

Guelph University Department of Anthropology and Sociology

## Soc. 4010 (03) Violence and Society, Fall 2018

Time: Mondays 2:30 – 5:20 : Location ROZH 108 Instructor: Norm Dubeski

Office hours Tuesdays 4:00 to 5:00

Office :MACK 606: Ext. 58941 : E-mail: [ndubeski@uoguelph.ca](mailto:ndubeski@uoguelph.ca)

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, honour killings, widow burning, school shootings, bullying, youth 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 among.

### Course Objectives:

- Providing an overview of both group and individual violence.
- To assess research and ideological points of view.
- To see violence as being both facilitated and constrained by a broader social network.
- Exploring strategies to prevent violent crime.

### Learning Objectives

- To explore and compare how violence can take place in many different forms.
- 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.

### Structure and Evaluative Procedures:

Three reaction papers	50%
Participation and Presenting	25%
Essay Final Exam	25%

Every student will present a selection of the readings. All students need to express their thoughts both in oral and written form. Participation in answering or asking questions 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 all the presentations.

Reaction Papers: The weighting within a term 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 process of writing the paper. For each reaction paper there will be materials from lecture, presentation, readings, documentary, and discussion. As a student's presentation may take place at the same time as a paper is due, the student is to complete their choice of three and is not to write on the same topic as they present.

### Additional Learning Outcomes

Our department has various overall and longterm learning objectives, some which apply directly to our course.

- We will evaluate and apply social theories to historical and contemporary issues, global and national.
  - 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 effectively, in both written and oral forms. Expressing your thoughts is not only vital for applying them, but in developing them as well. Class presentations and short essays 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 government should do about a specific problem?
  - Demonstrate personal, professional, and academic integrity and ethical reasoning. Directly addressing these goals may seem like a challenge, but when I write reference letters for graduate, questions on them always come up!
- 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.

Provision and Rider: This course outline is a guide, not unalterable. Changes can be made by the instructor as circumstances change. All class material may be disturbing for different people.