

**Ryerson University – Sociology**

**SOC 490: Sociological Practice**

*Thursday Noon – 3PM, ENG LG-13*

Instructor: Prof. Paul S. Moore  
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Office Hours: Thursdays 3 – 4PM or by appointment

I will normally reply to E-mail or phone messages within 48 hours. E-mail is best used as business communications. To discuss ideas and the substance of lectures, assignments, or activities, it is best to meet with me in person during office hours or by appointment.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will provide students with the opportunity to develop a structured program of study using sociological tools and concepts to investigate contemporary issues. Students will produce a project exploring an issue that is linked to their own sociological learning and their vision for the future.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

In the course, you will first compose a statement of a future goal (a “statement of interest” for a career plan). You will also develop an independent research project on a topic of your choice. These are not necessarily directly related to each other. Weekly readings and activities for the entire class are designed to assist in the process and interpretation behind any student’s project.

**REQUIRED WORK AND GRADING STRUCTURE:**

<b>Component</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Due Dates</b>
Reflections & Participation	Bi-Weekly reflections on readings, and participation in class discussion	10%	FOUR of Weeks 2, 4, 6, 8, 10
Statement of Interest	Statement of future (“career”) plan	15%	Week 5
Group Project Participation	A collective, online reflection on “Making Sociology Meaningful”	15%	Participation & Present Week 13
Research Proposal	Statement of research (“essay”) plan	15%	Week 11
Presentation & Response	Presentation of Research Proposals	10%	Week 11
Research Essay	10-12 page written analysis of process and research	35%	Due Fri., Dec 10, strictly by 5PM

**Bi-Weekly Reflections and Class Discussions** ..... 10%

In Weeks 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10, we will have an in-depth class discussion relating a theoretical class reading to a film. Come prepared to participate by composing a 1-2 page reflection on how a reading is related to the film. We will watch the first half of the film the previous week, and its conclusion in class before the discussion. You may miss ONE of the five reflections & discussions and still receive full participation marks.

**Statement of Interest (“Career Plan”)** ..... 15%

Due in Week 5, a two-page statement of a personal plan or goal for the future. The statement is similar to a general cover letter for a résumé, but we will discuss in class in more detail the required writing style and background preparation needed to write this statement well. The future plan can be job-related, professional degree or grad-school related, or any other aspect of your future life – but everyone will explain how you plan to achieve your goal and why this particular degree in Sociology is the best foundation for that next step. You will receive detailed response and feedback in order to revise it to use in applications and résumés.

**Group Projects “Making Sociology Meaningful”** ..... 15%

In Weeks 3, 5, 7, 9, small groups will plan and work on making an online reflection, collectively documenting how you, as a graduating class, “made Sociology meaningful” or perhaps “made meaningful Sociology.” We will discuss as a class what the best online forum is, but likely the groups will work in [www.tumblr.com](http://www.tumblr.com) and each group will be “followers” of the other groups. The final online results will be formally presented in class in Week 13, paying particular attention to the dynamic and relation between individual contributions and collective results.

**Research Essay (10-12 pages; Due Friday, Dec 10, 5PM)** ..... 35%

The choice of topic is entirely open, but you should address how you have “Made Sociology Meaningful” or perhaps “Made Meaningful Sociology.” You should draw upon both the course readings and further references and research material as appropriate. For students planning a thesis SOC 491 in Winter 2011, this essay may act as a thesis proposal.

**Research Proposal (2 pages)** ..... 15%

In Week 11, submit a 2-page proposal for your research essay. Proposals should summarize the topic, explain its importance, and state what is known already from initial research.

**Presentation of Research Topic (2-3 minutes)** ..... 10%

Also in Week 11, present a summary of your proposal to other students. Do not simply read it (except perhaps the first paragraph) – state your intentions, key points, struggles, and pride in aspects of it. This may be done in smaller groups to maximize feedback, or to the entire class for the experience and simply to maximize sharing about what others are researching.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

As in all courses, you are expected to follow the Student Code of Conduct. Read about the Code, issues around proper citation, cheating, and plagiarism, and consider your student rights and responsibilities at the following Ryerson website: [www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity)

**ACCESS CENTRE**

Students requiring assistance and accommodations for their circumstances should introduce themselves to me *immediately* to discuss a plan for the course.

## **Schedule of Activities, Readings, and Lectures**

If you must be absent from class for a legitimate reason, please excuse yourself in advance. In the first hour each week, Prof. Moore will lecture or discuss the readings or lessons. In the second hour each week, we will watch part of a film, in order to provide a common case study for discussion and interpretation of the theoretical points of the readings. In the third hour each week, we will either discuss the relevant readings or groups will work on their online projects.

### **Week 1 – Sep 9:**

Introductions: Making Sociology Meaningful, Making this course Meaningful

Film: Up in the Air (first part)

### **Week 2 – Sep 16:**

Lecture: The “normal” lifecourse? What does it mean to stake claim to an interest, to make a plan? Determining first steps toward turning an idea into a plan.

Film: Up in the Air (conclusion)

Discussion: Making Sociology Work? Reflect on the New York Times article, “What is it about 20-somethings?” using the example of *Up in the Air*.

### **Week 3 – Sep 23:**

Lecture: The purposes of education? James Baldwin, “A Talk to Teachers”

Part of Lecture will review instructions about the form and genre of a “statement of interest” – what is expected in the first paragraph, the next paragraphs, the final paragraph. No matter what topic or goal, everyone will follow the same outline, writing in the same “genre” of writing.

