

Ryerson University – Sociology – Fall 2012

SOC 490: Sociological Practice

Tuesdays, 8:10AM to 11AM, Kerr Hall East 121

Instructor: Prof. Paul S. Moore (psmoore@ryerson.ca)
Teaching Ass't: Joey Jakob (joey.jakob@ryerson.ca)
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I will normally reply to e-mail within 48 hours. E-mail is best used for 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 develop an advanced, independent research project on a topic of your choice, either a subject you have not yet had a chance to study in another course or revisiting and expanding significantly upon previous coursework.

You will also compose a plan to achieve a future goal (a “statement of interest” for a career plan or an application for a specific program of study). The choice depends primarily on whether your next career step involves further post-graduate education or not.

These two assignments are not necessarily directly related to each other, but those planning on post-graduate studies or certain careers may develop the independent research project with a view to having a writing or research sample for their professional portfolios.

Weekly lectures and in-class activities for the entire class are designed to assist in the process of writing and interpretation of any student’s project. Participation through collegial discussion and consideration of other students’ plans and projects is essential. Attendance—despite the early hour on the timetable—is crucial toward understanding your independent work in relation to the discipline of Sociology within a cohort of your peers.

Options and Approaches to this Course, or “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 research interests and in relation to your individual future career plan. 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 their own choice, to lay out a proposal for further exploration of any topic and begin researching it, possibly as a proposal for a thesis in SOC 491, possibly a proposal for a grad school or scholarship application, or possibly one last chance to research and write about something you're interested in, but haven't studied in other coursework.

Visit the [Arts Career Counselor](#), Sonny Wong (sonny.wong@ryerson.ca), of the Arts Student Experience Team in the POD 344 area. Sonny will join us in October to discuss the social, economic, and professional value of a Sociology Bachelor of Arts.

Experiential Learning option: If you are volunteering or working 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.

Service Learning option: This optional coursework involves preparing information in a handout and workshop. **This option counts as 10% of your grade, and substitutes for participating in the “Research Fair” in the final two weeks of class.** You should plan to spend about 10-12 hours outside of normal class time for additional research, preparation, group meetings, etc.

The project focuses on Program Evaluation and Mentoring Junior Soc Majors in SOC 481.

This option is open to six students, and involves preparing a handout and holding a workshop on Program Evaluation to mentor 3rd year students in SOC 481 who will be designing a survey evaluating a variety of programs, and perhaps consulting with them again on their draft surveys and reports. This option is especially valuable for students interested in consulting for government civil service or in research support for business or the non-profit sector.

The Application, detailed expectations, and specific dates for this Service Learning option will be circulated shortly after the beginning of the term.

REQUIRED WORK AND GRADING STRUCTURE:

Component	Format	Value	Due Dates
Participation	General Attendance, Preparedness, and Quality of Participation in activities	10%	weekly
Early Morning Attendance	Being present at start of class at least 10 times for the full 5% credit	5%	weekly
Research Proposal	Statement of research plan, "essay proposal" and summary of essay outline	15%	Week 5, October 2
Summary of Article or Chapter	For Classtime Presentation: by popular vote, 3 will be selected for final lectures	5%	Week 7, October 23
Statement of Interest	Statement of future ("career") plan, or an Application to a Job Posting	15%	Week 9, November 6
"Research Fair" Presentation	For Presentation In-Class: a poster, powerpoint, website, or blogware-based overview of your research-in-progress	10%	Week 11 or 12, Nov. 20 or 27
Research Essay	Min. 12 page written analysis of process and research	40%	Due Mon., Dec 10, strictly by 5PM

Research Proposal (2 pages) 15%
 In Week 5, submit a 2-page, double-spaced print-copy of a proposal for the advanced, independent research essay for the course, and also include an annotated bibliography of at least five (5) initial research references. You should summarize the topic, explain its importance, and state what you know from initial research. Further detailed instructions to come.

Presentation of Summary of an Article or Book Chapter (bring 1 paragraph to class) 5%
 In Week 7, you will determine the content of the final three lectures Prof. Moore gives. The class will select, by popular vote, three readings and lecture topics for the last three classes. First, small groups of eight students will debate and select one reading from each group to present to the entire class. The summaries will be read aloud and voted on to pick the most popular three topics and readings. The students who suggested these three readings will be invited to help deliver the lectures, if they wish. In this class, too, you will also determine the format and content of the final three activities toward finishing your research essays: whether they are informal or structured, about individual research or the common readings of lectures.

