

# INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

(SOCIOL 4R03 – Winter 2020)

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Instructor: **Dr. Casey Scheibling**

Lecture Time: Monday 7:00pm – 10:00pm

Lecture Location: PGCLL M24

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Office Location: KTH-608

Office Hours: By appt.

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## Course Description

This course focuses on a foundational aspect of sociological social psychology – the idea that the individual and society cannot exist without one another. We will explore this dialectic of social reality by examining: 1) how our lives are influenced by larger social forces; 2) how individual and group interactions are performed in daily life; and, 3) how these activities function to either reinforce or rework prevailing social structures and ideologies. Particular attention will be given to the role of culture and communication in acting as bridges between individuals and society. We will learn the principles of symbolic interactionism and then use this perspective to address classic and more contemporary social psychological topics. The key topics covered in this course will include: meaning, language, identity, roles, emotion, embodiment, intersectionality, relationships, families, culture, communities, collective action, and inequality. Whenever possible, we will extend our theoretical knowledge towards emergent social issues surrounding the growing digitization of (post)modern society.

Important questions shaping this course include:

- What are the theoretical principles of symbolic interactionism and what are the methodological strategies of ethnography? How do they work together to enable us to examine of the relationship between individuals and society?
- How do we assign meaning to language and other communications? In what ways are symbols created, disseminated, and modified in interaction?
- How do we construct, embody, and perform our roles and identities? How does identity construction play out in contemporary mediated society?
- How do communities and (sub)cultures develop and interact in the public sphere? How and why do small groups mobilize into larger collective action?

- How do power structures shape our lived experience? How are social inequalities sustained and resisted by individuals in society?

## Course Objectives

- Content – You will learn about sociological social psychology. To do so, you will become familiar with theories and methodologies that sociologists use to analyze and make sense of the relationship between the individual and society. These ideas will be illustrated in textbook chapters, peer-reviewed journal articles, and media clips that we will discuss in depth.
- Skills – You will learn how to comprehend, compare, and contrast theoretical and empirical texts about action, interaction, identities, emotions, bodies, culture, media, and more. You will gain experience in communicating your understanding of the course content in tests, discussions, and written assignments.
- Application – You will have the opportunity to extend your theoretical knowledge in two short written assignments. These assignments will provide you with space to develop and demonstrate critical thinking in the form of a response to questions about important contemporary social issues. In these responses, you will be expected to apply course material to effectively answer the proposed questions.

## Course Evaluation

### 1) Attendance (5%)

- You will be expected to attend the lecture periods throughout the semester.

### 2) Online Discussion Posts (6x 2.5% = 15%)

- We will have online discussions about the assigned readings on Avenue To Learn. I will start the discussion each Wednesday starting on January 22<sup>nd</sup> with some questions or points about the next week's readings that I think we can unpack further. Then, you will be expected to contribute substantially to the dialogue – either through a few lengthy posts or many shorter responses. You should contribute to 6 of the 8 weeks with assigned readings beginning in the week of January 20<sup>th</sup>. Contributing to all 8 weeks will *not* result in bonus marks. Your contributions will be evaluated not only by quantity, but also by quality, in terms of engagement and critical thinking. The posts are due each Monday by 5pm. Posts submitted after this time will not be counted or evaluated.

- These online discussion posts are also meant to facilitate offline in-class discussion. Part of the lecture period will be designated to going over the weekly posts and elaborating on them as a group. Therefore, you should come to class prepared to explain and discuss your contributions, and ask questions about those of your classmates.

### 3) Two Examinations (2x 25% = 50%)

Midterm Exam – February 10<sup>th</sup>

Final Exam – Scheduled by the registrar during the exam period

- There will be two tests on the assigned course readings. The exam will consist primarily of multiple-choice questions, with one or two written-answer discussion questions. The purpose of these exams is to evidence your understanding of social psychological theories, concepts, and findings outlined in the course textbook and assigned journal articles.

