\*Annotated Bibliographies Due**

**Week 10: The politics of terrorism and dissent** March 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>

Giroux, H. 2002. 'Democracy and the Politics of Terrorism', *Cultural Studies: Critical Methodologies*, 2, 334-342.

*The Fifth Estate: Enemies of the State* : (45 minutes)

<http://www.cbc.ca/fifth/20102011/enemiesofthestate/>

**Week 11: Risk and fear** March 17<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>

Beck, Ulrich. (1992). On the Logic of Wealth Distribution, In *Risk Society* Pp. 19-50. London: Sage.

**Week 12: Pandemic and contagion** March 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>

Martin, E. (1994). Immunology on the Street: How Nonscientists see the Immune System, Pp. 64-81, In *Flexible Bodies: Tracking Immunity in American Culture from the Days of Polio to the Age of AIDS* Boston: Beacon Press.

Film: *SARS*

**\*\*Paper Due March 24th**

**Week 13: Disaster and Apocalypse** March 31<sup>st</sup> & April 2<sup>nd</sup>

Lyng, S. (1990) Edgework: A Social Psychological Analysis of Voluntary Risk Taking, *The American Journal of Sociology*, 95 (4), 851-886.

Film: *20 Seconds of Joy*

