Guelph University Department of Anthropology and Sociology

**Soc. 4010 Violence and Society, Winter 2023**

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Time: 11:30 – 2:20 PM. : Location MCKN 223

Office hours: Wednesdays 2:30 to 4:00 : Location TBA

**Exploring violence from multiple perspectives**

**Overview:**

Violence is the act of deliberating hurting another person physically. Not only do violence actions take place in a changing social context, the interpretations of the meanings of the actions, their justifications, and the decisions whether the justifications are valid are all ultimately socially-constructed. To acknowledge that a violent act takes place in a social context and there may be contributing causes in no way means that it is automatically justifiable. Cause and justification are not the same. Violence can manifest in many different forms such as elder abuse, suicide, infanticide, domestic violence, sports violence, genocide, torture, serial killing, Female Genital Mutilation, honor killings, widow burning, mass shootings, bullying, gangs, child abuse, sexual assault, hate crimes, and war. This course will examine the definition and meaning of violence for the participants (perpetrator, victim, *and* bystander) and move beyond the traditional view of violence as inherently individualistic in origin (that are insufficient to explain social change) to a more sociological approach that links violent acts to its social context for both causality and interpretation. In no way does a sociological analysis eschew the contributions of any field; rather, we have an opportunity to gather all such contributions together within a common framework.

This course used to be a seminar but now has been restructured to have a lecture-oriented format to cope with rising enrollment. All material may be a little disturbing. Hang in there. It’s also very interesting!

**Covid Accommodations**: Due to the nature of the pandemic, circumstances can rapidly change. However, as of present conditions, student attendance in class will be expected. The midterm and final exam are online as changes in the pandemic may create new concerns for the students.

**Learning Objectives**

--To express their own ideas and construct arguments with facts and examples.

--To develop an appreciation for different points of view.

--To demonstrate independent research linking a variety of sources.

--To connect the micro and macro levels in social explanation.

--To see violence as being both facilitated and constrained by a broader social network.

--Exploring strategies to prevent violent crime.

--And above all, to expand your Sociological Imagination!

**Additional Learning Outcomes**

Our department has various overall and long-term learning objectives that apply:

---We will evaluate and apply social theories to historical and contemporary issues.

--Evaluate and apply theories to data and circumstances. What are their strengths and weaknesses and how are they to be used?

--Reflect on culture, social relations and structures to develop a deeper understanding of social problems. To see how different stuff ties together, integrating knowledge from academic sources with your own experiences.

--Evaluate one’s social identity within a broader context. How do we fit ourselves fit into a bigger picture?

--Develop an appreciation for the uncertainty and ambiguity within interpretation and analysis. In coming up with our own answers we also acknowledge what might change, as the pursuit of truth is unlikely to have easy and permanent answers, and some things we cannot know for sure.

--Communicate effectively in both written and oral forms. Expressing your thoughts is not only vital for applying them, but in developing them.

--Develop intellectual curiosity. Learning is fun! Let us expand our sociological imagination!

--Use theories and data to evaluate social policy. Now that we have given you different theories and some recent data, what do you think should be done about a specific problem?

-- Demonstrate personal and academic integrity and ethical reasoning. Directly addressing these goals may seem like a challenge, but they come up when I write reference letters.

As you go through life, you will no doubt be taking many stands; as you employ the skills you developed at university, and, as circumstances and data change, you change!

**Structure and Evaluative Procedures:**

Three reaction papers 50.0%

Online Midterm (TF & MC) 16.6%

Online Final Exam 33.4%

The structure of the final exam is yet to be decided and will be either a combination of multiple choice and essay or just multiple choice.

**Resources:** The required text is *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* by Steven Pinker. There are also online readings and video links.

**Reaction Papers**: The weighting within a paper is flexible, following the student's choice of what parts to emphasize. Reaction papers are three to five pages long, double-spaced, not including the title page. They must include original thought, bring out central themes, and show what the student has learned in the writing process. For each paper there will be materials from lecture, readings, documentary, and discussion.

**Reaction Paper FAQS:**

A) Is a reaction paper just a *précis*?

No. They are not merely summaries: a short summary is a necessary structural part of the paper but its purpose is to show that the student has done the reading and to lead into the student’s own original contribution.

