

## Soc. 4010 Violence and Society, Fall 2021

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Time: Wednesdays 11:30 – 2:20 : Location TBA

Office hours: Wednesdays 2:30 – 4:00

Exploring violence from multiple perspectives

### Overview:

Violence is the act of deliberately hurting another person. 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. 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.

In past years, all students had to give a class presentations. This time that will not be possible due to a greater projected enrollment. If enrollment should be unexpectedly low, we can return to that structure, circumstances permitting.

All material may be a little disturbing. Hang in there. It's also very interesting!

### 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.

### Additional Learning Outcomes

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

- We will evaluate and apply social theories to historical and contemporary issues.
- Learn to evaluate and apply theories to data and circumstances. What is a theory's strengths and weaknesses and can you use it?
- To 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 own social identity within an increasingly 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:

Four reaction papers	60%
Weekly Feedback Forms	10%
Essay Final Exam	30%

All students need to express their thoughts in oral and written form.

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

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, presentation, readings, documentary, and discussion.

#### 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 students are required to speak and participate in class, but alternate arrangements can be made for those with social anxiety disorder.

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 and the changes in student enrollment.