### 4) Two Written Assignments (2x 15% = 30%) due March 9<sup>th</sup> and April 6<sup>th</sup>

- There will be two written assignments in the form of response papers. In these papers, you will be answering a question that I pose about a piece of media (e.g., documentary, film, television show episode, podcast) assigned in the course. We may have time to watch or listen to the media in the lecture period but if not, I will ensure that you have access to it ahead of time. The purpose of these papers is to put together a critical and theoretically-informed response to the posed question in way that engages with the course material and media in question. While you are expected to present your own ideas in your answer, you *must* also demonstrate an understanding of concepts, theories, and arguments from assigned readings. Hence, you should be using what you learned in the course to frame an original response to the assigned media text.
- The first question will be assigned on March 2<sup>nd</sup> and the response paper will be due one week later on March 9<sup>th</sup>. The second question will be assigned on March 30<sup>th</sup> and the response paper will be due one week later on April 6<sup>th</sup>. Late submissions will be deducted by 5% off the total grade per day. There is not a formal page requirement or limit, but I expect most papers to be 3-5 pages long. We will talk more about the paper format and guidelines in class.

## Additional Information on Written Assignments

All pages of the assignment must be numbered and have 1" margins on all sides. All text should be double-spaced in Times New Roman or Arial 12-point font. You should use APA citation style (<https://apastyle.apa.org/>) in the assignment. Failure to adhere to these guidelines will be reflected in the mark for the assignment. All assignments should be submitted in hard copy during the lecture period. The professor will not accept digital submissions of the assignments unless prior arrangements are made.

## Late Assignments

The McMaster Student Absence Form ([www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/](http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/)) is a self reporting tool for Undergraduate Students to report absences that last up to 3 days and provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work. You may submit a maximum of 1 Academic Work Missed request per term. It is *your* responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation. If you are absent more than 3 days, exceed 1 request per term, or are absent for a reason other than medical, you *must* visit your Associate Dean's Office (Faculty Office). You may be required to provide supporting documentation. This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence. In the absence of a vetted excuse, late assignments will be marked down 5 percentage points for each day late, including weekends.

## Accommodations

I am committed to making appropriate accommodations for students' observance of religious holidays. Please contact me early in the term to make arrangements. I am also committed to working with students with disabilities to make individualized accommodations according to your specific needs. All such arrangements must be made through Student Accessibility Services (by phone at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or by email [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca)). Please drop by my office hours at the beginning of the term to make individual arrangements and to complete the necessary paperwork. All details regarding accommodation arrangements will be kept strictly confidential.

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, Avenue to Learn, and/or McMaster email.

## Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- 1) Plagiarism (e.g., the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained).
- 2) Improper collaboration in group work.
- 3) Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

## Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

<b>MARK</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Occasionally, students may disagree with the grades they receive. If this occurs you may request a review of a grade by writing a brief 1-page memo that describes in detail the nature of the perceived marking error. Submit this memo to me via email. You may submit requests for review no sooner than 48 hours and no later than 2 weeks after the

assignments are returned. Please note that, after a grade is reviewed, the newly assigned grade may be lower than the original.

## Departmental and University Policies

The staff members in the Department of Sociology do not date-stamp assignments, nor do they monitor the submission or return of papers. The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check her/his McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

## Course Readings and Lectures

The required textbook for this course is:

**Sandstrom, K. L., Lively, K. J., Martin, D. D., & Fine, G. A. (2014). *Symbols, Selves, and Social Reality: A Symbolic Interactionist Approach to Social Psychology and Sociology* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.**

This textbook is available for purchase at the McMaster University bookstore. If you wish to buy the text from elsewhere, please note that the version we are using is the 4<sup>th</sup> edition from 2014.

The additional assigned readings for this course can be accessed via McMaster University's library system. For more information about locating journal articles, go to: [https://library.mcmaster.ca/instruction/social-science-inquiry/finding-articles/story\\_html5.html](https://library.mcmaster.ca/instruction/social-science-inquiry/finding-articles/story_html5.html).

Each week, I will provide a lecture on the readings and take any questions you may have—but this will not take up the entire 3-hour lecture period. After we have covered

the readings, there will be time for watching media clips and having a group discussion.

