



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Fall 2019

FACULTY OF ARTS

Department of Sociology

Department of Sociology Website: <https://soci.ucalgary.ca/>

COURSE TITLE: Sociology of Knowledge			
Course Number	SOCI 435		
Pre/Co-Requisites	SOCI 331, 333		
Instructor Name	Liza McCoy	Email	mccoy@ucalgary.ca
Office Location	SS 934	Office Hours	Wednesday 1 – 3:00 pm
Telephone No.	403-220-6856		
Class Dates	September 6 – December 6, 2019		
Class Times	Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 10:00 – 10:50 am		
Class Location	SA 125		

Course Description

All social activities are in some way coordinated through socially organized modes of knowledge. The sociology of knowledge studies these modes and practices, exploring how they operate in specific times and places, and how they shape our experience. What are the categories through which we know and speak of our world – and act in it? How does information circulate? Which ways of knowing are authoritative in a given setting? Whose knowledge is privileged, whose rejected? What counts as truth?

In this course, our focus is on one significant practice of knowledge: *the process through which particular situations are identified as social problems, and various solutions to these problems are proposed, argued about, acted upon and evaluated.* Much sociology is concerned with social problems – describing or measuring their manifestations and explaining how and why they occur. In the sociology of knowledge, however, we take a different perspective: initially bracketing concerns about whether something really is a problem or what it really involves, we ask instead, how did this version of the world – this sense of a problem – come about? Often there is controversy. Different versions of the problem and its solutions are fought over by various claims makers – experts, activists and policymakers – and further worked up when represented in the media. What are these competing ways of knowing and naming? What is the work that goes into promoting or contesting a particular version of a social

problem? Why and how does one version come to “stick” more successfully than others? What role do journalists, the mass media, the Internet and social media play in the construction and circulation of knowledge about social problems? How is knowledge of social problems taken up by policymakers and professionals in their work? How do these societal practices of knowing social problems shape our own everyday lives? How do we ourselves participate in them?

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- Explain what it means to study knowledge as socially constructed and as arising through socially organized practices.
- Explain and use a constructionist approach to the study social problems.
- Identify and explain the different stages in the social problems process.
- Critically discuss empirical studies related to the social construction/social organization of knowledge.
- Conduct and present original analysis of social problems claims making.

Required Textbooks, Readings, Materials, Electronic Resources

Joel Best, *Social Problems*, 3rd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton: 2017). This book is available for purchase or for rental at the University of Calgary Book Store.

A collection of book chapters and journal articles. The list of readings, with links, will be posted in D2L.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

The course schedule will be posted in D2L.

Methods of Assessment and Grading Weights

Participation/Contribution	5%
Article presentation	10%
Article reading notes	10%
Tests	35%
Term project preparation	5%
Term project paper	35%
Total	100%

Participation and contribution (5%)

This is an advanced, seminar-style course. There will be lectures, but there will also be a lot of presentations, discussions, and in-class practice exercises. Regular attendance, preparation, and participation are crucial for learning the theory and analytic practices you will be expected to demonstrate in tests and assignments. As well, your participation makes an important contribution to the class environment and the learning of other class members, including me.

Article presentation/discussion (10 %)

For most of the journal articles we read, 1-2 students (depending on total enrollment) will make a short presentation summarizing the main argument of the article, linking it to course theory and other readings, discussing it critically, and relating it to local or contemporary situations. Each student must sign up to present one article. When two students are signed up for the same article, each prepares individually, and during the presentation, the discussants function as a panel and take turns offering their summaries and ideas. Guidelines for preparing presentations will be posted in D2L. After the presentation, you will turn in a hard copy of your speaking notes. There is no page limit for these notes; 2-3 pages would be usual.

Article reading notes (10 %)

In addition to the article presentation, each student may do a careful reading of **up to 8** journal articles and write one page of typed, single-spaced page of notes and commentary for each article, following guidelines posted in D2L. How many you do is up to you. Each page of notes (for one article) is worth 1 point, to a maximum total of 8 points, with up to an additional 2 points awarded at the end of the semester for the overall quality of your reading notes. In order to receive credit for the notes, you must post them to the Drop Box in D2L by 9 am on the day of the class when we will discuss the reading. Incomplete or weak notes may be given half credit. Notes for the article for which you will serve as a key discussant *cannot* be submitted for reading note credit, as you will be turning those notes in for your discussant grade.

Tests (35%)

There will be two in-class tests: a midterm on October 18 (20%) and final test on December 6 (15%). Tests will involve short essay questions. Questions will be based on the textbook, the articles, and lectures. Test questions will ask you to demonstrate your understanding of the theories, concepts and approaches we are studying in this course, using examples from the articles to illustrate your explanations.

