

Sociology 401.51

Sociology of Identity

January 2017

Instructor

Dr. Scott McLean
Room 943, Social Sciences Building
403-220-2128; smclean@ucalgary.ca

Calendar description

This senior-level undergraduate course explores social theory and empirical research concerning the formation and reproduction of human identities. The fluid and multi-faceted nature of identity is examined through study of the social processes through which we come to understand ourselves and others as individuals and as members of various collectivities in domains including: ethnicity and race; nationalism and cosmopolitanism; gender and sexuality; social class, work, and consumption; age and the life course; localities and online communities; and religion and fandoms.

Time and location

Class sessions are from 12:30 to 13:45 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, in room EDC 287.

Components

The course is organized into three basic parts, each of which contributes to the overall learning outcomes of building knowledge of sociological theory and research about human identities, and enhancing academic and professional skills. In the first part of the course, the instructor lectures and facilitates group discussion about theoretical and conceptual frameworks in the sociological study of identity. In the second part of the course, lectures are accompanied by student-led discussions of assigned readings. Students rotate responsibility for summarizing and leading the discussion of readings chosen by the instructor to exemplify recent scholarship in the sociology of identity in each of the following domains:

- Ethnicity and race
- Nationalism and cosmopolitanism
- Gender and sexuality
- Social class, work, and consumption
- Age and the life course
- Localities and online communities
- Religion and fandoms

The third, and shortest, part of the course is dedicated to review and examination.

Readings

There is no assigned textbook for this course, nor any materials for purchase at the bookstore. All assigned readings are accessible online through the University of Calgary Library. Specific readings are listed below for each week of the course.

Part I: Concepts and debates (4 weeks)

Objectives:

- Understand key concepts and debates in the sociology of identity.
- Assess examples of empirical work in the sociology of identity – reflecting divergent research methods and conceptualizations of identity.
- Explore ideas from prominent social theorists about the social construction of individuals and communities.
- Develop skills to participate actively in group discussions.
- Build rapport among your peers.
- Complete an in-class examination requiring knowledge of all lectures and readings in the first part of the course.

Week one: Introduction to the sociology of identity

Tuesday 10 January: Lecture and individual activity

- Identity: twelve initial propositions.
- Operationalizing identity I (Twenty Statements).

Thursday 12 January: Lecture and group discussion of reading

- Sigmund Freud on the structure and development of human identity.
- Snow, David & Leon Anderson (1987) Identity Work Among the Homeless: The Verbal Construction and Avowal of Personal Identities. *American Journal of Sociology*, 92 (6) 1336-1371.

Week two: Key concepts and debates

Tuesday 17 January: Lecture and group discussion of reading

- Michel Foucault on the nature of power and subjection.
- Gosine, Kevin (2000) Revisiting the Notion of a 'Recast' Vertical Mosaic in Canada: Does a Post-Secondary Education Make a Difference? *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 32 (3) 89-104.

Thursday 19 January: Group discussion of readings

- Jenkins, Richard (2006) When Politics and Social Theory Converge: Group Identification and Group Rights in Northern Ireland. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 12 (3-4) 389-410.
- Hintjens, Helen (2001) When identity becomes a knife: Reflecting on the genocide in Rwanda. *Ethnicities*, 1(1) 25-55.

Week three: Understanding collectivities and individuals

Tuesday 24 January: Lecture

- Symbolic, primordial and mobilizationist explanations of boundaries in social life.

Thursday 26 January: Lecture and Q&A regarding readings

- The social construction of individuality.
- Brubaker, Rogers & Frederick Cooper (2000) Beyond "Identity". *Theory and Society*, 29 (1) 1-47.
- McLean, Scott (2015) Individual Autonomy or Social Engagement? Adult Learners in Neo-Liberal Times. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 65 (3) 196-214.

Week Four: Review and examination

Tuesday 31 January: Lecture and individual activity

- Review and preparation for the first mid-term examination.
- Operationalizing identity II (Key narrative activity).