## **Course Schedule**

### **January 6<sup>th</sup>: Introduction**

(no readings)

### **January 13<sup>th</sup>: Theoretical and Methodological Foundations (pt. 1)**

Sandstrom et al. (2014). Chapter 1 – The Meaning of Symbolic Interactionism (pp. 1-23)

Fine, G. A., & Tavory, I. (2019). Interactionism in the Twenty-First Century: A Letter on Being-in-a-Meaningful-World. *Symbolic Interaction*, 42(3), 457-467.

### **January 20<sup>th</sup>: Theoretical and Methodological Foundations (pt. 2)**

Sandstrom et al. (2014). Chapter 3 – People as Symbol Makers and Users: Language and the Creation of Reality (pp. 56-84)

Sandstrom et al. (2014). Chapter 2 – The Interactionist Toolkit: Methods, Strategies, and Relevant Perspectives (pp. 24-33)

- Online discussions start this week (about next week's readings).

### **January 27<sup>th</sup>: Self and Identity (pt. 1)**

Sandstrom et al. (2014). Chapter 5 – The Nature and Significance of the Self (pp. 123-163)

Goffman, E. (1963). The Self and its Other. In *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (pp. 126-139). New York: Touchstone.

### **February 3<sup>rd</sup>: Self and Identity (pt. 2)**

Erickson, R. J. (1995). The Importance of Authenticity for Self and Society. *Symbolic Interaction*, 18(2), 121-144.

Davis, J. L. (2018). Triangulating the Self: Identity Processes in a Connected Era. *Symbolic Interaction*, 37(4), 500-523.

### **February 10<sup>th</sup>: Midterm Exam**

(no readings)

### **February 17<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>: Midterm Recess**

(no readings)

### **February 24<sup>th</sup>: Emotions and Emotion Work**

Sandstrom et al. (2014). Chapter 7 – Interactionist Approaches to the Study of Emotion: Emotions in Everyday Life (pp. 193-232)

Bolton, S. C. (2001). Changing Faces: Nurses as Emotional Jugglers. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 23(1), 85-100.

### **March 2<sup>nd</sup>: Gender, Sexuality, and Bodies**

Sandstrom et al. (2014). Chapter 4 – Socialization: The Creation of Meaning and Identity (pp. 96-122)

Westbrook, L., & Schilt, K. (2014). Doing Gender, Determining Gender: Transgender People, Gender Panics, and the Maintenance of the Sex/Gender/Sexuality System. *Gender & Society*, 28(1), 32-57.

- Response Paper #1 assigned, due March 9<sup>th</sup>.

### **March 9<sup>th</sup>: Relationships and Families**

Lamont, E. (2015). The Limited Construction of an Egalitarian Masculinity: College-Educated Men's Dating and Relationship Narratives. *Men and Masculinities*, 18(3), 271-292.

Collett, J. L., & Childs, E. (2009). Meaningful Performances: Considering the Contributions of the Dramaturgical Approach to Studying Families. *Sociology Compass*, 3(4), 689-706.

### **March 16<sup>th</sup>: Culture and Discourse**



Magnuson, E. (2005). Cultural Discourse in Action: Interactional Dynamics and Symbolic Meaning. *Qualitative Sociology*, 28(4), 371-398.

Connell, C. (2013). Fashionable Resistance: Queer “Fa(t)shion” Blogging as Counterdiscourse. *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, 41(1/2), 209-224.

### **March 23<sup>rd</sup>: Deviance and Resistance**

Sandstrom et al. (2014). Chapter 8 – Constructing and Negotiating Deviance (pp. 233-272)

Gillett, J. (2003), Media Activism and Internet Use by People with HIV/AIDS. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 25(6), 608-624.

### **March 30<sup>th</sup>: Public Groups and Collective Action**

Sandstrom et al. (2014). Chapter 9 – Collective Behavior and Social Movements (pp. 273-310)

Jackson, S. J., & Welles, B. F. (2015). Hijacking #myNYPD: Social Media Dissent and Networked Counterpublics. *Journal of Communication*, 65(6), 932-952.

- Response Paper #2 assigned, due April 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **April 6<sup>th</sup>: Review and Wrap-up**

(no readings)

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## **Land Acknowledgement Statement**

McMaster University recognizes and acknowledges that it is located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the “Dish With One Spoon” Wampum agreement.