Term project preparation (5%)

As you plan and research your project (see below), you will turn in the following, for feedback:

- 1) A short proposal identifying an arena of social problems claims making and key claims makers; due September 30 (2.5)
- 2) An annotated bibliography of the specific materials you will analyze for your paper; due October 28 (2.5)

Guidelines for preparing these short documents will be posted in D2L and discussed in class.

Term project (35%)

Using primarily Internet-based materials, you will research the social construction of a social problem that has current relevance within Canada or elsewhere in the world and that is the object of claims making by activists, experts, media, and possibly government policy makers as well. The focus of your research and analysis will be the ways the social problem is constructed and framed by various claims makers. Your project will culminate in a 12-15 pp. paper due November 20. Guidelines for the research and the paper will be posted in D2L and discussed in class.

Final Exam Information

There is no final exam.

Grading Scale

Letter grades will be assigned and submitted to the registrar based on the following scale:

Grade	Percent range	Grade Point Value	Description
A+	96 – 100%	4.0	Outstanding performance
A	90 – 95.99%	4.0	Excellent performance
A-	85 – 89.99%	3.7	Approaching excellent performance
B+	80 – 84.99%	3.3	Exceeding good performance
B	75 – 79.99%	3.0	Good performance
B-	70 – 74.99%	2.7	Approaching good performance
C+	67 – 69.99%	2.3	Exceeding satisfactory performance
C	63 – 66.99%	2.0	Satisfactory performance
C-	59 – 62.99%	1.7	Approaching satisfactory performance
D+	55 – 58.99%	1.3	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject
D	50 – 54.99%	1.0	Minimal Pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject.
F	<50%	0	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.

Passing Grades

Optional but recommended – please clearly indicate if a passing grade on any course component is required in order to pass the course.

Grade Reappraisal

Within two weeks of the date the exam/assignment is returned, students seeking reappraisal of examinations or assignments must submit a written response to the instructor explaining the basis for reconsideration of one's mark. The instructor will reconsider the grade assigned and will then book a time with the student to discuss his or her work and rationale. It should be noted that a re-assessed grade may be raised, lowered, or remain the same.

Technology Use

The use of laptops and tablets during class meetings is permitted *for course purposes only*. If you are using your devices in ways that are rude or disruptive, you will be asked to stop what you are doing; if you persist, your permission to use devices for any purpose in class will be revoked.

Handing in Papers, Assignments

1. The main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters. Please speak directly to your instructor.
2. **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 can provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment. Private information related to the individual student is treated with the utmost regard by the faculty at the University of Calgary
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are only available online.

Research Ethics

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 subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

Copyright Legislation

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf>) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

Instructor Intellectual Property

Course materials created by professor(s) (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the professor(s). These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the professor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the course at the same time may be allowed under fair dealing.

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.html>

Absences and Deferrals

Students who are absent from class assessments (tests, participation activities, or other assignments) should inform their instructors as soon as possible. Instructors may request that evidence in the form of documentation be provided. If the reason provided for the absence is acceptable, instructors may decide that any arrangements made can take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another

assignment or test. For information on possible forms of documentation, including statutory declarations, please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>

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 can be found at:

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://live-ucalgary.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/teams/1/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).

Academic Accommodation

The student accommodation policy can be found at: ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy.

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

Wellness and Mental Health Resources

The University of Calgary recognizes the pivotal role that mental health plays in physical health, social connectedness and academic success, and aspires to create a caring and supportive campus community where individuals can freely talk about mental health and receive support when needed. We encourage you to explore the excellent mental health resources available throughout the university community, such as counselling, self-help resources, peer support or skills-building available through Student Wellness Services (Room 370 MacEwan Student Centre, <https://www.ucalgary.ca/wellness-services/services/mental-health-services>) and the Campus Mental Health Strategy (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/>).

Student Success

The Student Success Centre provides services and programs to ensure students can make the most of their time at the University of Calgary. Our advisors, learning support staff, and writing support staff assist students in enhancing their skills and achieving their academic goals. They provide tailored learning support and advising programs, as well as one-on-one services, free of charge to all undergraduate and graduate students. For more information visit:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success>

Student Ombuds Office

The Student Ombuds Office supports and provides a safe, neutral space for students. For more information, please visit www.ucalgary.ca/ombuds/ or email ombuds@ucalgary.ca.

Student Union (SU) Information

The SU Vice-President Academic can be reached at (403) 220-3911 or suvpaca@ucalgary.ca; Information about the SU, including elected Faculty Representatives, can be found here:

<https://www.su.ucalgary.ca>.

Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points

Assembly points for emergencies have been identified across campus. Assembly points are designed to establish a location for information updates from the emergency responders to the evacuees; from the evacuated population to the emergency responders. For more information, see the University of Calgary's Emergency Management website:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

Safewalk

Campus security will escort individuals, day or night, anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences Centre, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). Call 403-220-5333 or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk>. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths. Please ensure your personal safety by taking advantage of this service.