Thursday 2 February: First mid-term examination (in-class)

Part II: Key empirical domains in the sociology of identity (8 weeks)

Objectives:

- Understand claims to knowledge in a range of domains in the sociology of identity.
- Build skills in interpreting and assessing the claims to knowledge contained in recent sociological work published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals.
- Participate actively in group discussions, and take turns leading such discussions.
- Complete an in-class examination requiring knowledge of all lectures and readings in the second part of the course.

Week five: Ethnicity and race

Tuesday 7 February: Lecture

- Other people's racism: rednecks and structural inequality in a Southern high school.

Thursday 9 February: Group discussion of readings

- Jiménez, Tomás (2008) Mexican Immigrant Replenishment and the Continuing Significance of Ethnicity and Race. *American Journal of Sociology*, 113 (6) 1527-1567.
- Pager, Devah, Bruce Western & Bart Bonikowski (2009) Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market: A Field Experiment. *American Sociological Review*, 74 (5) 777-799.

Week six: Nationalism and cosmopolitanism

Tuesday 14 February: Lecture

- Becoming Canadian: citizenship education for students and immigrants.

Thursday 16 February: Group discussion of readings

- Skey, Michael (2010) 'A sense of where you belong in the world': national belonging, ontological security and the status of the ethnic majority in England. *Nations and Nationalism*, 16 (4) 715-733.
- Brett, Judith & Anthony Moran (2011) Cosmopolitan nationalism: ordinary people making sense of diversity. *Nations and Nationalism*, 17 (1) 188-206.

Week seven: Reading Week (no classes on 21 or 23 February)

Week eight: Gender and sexuality

Tuesday 28 February: Lecture

- Intersectionality: gender and race in the experience of urban black youth bussed to suburban secondary schools in the USA.

Thursday 2 March: Group discussion of readings

- Cairns, Kate, Josée Johnston & Shyon Baumann (2011) Caring About Food: Doing Gender in the Foodie Kitchen. *Gender & Society*, 24 (5) 591-615.
- Myers, Kristen & Laura Raymond (2010) Elementary school girls and heteronormativity. *Gender & Society*, 24 (2) 167-188).

Week nine: Social class and consumption

Tuesday 7 March: Lecture

- Disrupting one's sense of oneself: successful working class students at university.

Thursday 9 March: Group discussion of readings

- Thiel, Darren (2007) Class in construction: London building workers, dirty work and physical cultures. *British Journal of Sociology*, 58 (2) 227-251.
- Johnston, Josée & Shyon Baumann (2007) Democracy versus Distinction: A Study of Omnivorousness in Gourmet Food Writing. *American Journal of Sociology*, 113 (1) 165-204.

Week ten: Age and the life course

Tuesday 14 March: Lecture

- School – work transitions and working class apprentices.
- Operationalizing identity III (True Self Method).

Thursday 16 March: Group discussion of readings

- Rivers-Moore, Megan (2010) But the kids are okay: motherhood, consumption and sex work in neo-liberal Latin America. *British Journal of Sociology*, 61 (4) 716-736.
- Silva, Jennifer (2012) Constructing Adulthood in an Age of Uncertainty. *American Sociological Review*, 77 (4) 505-522.

Week eleven: Localities and online communities

Tuesday 21 March: Lecture

- Explaining “random” school shootings in the USA.

Thursday 23 March: Group discussion of readings

- Harding, David (2009) Violence, Older Peers, and the Socialization of Adolescent Boys in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods. *American Sociological Review*, 74 (3) 445-464.
- Whitehead, Krista (2010) “Hunger Hurts but Starving Works”: A Case Study of Gendered Practices in the Online Pro-eating-disorder Community. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 35 (4) 595-626.

Week twelve: Religion and fandoms

Tuesday 28 March: Group discussion of readings

- Hookway, Nicholas & Daphne Habibis (2015) "Losing my religion:" Managing identity in a post-Jehovah's Witness world. *Journal of Sociology*, 51 (4) 843-856.
- Pope, Stacey (2012) "The love of my life": The meaning and importance of sport for female fans. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 37 (2) 176-195.

