

The University of Manitoba  
Department of Sociology  
**Social Psychology**  
077.233 L01

September 2005  
3 credit hours

Professor: Rod Kueneman  
Office: 302 Isbister Building  
Phone: 474-6501 (office)  
452-4560 (between 10:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.)  
Class Location: 215 Tier, Slot 3 Mon., Wed. and Fri. 10:30 -11:20  
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**Required Texts:**

Charon, Joel. Symbolic Interactionism: An Introduction, an Interpretation, an Integration, 8<sup>th</sup> edition.  
Becker, Ernest. The Birth and Death of Meaning, 2nd edition.

**ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TEXTS**

Schreiber, Flora. Sybil  
Shkilnyk, Anastasia. A Poison Stronger Than Love  
Anderson, Kim. A Recognition of Being.  
Kelly, Jennifer. Under the Gaze: Learning to be Black in White Society  
Brosimmer, Franz. Ecocide: A Short History of the Mass Extinction of Species  
Herman, Edward and Noam Chomsky. Manufacturing Consent (with new intro)

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Students will be evaluated by way of the following activities:

- 4 in-class tests. Each test is worth 1/6 (approximately 17%) of your grade. The tests are 50 minute essay type. Study questions are provided in this outline. There will be some choice of questions for each test.
- One take home assignment, worth 1/3 ( 33.3% ) of the final grade and due at the end of the term. It will be based on lectures and the assigned reading material for the course. You will receive more detailed directions in class.

**DUE DATES AND READING ASSIGNMENTS**

**FIRST TEST**                      **September 26th**  
READINGS:                      Becker Ch. 1, 2, 3; Charon Ch. 3, 4, 5

**SECOND TEST**                      **October 14th**

READINGS:            Becker Ch 4, 5; Charon Ch 6, 7

**THIRD TEST**            **October 31st**

READINGS:            Becker Ch. 6, 7, 8, 9; Charon Ch. 8, 9

**VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL DATE - November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2005**

**FOURTH TEST**        **November 18th**

READINGS:            Becker, Ch. 10, 11, 12, 13; Charon Ch. 10, 11, 13

**TAKE HOME ASSIGNMENT - due last class December 7th**

READINGS:            One of the six optional texts

Students who fail to write tests on assigned dates or who do not turn in the take-home assignment when due will receive a grade of F for that part of the course grade unless an alternative date has been agreed to by the instructor. Such arrangements should be made in advance whenever possible. Missed tests or the assignment due dates must be rescheduled within 7 days of the above published dates. Rescheduled dates will only be approved for good reasons.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The course will be divided into two parts. In the first part, we examine the work of Charon and Becker in order to develop some key concepts to enable us to think about human beings from a social psychological perspective. A brief review of the attached study questions will give you some idea of the topics that we will consider.

The second part of the course will be devoted to an application of these concepts to some different types of social relationships to see how well they help us understand human behaviour. We will focus in the classroom, at a general level, on the six possible topics that you can select for your take home assignment for the course. Each of the optional readings assigned for this course will allow you to delve more deeply into one of these issues. We will focus on the destructive psychological consequences of physical and sexual abuse as they manifested themselves in the multiple personality of Sybil. We will also examine the destructive consequences of the loss of the traditional way of life of the Ojibway people at Grassy Narrows as well as the effects of institutional racism. We will reflect on the challenge of constructing an identity as a “Black person in a White-dominated society”. We will explore the challenges to and the opportunities for reconstructing a life affirming identity of native womanhood which offers lessons for positive self-affirmation for individuals and their communities. We will reflect on how humans have come to think of themselves as outside of nature and have a long legacy of ecocidal behaviour. We will consider how the “powers that be” are in a position to shape the content of news and information systems in liberal democracies in ways that have been characterized as manipulation and propaganda and to consider the consequences for human actors in such an environment.

It is my contention that we need to reflect on the kinds of social situations which provide obstacles to the creation of positive social interaction from a social psychological vantage point. It is through the analysis of these difficult realities that we will be better able to understand the more mundane reality of positive social relationships. You will choose one of these case studies and complete either question 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 or 14 as a take home assignment. This assignment is due on the last day of classes.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

### Question 1

Simon and Gagnon wrote a chapter on Lesbians in a book entitled Sexual Deviance in 1967, and concluded their discussion with the following quote,

"We are not trying to argue that female homosexuality is natural. To the contrary, we are arguing that it is unnatural, but unnatural in a way that all human behaviour is unnatural; that is, it is without an absolutely pre-determined and fixed shaped and content, and it is a complex condition which derives from [our] unique abilities to think, act and remember and [our] need to live with other humans."