Film: The Class (first part)

Groups: Representing “Sociology at Ryerson”? What Sociology or other courses, assignments, readings, lessons, experiences of studying at Ryerson do the members of the group have in common? How can you link, photograph, describe, or represent that common ground?

### **Week 4 – Sep 30:**

Lecture: Sociology as a Vocation. Weber, “Science as a Vocation”

Film: The Class (conclusion)

Discussion: Sociology as a Vocation? Reflect on the significance of Weber’s “Science as a Vocation” using examples from *The Class*.

### **Week 5 – Oct 7:**

#### ***Statements of Interest Due In Class Today***

Lecture: A Sociological Imagination? Lemert *Social Things*; Mills, *Sociological Imagination*.

Film: Examined Life (first part)

Groups: Representing “The Sociological Imagination”? What Sociological approaches, interests, ideologies, perspectives, motivations do the members of the group have in common? How can you link, photograph, describe, or represent that common ground?

**Week 6 – Oct 14:**

Lecture: The Unexamined Life? From the book, *Examined Life*, a transcript (plus) of the film.

Film: Examined Life (conclusion)

Discussion: Making a Difference? Reflect on Zizek’s interview from *Examined Life* in relation to points from other interviewed philosophers in the film.

**Week 7 – Oct 21:**

Lecture: The Art of Sociology. Becker, *How Society Works?*, selection

Film: Manufactured Landscapes (first part)

Groups: Representing “Society”? How does the group agree or not on which aspect of the social is the most important—in terms of effect, power, meaning, passion, satisfaction, happiness? How can you link, photograph, describe, or represent your discussion?

**Week 8 – Oct 28:**

Lecture: Liquid Modernity? Bauman, “Hurried Life”

Film: Manufactured Landscapes (conclusion)

Discussion: Reflect on Bauman’s claims about contemporary society in “Hurried Life”, in light of what is shown in *Manufactured Landscapes*.

**Week 9 – Nov 4:**

Lecture: Post-Identity? D’Andrea, “Neo-Nomadism”; Graeber, *Possibilities*, selection.

***Part of Lecture reviews instructions about the form and expectations of your essay proposal.***

Film: Gambling, Gods & LSD (first part)

Groups: Representing “Making Sociology Meaningful”? What ways do you make life meaning? How are they related, or not, to the lessons, ideas, skills, and time spent in school? How can you link, photograph, describe, or represent your discussion?

**Week 10 – Nov 11:**

Lecture: Intellectual Play? Kurasawa, “Generational Manifesto”; Miller, *A Theory of Shopping*.

Film: Gambling, Gods & LSD (conclusion)

Discussion: Reflect upon Kurasawa’s “The State of Intellectual Play” or Miller’s *A Theory of Shopping*, in relation to how people are shown seeking meaning in “Gambling Gods & LSD.”

**Week 11 – Nov 18:**

***Essay Proposals Due in Class. You will also present a brief summary of your proposal.***

To be determined: Present to a small group, or to entire class?

**Week 12 – Nov 25:**

Class is Cancelled, but the class room and time are available to small groups to finalize their online representations and plan for presentations the following week.

There will be extended office hours earlier this week to return essay proposals and discuss working towards final essays.

**Week 13 – Dec 2:** Group Presentations of “Making Sociology Meaningful.”

## Options and Approaches to this Course

*(“Just what is this course for, anyway?”)*

The purpose of the course is to reflect upon the study of Sociology in relation to your individual future plan and in relation to your individual research interests. This requires synthesizing personal goals with abstract theories, connecting individual experience with idealism and hypothetical plans.

**Everyone** should use this course as an opportunity to study a topic of your choice, to lay out a proposal for further exploration of any topic and begin research on it, possibly as a proposal for a Thesis SOC 491, possibly a proposal for a grad school or scholarship application, or possibly just one last chance to research and write about something you’re interested in, but haven’t been able to study in other coursework.

Visit the Arts Career Counselor, Sonny Wong ([sonny.wong@ryerson.ca](mailto:sonny.wong@ryerson.ca)), of the Arts Student Experience Team in the POD 344 area.

**Experiential Learning option:** If you are volunteering in a position that is relevant to your career plan, talk to Prof. Moore about incorporating that experience into the coursework. Your final essay may then research a topic related to your service, and incorporate reflections about specific, detailed experiences gained from volunteering.

You might then use this course as an opportunity to prepare for further studies or certifications in Law School, Human Resources, Teachers’ College, an MBA, teaching overseas, a Masters in Social Work, Counseling, Information Management or another applied field.

For advice and assistance connecting with relevant volunteering, see Christina Smit ([csmit@arts.ryerson.ca](mailto:csmit@arts.ryerson.ca)), of the Arts Student Experience Team in the POD 344 area.

**Service Learning option:** Program Evaluation for Student Services on campus. This is available to only three students, and will involve studying and researching Program Evaluation and mentoring 3<sup>rd</sup> year students in SOC 481 who will be designing a survey evaluating a student service program. This option is especially for students interested in consulting for government civil service, research support for business or the non-profit sector.

You must do your final research paper on the field of Program Evaluation, and incorporate reflections about the specific detailed experiences gained from mentoring the students in SOC 481. Your work as consultant will take the place of the class presentation (10%) on Nov. 18.

Dates and Components of Service Learning (SL) Option (exact times to come):

- Present principles of Program Evaluation to 481 SL Orientation: Sept 29 or 30.
- Consult with 481 students about their draft surveys: October 25 to 27.
- Consult with 481 students about their draft reports: December 2 or 3.