Thursday 30 March: Second mid-term examination (in-class)

Part III: Summary and final examination (2 weeks)

Objectives:

- Practice the integration and synthesis of knowledge through completing a take-home examination (written essay format) requiring critical and creative thinking.
- Complete course evaluation and final synopsis.

Week thirteen: Final (take home) examination

Tuesday 4 April: Classroom session for the final examination (time and location TBA)

Thursday 6 April: No class (time for writing the examination)

Week fourteen: Synopsis and wrap-up

Tuesday 11 April: Lecture (Final exams to be submitted in hard copy at start of class)

- Analysis of the three in-class activities regarding the operationalization of identity.
- Final synopsis and discussion of course.
- Course evaluation to be completed.

Assignments and grading

Grades in this class will be based on the completion of the following requirements:

- First examination, held in class on 2 February (20%)
- Second examination, held in class on 30 March (20%)
- Final examination (take-home) due at start of class on 11 April (40%)
- Participation in, and facilitation of, class discussions (20%)

Performance will be assessed, and grades will be assigned, based on the University of Calgary standards as described in the Calendar. The following chart will be used to translate the results of all assignments into a final letter grade.

Points (/100)	Letter Grade
96-100	A+
90-95	A
86-89	A-
81-85	B+
76-80	B
71-75	B-
67-70	C+
62-66	C
59-61	C-
54-58	D+
50-53	D
49 or less	F

OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

The main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters. Please speak directly to your instructor.

Office hours and e-mail contact

Office hours are by appointment only. If you wish to make an appointment, please contact the instructor using the e-mail address or telephone number on the first page of the outline. If communicating by e-mail, please include your full name and a description of the question or issue that you would like to discuss. Note that, as appropriate, some questions or issues may be addressed via e-mail or telephone rather than through an in-person meeting.

Protection of Privacy

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) legislation does not allow students to retrieve any course material from public places. Anything that requires handing back will be returned directly during class or office hours. If students are unable to pick up their assignments from the instructor, they provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

Notification of final grades

Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are only available online.

Ethics in Research

Students are advised that any research with human subjects – including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation – must have the approval of the Faculty Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human research involving human subjects without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

Academic Misconduct

Please refer to the website listed below for information on University of Calgary policies on Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

Deferrals

When possible, please provide advance notice if you are unable to write an exam or complete/turn-in assignments on time. All requests for deferral of a course component due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the health issue rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements, misreading the syllabus, and scheduling conflicts with other classes or employment are not valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, the instructor can require you to write a “make up” test as close in time to the original test as possible or can choose to transfer the percentage weight to another course component. If the instructor schedules a “make up” test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the Department of Sociology.

Deferred Final Exam Form: Please note that requests to defer a Registrar scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar’s Office. Further information about deadlines, and where paperwork should be taken, is available on the form, which can be found at:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/student-forms>

Deferred Term Work Form: Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It's available at

https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred_termwork15_0.pdf

Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

Student Representation

The 2016-17 Students' Union VP Academic is Alicia Lunz (suvpaca@ucalgary.ca). The Faculty of Arts has four SU representatives who may be contacted at any of the following email addresses: arts1@ucalgary.ca, arts2@ucalgary.ca, arts3@ucalgary.ca, and arts4@ucalgary.ca. You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds/role>

Emergency Evacuations

In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the assembly point at the **Scurfield Hall atrium**. Please check these assembly point locations for all of your classes at: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

Safewalk

The University of Calgary provides a "safe walk" service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.

Academic Accommodation

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should contact Student Accessibility Services (MC 293, phone 403-220-8237) in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities available at <http://ucalgary.ca/access/>. Please provide academic accommodation letters to the instructor as early in the semester as possible and no later than two weeks after the course begins.