Statement of Interest ("Career Plan" or "Program of Study")..... 15%
 In Week 9, submit a two to three-page, double-spaced statement of a personal plan for the future OR a program for further post-graduate study. We'll discuss the writing style and preparation needed to do this well. Each of you will explain your plan to succeed at the goal, whether career or further study, and why this particular degree in Sociology is a foundation. You will receive detailed response and feedback in order to revise it to use in applications, whether to jobs or college-certificate programs, grad school, teachers' college, law school, etc.

"Research Fair" Poster or Laptop-based Presentation of Research..... 10%
 The last two classes, Weeks 11 and 12, half of the class each week will set-up a station to present their research-in-progress on a poster or laptop; Prof. Moore, Joey, and the other half of the class

will circulate around the “Research Fair” learning more about your work-in-progress and asking questions, making suggestions. State your “thesis” clearly, highlight key points, theoretical or methodological struggles, and pride in certain aspects of the research you have done by then.

Research Essay (about 4500 word minimum, 12-16 pp.; Due Monday, Dec 10, 5PM) 40%
 The choice of research 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 weekly lectures and further references and research material as appropriate. For students planning to write a thesis for SOC 491 in Winter 2012, this essay may act as a thesis proposal.

Participation and Preparedness..... 10%
 It is essential that you attend and participate in class discussion and activities. Attendance *in the second-half of class* and overall participation will be evaluated weekly from Sep 4 to Nov 27. Absence from two classes without explanation will not affect your grade, but missing any more than two requires written documentation and explanation to receive credit in lieu of attendance.

Early Morning Attendance 5%
 Because class is scheduled at 8AM weekly, a token amount of credit will be given for being in attendance at the start of class each week, at least 10 times over the semester, and proportionately for less than 10 times.

(Alternative to credit for Participation and Attendance)	In EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES only, <i>an additional written assignment</i> in lieu of the expectation and credit for attendance and participation. MUST BE negotiated, in writing, with Prof. Moore by Sep 14, the last day to enroll.	(15%)	ONLY Exceptional Circumstances, MUST BE negotiated, in writing, by Sep 14
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EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES does not include unfortunate but ordinary factors such as commuting long distances and needing to work shifts that conflict with schoolwork or sleep.

MISSED CLASSES and ILLNESS

Much of the grade covers activities that will only work if everyone attends consistently. Get in touch with Prof. Moore ***immediately*** if you miss two classes in a row for any reason.

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

ACCESS CENTRE

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

DEADLINE TO WITHDRAW: Friday, November 16

If you risk not completing the coursework in SOC 490 for whatever reason, the final date to withdraw and avoid having a (failing) grade is Nov. 16. Talk to Prof. Moore or Prof. Noack first about the consequences of doing so, and whether an alternative is still possible.

Schedule of Activities, Readings, and Lectures

Week 1 – Sep 4: Introductions: Making Sociology Meaningful, Making SOC 490 Meaningful

Prof. Moore will introduce the course and its concerns. He and Joey will lead a discussion about the variety of ways to consider your studies in Sociology as meaningful and valuable. The class will also discuss and come up with “theses” toward a Sociology Student Manifesto!

READ: [Fuyuki Kurasawa, “The State of Intellectual Play: A Generational Manifesto for Neoliberal Times,” *Topia* 18 \(2008\): 11-42.](#)

Outcomes: Statements in a Sociology Student Manifesto! Being prepared and motivated with a first few research options next week.

Week 2 – Sep 11: What is a Research Problematic?

Lecture (before break): What does it mean to commit to a research interest? Is there an ethical commitment to your “topic”? To yourself and your curiosity? What is the difference between a “problem” and a “problematic”?

READ: [Patrice Maniglier, “What is a Problematic? Bachelard and the Concept of a Problematic,” *Radical Philosophy* 173 \(2012\): 21-23.](#)

Activity (after break): Writing an Abstract proposal for a research paper. Instructions and a workshop on imagining the possible outcomes of research before you’ve even begun.

Outcomes: A first draft of the “thesis” problematic (an “abstract”) of your research proposal. Being prepared and motivated to find a couple of articles or books on your topic for next week.

Week 3 – Sep 18: Vegetarian Ecofeminism... Are Animals part of “society”?

Lecture (before break): Example of one of last year’s student research topics. Prof. Moore will present a lecture and lead a discussion based on one of last year’s student projects: animal rights. In addition to the topic, the lecture will demonstrate how to develop a “theory” and a conceptual framework for your own research topic.