- a) I would like you to begin unpacking this quote by defining the terms natural and normal. (Please refer to a dictionary.) In what way are these terms referring to a common meaning, and in what way(s) should they be seen as meaning very different things?
- b) Is heterosexuality normal and natural in North American culture? Do you think that homosexuality requires more or less of a sociological explanation for its existence than heterosexuality?
- c) If a homosexual couple had a meaningful, satisfying, longstanding, and intimate relationship which was also sexual, on what grounds could you (or would you?) argue that it neglects some of the needs of the human species?

If a heterosexual couple chose to remain childless while having a meaningful, satisfying, longstanding and intimate relationship which was also sexual, on what grounds could you (or would you?) argue that it neglects some of the needs of the human species?

### Question 2

"We experience the world not as it is but as we are."

- a) In what ways is this statement both fundamentally correct and incorrect?
- b) Comment on the physical, individual (personal) and social sources of order for human beings.
- c) What are the advantages and risks that stem from the fact that human beings are able to make up their own reality?

### **Question 3**

In 1902, Charles Horton Cooley wrote the following statement (in the male-dominated language of the day):

"A man's sympathies as a whole reflect the social order in which he lives, or rather, they are a particular phase of it. Every group of which he is really a member, in which he has any vital share, must live in his sympathy; so that his mind is a microcosm of so much society as he truly belongs to." (1902:144)

The Webster's Dictionary defines sympathy as "the inclination to think or feel alike".

- a) Use concepts such as mind, self, and reference group to demonstrate that Cooley's statement is sound from a social psychological point of view.
- b) Discuss the concept of self paying attention to the work of Charon and Becker as you include both dimensions of sympathy in your discussion.

### **Question 4**

Becker begins Chapter 5 with this quote from Thomas Treherne:

"It is not our parents' loins, so much as our parents' lives, that enthrals and blinds us."

- a) Paying attention to both mind and body, discuss how parents are able to enthrall (to bind, to hold, or reduce to slavery) their children.
- b) Why is it possible and impossible for parents to create autonomy in their children?

### **Question 5**

Each human being negotiates the world via a self-regulating structure (variously referred

to as mind, ego, self, personality, character).

- a) How is this structure formed?
- b) What are its purposes for the individual?
- c) In what ways is this structure private to the individual and in what ways is it public?
- d) Why is it difficult for the person to bring this structure under his or her control?

### **Question 6**

Discuss how and why human beings align themselves.

### **Question 7**

- a) Briefly distinguish doxa, heterodoxy, and orthodoxy.
- b) What are the advantages and disadvantages for human beings living within each of these symbolic universes?
- c) Why does Becker think that it is so difficult to live with heterodoxy?

### **Question 8**

Becker believed that the social sciences, as a result of their knowledge of cultural plurality, were in a position to make important contributions to social life.

- a) Why did he believe this to be true?
- b) What effect could such a shift in role have on science as an institution?
- c) What effect could such a shift in role have on the average citizen, the state, and moral discourse?

### **Question 9**

#### **TAKE HOME ASSIGNMENT - Schreiber Option**

- a) Briefly describe Sybil's early relationships with significant others and discuss how this interaction met (and failed to meet) her basic need for safety and significance.
- b) Sybil had several central and peripheral selves in her multiple personality complex.

Discuss the structure and roles of her major selves and discuss how some of the concepts developed in this course can make sense of what this constellation of selves was designed to achieve.

- c) We have discussed some basic social psychological terms in this course. Take the case of Sybil and extend the analysis of the following terms: mind/ego, self, identity, the unconscious, problems-in-living.
- d) From a social psychological point of view, what would you recommend to your family, friends, and government to stop the creation of further Sybils?

**OR**

**Question 10 TAKE HOME ASSIGNMENT - Shkilnyk Option**

- a) Briefly describe the long term and recent historical changes that contributed to the dislocation of Native Culture at Grassy Narrows. Discuss how these changes contributed to the undermining of both safety and significance.
- b) Briefly describe the dominant features of community life at Grassy Narrows. Discuss how some of the concepts developed in this course can make sense of what the community is doing to itself and its members.
- c) We have discussed some basic social psychological terms in this course. Take the case of Grassy Narrows and extend the analysis of the following terms: self, self-concept, self-esteem, despair, normal neurosis and the restriction of experience, and historical psychology.
- d) From a social psychological point of view, what would you recommend to your family, friends, and government to redirect communities like Grassy Narrows towards a better future?