B) Can I say “I?” and use contractions?

Yes. The use of the first person is common, as the writing level is semi-formal. However, the writing quality is to be of university level with correct capitalization, punctuation, and grammar.

C) What kind of referencing do I use?

Any consistent referencing style is acceptable; what is common knowledge to the class does not have to be referenced, but all direct quotes must be. To refer to class material, one might just say, “....as mentioned in class by the instructor...” or “...as we saw in the documentary \_\_\_\_ ... “

D) How are they marked? Is there a marking guide?

There is no marking guide or rubric. You have to convince me you did the readings, were able to analyze the material, focus on your choice of salient points, and develop a conclusion in regards to the material and how you learned it. I ask myself, ‘Can I see that the student learned something? Did I?”

E) I got my paper back. Can you show me where I lost marks?

No. *You* show your instructor where you deserved to gain marks. One starts at zero, not at a hundred percent. Feel free to drop into my office hours and we can go over your paper.

F) There are a lot of readings listed for the assignments. Do I have to read them all?

I’d recommend you glance at all of the readings listed for a paper and then narrow it down.

G) What is the best way to really screw up a paper?

You mean besides not editing your work? What gives an instructor a negative impression is saying, *“...this material contradicts what I have learned elsewhere so therefore I’m ignoring it!.*” Another mistake is to copy what you think my beliefs are. I often try to challenge students by exploring unexpected positions, and, in any case, one has to always support one’s own position because then one is learning, not reiterating.

H) Do you have any tips?

Always come up with your own title to help you focus your theme. Also, it is usually when I get to the end of a first draft that I know what the paper is all about, so plan on revision to really tighten up your final draft. A good paper is one where the student learns something. A great paper is one where the professor learns something.

I) That sounds intimidating

Don’t panic. You don’t have to be right about everything, only to give the best argument and clearest theme you can. There is no right and wrong answer. .

**Student's Rights and Obligations**

All value positions are accepted within class discussion if voiced with respect for the beliefs of others. Students can help each other on their papers, but each paper must be single-authored. All assignments handed in on time will be marked and ready to be handed back by the last class. Responses on E-mail can be expected from instructor within 48 hours. If you don't hear back from me within this time, you can assume I did not receive your message. Please contact me through other means. (The office phone extension is not a reliable way to get ahold of any instructor except during office hours.) If a test or assignment is missed, it is the student's responsibility to provide a verifiable reason. In the cases of possible misunderstandings between instructor and student, it is the student's responsibility to see the instructor in office hours, call, or E-mail. Opinions presented by the instructor are points of view given for educational purposes to be understood & analyzed and not to be copied by the student. Everyone has the right to their own values, though not their own facts.

All class material may be a little disturbing. There are no “trigger warnings” as such as the whole material is potentially disturbing and such warnings may do more harm than good. I will try to challenge your preconceptions, just as I hope to learn a few things from your own contributions.

**Grading Scale**: For general information, please consult the Guelph University Calendar web page. A mechanically-written, plodding paper that does the minimum required is about a 'C+.' A paper with facts, reasoning, examples, and a focused theme and argument is a 'B.' An 'A' paper includes original thought, passion, and the incorporation of new material. It is also grammatically-correct and well-organized. An 'A+' paper is one that is breathtaking in terms of form and content. Students who do not pick up their papers by the exam risk a penalty.

**Provision and Rider**: This course outline is a guide, not an unalterable schedule. Changes can be made by the instructor as circumstances change. Class structure and delivery may still change due to the unpredictable nature of our present health crisis. Though the course structure has to be flexible in regards to the pandemic and to accommodate possible bad weather, any changes to the grading procedures will be conducted following “grading policy” in the academic calendar.

**Contingency Planning**: If a paper is one week late, there is no penalty. Anything more late without a verifiable medical reason will incur a mild penalty in order to be fair to the other students.

**Reaction Paper Schedule:** Each student writes THREE papers. I want to give you feedback by the 5th class and all of your papers graded by the last class. Your first paper is due the fourth class, the second the eighth, and the third the eleventh. Anything more than a week late incurs a penalty but will be accepted.