

Guelph University Department of Anthropology and Sociology

## Soc. 4010 (02) Violence and Society, Fall 2018

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Time: Section (02) Thursdays 2:30—5:20 : Location CRSC 403

Office hours Tuesdays 4:00 to 5:00 :Office :MACK 606: Ext. 58941

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 may have contributing causes in no way means that it is automatically justified nor unjustifiable. There are many different types such as elder abuse, suicide, infanticide, domestic violence, sports violence, genocide, torture, serial killers, Female Genital Mutilation, honor killings, widow burning, school 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 (acknowledging that though biological and medical theories may have a place they are insufficient to explain change and diversity) 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 anthropology, neuro-psychology, economics, geography, history, philosophy, and ideological perspectives; rather, sociology provides us with an opportunity to gather all such contributions together within a common framework. All students will have to give a class presentation, but there will be a wide variety of topics to choose.

All class material may be disturbing for different people. 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 learn how to give a presentation to one's peers.
- 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, some which apply directly to our course.

--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 have to 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 well in both written and oral forms. Expressing your thoughts is not only vital for applying them, but in developing them. Presentations and papers will help here!

--Develop intellectual curiosity. Learning is fun!

--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 learn more with the skills you have developed at university, as circumstances change, you change, and new data comes in.

## Structure and Evaluative Procedures:

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Three reaction papers        | 50% |
| Participation and Presenting | 25% |
| Term Paper                   | 25% |

Every student will present a selection of the readings. All students need to express their thoughts both in oral and written form. Participation is thus expected and required.

Resources: The required text is *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* by Steven Pinker. There are also required readings online. Students are responsible to keep up with the readings for the presentations.

## 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. (However, the office phone extension is not a reliable way to get hold of any sessional 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 disturbing for different people. There are no “trigger warnings” as such as the whole material is potentially disturbing, and there is no right to “feel comfortable” in class.