READ: [Grace Kao, “Consistency in Ecofeminist Ethics,” *International Journal of the Humanities* 3, no. 11 \(2005\): 11-21.](#)

Activity (after break): How to talk or write about books you haven’t read yet! ... Writing a lit review that conceptualizes a problem and does more than simply review the research literature, based on the first couple of articles or books you found on your topic in the past week.

Outcomes: A first draft of the “lit review” passage of your research proposal. Being prepared and motivated to consider and create the methodology for your research for next week.

Week 4 – Sep 25: Islamic Sexuality in Historical View: Is a mustached woman beautiful?

Lecture (before break): Example of another of last year's student research topics. As last week, Prof. Moore will present a lecture and lead a discussion based on one of last year's student projects: the history of gender and beauty in Iran. In addition to the topic, the lecture will, again, demonstrate how to conceptualize a theoretical framework from a case study and a concrete example.

READ: [Afaneh Najmabadi, "Beyond the Americas: Are Gender and Sexuality Useful Categories in Historical Analysis?" *Journal of Women's History* 18, no. 1 \(2006\): 11-21.](#)

Activity (after break): How to talk or write about research you haven't done yet! Constructing a methodology for your research-to-come. What do you need to do? How can you do it? Idealistically and realistically. Mapping out a timeline to completing the research essay in Dec.

Outcomes: A first draft of the "methodology" passage of your research proposal, and thus a first draft of the entire research proposal.

Week 5 – Oct 2: The "Iron-Cage" of Life-long learning.

Lecture (before break): Is education a modern privilege or a neo-liberal prison-cell? What does it mean to pursue education in "liquid modern" times?

READ: [Zygmunt Bauman, "Education in Liquid Modernity," *Review of Education, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies*, 27 \(2005\): 303-317.](#)

Activity (after break): Discussion and first thoughts about careers, further study, "the future"

Outcomes: Proposals Due. Prepared and Motivated for the next "career plan" section of course.

Advanced, Independent Research **Project Proposals** (2 pages, double-spaced, with a briefly-annotated bibliography of at least five sources) are **due today**.

FALL READING Week – Oct 9: No Classes at Ryerson Thanksgiving Week

Week 6 – Oct 16: Sociology BA? What kind of job will that get you?

Lecture (before break): Arts Career Counselor, Sonny Wong, will lead a workshop and discussion on "The Value of a Sociology Bachelor of Arts Degree"

Activity (after break): Strategies for a successful job search and career plan, with Sonny.

Outcomes: Thinking of your degree in practical terms as a path to success, but also thinking of it in idealistic terms as an opportunity for personal and social empowerment and betterment.

Week 7 – Oct 23: Planning a hypothetical future. Utopianism or Pragmatism? Both!

Lecture (before break): What does it mean to stake claim to an interest, to make a plan?

Part of the Lecture reviews instructions about the form and genre of a “statement of interest”

Activity (after break): Steps toward turning an idea into a plan. Imagining a future goal or job; considering programs for future study—translating into a practical program and plan of action.

Outcomes: Writing a first-draft of your Statements of Interest. Becoming prepared and motivated to complete the Statement of Interest in the next two weeks before it’s due.

Week 8 – Oct 30:

Lecture (before break): Topic and reading as chosen by you on Oct 23.

Activity (after break): Alumni Day—Panel of Ryerson Sociology Alumni

Outcomes: Learning about alumni paths to success and struggles to finding a footing in the “real” world after graduation. Check-in briefly to keep momentum motivated for Statements.

Week 9 – Nov 6:

Lecture (before break): Topic and reading as chosen by you on Oct 23.

Activity (after break): To be determined by you on Oct 23. A step toward your research essay.

Outcomes: To be determined by you. Keeping up momentum and motivation for final essay.

Statements of Interests (2 to 3-pages double-spaced, with a specific job-posting or other opportunity as advertised if a career-path or other option; with a bibliography if it’s for further post-graduate study) are **due today**.

Week 10 – Nov 13:

Lecture (before break): Topic and reading as chosen by you on Oct 23.

Activity (after break): To be determined by you on Oct 23. A step toward your research essay.

Outcomes: To be determined by you. Keeping up momentum and motivation for final essay.

Week 11 – Nov 20 and Week 12 – Nov 27: “Research Fair”

Half the class, each of these weeks, will set-up a station to present their research-in-progress as a poster-presentation or a power-point, website, or blog-based presentation on a laptop (plan for two-hours battery! You can’t all plug-in at once). Attendance is expected even if not presenting, to act as the audience for the other half of class, and out of simple respect for fellow students.

All Students: Research Essay, Paper Copy Due to Prof. Moore or in the Sociology Essay box by 5pm on Monday, December 10.