

# UNIVERSITY of GUELPH

## COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES

### Department of Sociology and Anthropology

SOC\*1100 02 Sociology, Fall 2024

Prof. Mervyn Horgan

### COURSE OUTLINE

Sociology is among the most dynamic, wide-ranging, and controversial disciplines taught at universities. Whether it's crèches or crematoriums, housing or holidays, porn or prayer, sport or suicide, if it's something people think or do it together, we sociologists study it.

Thinking sociologically means developing a flexible and endlessly useful set of analytic skills called the *sociological imagination*. To develop our sociological imagination, we subject our own lives, experiences, and ideas about the world to critical scrutiny. Sociologists take on the uncomfortable but worthy task of questioning taken-for-granted ways of thinking, beliefs, and practices, especially things that others view as unquestionable truths. For example, many believe that wealth is earned through individual effort and good decision-making. Sure, but only if we ignore how external (structural) forces shape individual capacities and direct our choices. Structural forces influence whether our education ends in high school or Harvard, and whether we work on Wall Street or at Wal-Mart, and whether we sleep in a park or penthouse.

The sociological imagination is a formidable force for connecting our seemingly small, local, personal biographies to large-scale, global, seemingly impersonal forces. With our sociological imagination we come to see how many of our most deeply felt personal troubles intertwine with wider public issues. At a personal level, the beauty of the sociological imagination is in enhancing our ability to think expansively and critically, and to live reflexively, ethically and meaningfully. More broadly, it enhances our capacity to critically engage with our world and work towards a more just and inclusive society.

**Evaluation:** Weekly Quizzes; 2 Writing Assignments; Final Exam (in-person)

**Textbook:** All readings will be available online or through course reserves

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course is designed around the following objectives. These form the bases for evaluating your coursework so please revisit them regularly throughout the semester.

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- employ your sociological imagination to analyze social issues
- understand the meanings and applications of basic sociological concepts
- critically analyze taken-for-granted understandings of social issues
- articulate the intersections of structural forces, biography, and everyday life
- discern and critique causes and effects of social inequality