**OR**

**Question 11 TAKE HOME ASSIGNMENT - Kelly Option**

- a) Briefly describe the historical factors which contributed to the social construction of race as a negative framework with respect to people of African descent. Comment on why some aspects of this negative framework have persisted into the present .
- b) Outline some of the actions undertaken by the government and various individuals and groups within Canada which are viewed by the Black community as outward manifestations of racism and comment on how they have contributed to a stronger sense of identity within the Black Community.
- c) Using some of the key concepts for this course, outline the social forces which impinge upon the creation of Black identity and contribute to the persistence of strong,

“in group” boundaries for members of the Black community. What are some of the internal sources of tension with the Black community with respect to its internal cohesion?

- d) Use the issue of inter-racial relationships to help you outline the reasons why the issue of race should become irrelevant in the formation of intimate relationships and why it is unlikely that it will become irrelevant. What advice would you offer to high school curriculum planners and administrators which might help Canadian society move toward more positive relationships in a society made up of communities who do not all hold each other in high regard?

**OR**

**Question 12 TAKE HOME ASSIGNMENT - Anderson Option**

- a) Briefly describe the various factors which contributed to the construction of a negative identity of Aboriginal women and discuss how these factors undermined Native women’s basic need for safety and significance.
- b) Using Diagram 1 (Recognition of Being, pg. 16), outline the various dimensions of self concept and identity which, in conjunction, provide the basis for the development of positive social interaction in family and community life.
- c) Discuss how the author’s work enriches some of the key concepts used in this course. Are there additional concepts from her work that you think should be incorporated into a social psychological approach? Please elaborate.
- d) From a social psychological point of view, what advice would you have to offer family, friends, and government with respect to how to contribute to the creation of more positive social relationships for women and men, Native and non-native?

**OR**

**Question 13 TAKE HOME ASSIGNMENT - Broswimmer Option**

Broswimmer recounts how human’s cognitive capacity and prevalent cultural beliefs are bringing our species closer to extinction.

- a) Outline how human evolution as a cultural rather than a biological process has

contributed to our longstanding practice of ecocide. How does Broswimmer's theoretical approach mesh with that of symbolic interactionism and the writings of Ernest Becker?

- b) Describe the social construction of the "human - nature relationship" of modern society as outlined by Broswimmer and others. Contrast this to the understanding of earlier human groups and discuss why we may have changed our mind about the nature of this relationship. Quinn, French and Becker may be of assistance here.
- c) Outline why Broswimmer thinks that our views about nature, consumption, reproduction, science, technology and war are perpetuating and deepening the ecological crisis which we have brought upon ourselves. How does Becker think humans handle such anxiety-provoking information (both positive and negative ways)?
- d) Briefly outline the four most important changes in human behaviour that you consider essential. Describe what changes in our view of our relationship to nature will be necessary to spur these changes and outline a few concrete steps that could be taken to change the social construction of the human's place in the web of life.

**OR**

**Question 14 TAKE HOME ASSIGNMENT - Herman/Chomsky Option**

- a) Outline the various dimensions of the propaganda model proposed by Herman and Chomsky.
- b) Using the new introduction and the case studies, outline the various ways in which information presented by government and media sources have manipulated the perspective of the American public regarding various topics.
- c) Using concepts and material from the course ( e.g. social construction of reality, Thomas theorem, hegemony, manipulation, limited awareness contexts), discuss how a political economy of the mass media can be enriched and deepened by using a social psychological vantage point.
- d) Becker would maintain that democracy requires citizens with fully informed awareness contexts. Identify two or three specific structures or processes that impede the development of such awareness and, for each, offer some specific recommendations that would improve the current situation. Think social psychologically.

**GRADING PROCEDURES**

The following description of my grading scheme should make it possible for you to calculate your final grade in the course. You are urged to make your own computations to ensure that I have not made an error.

I find the normal grading system too constraining, so I have modified it to a limited extent by introducing the minus grade (e.g. A-, B-, C-). In the final grade submitted, however, I must conform to the university scheme.

Your answers are being evaluated on a letter grade system, not on a point system which is converted to a letter grade. The main benchmarks for the grade ranges can be described as follows:

D/F= an answer which is factually weak, faulty analysis, and very poor organization.

C= an answer which is mostly complete in terms of facts but suffers from poor analysis, organization and integration. Knowing the facts is a good start, but only a beginning.

B= answer is factually accurate and mostly complete as well as organized and integrated.

A= answer factually complete, well organized, sophisticated analysis which demonstrates a good degree of comprehension.

There is no grading curve used in the evaluation of our answers, as class could do very well or very poorly, I feel no obligation to artificially manipulate the distribution into a bell curve. Each letter grade has been assigned a numerical value to allow for averaging and the calculation of a final grade. The numerical value has been assigned to convert the letter grade into an interval scale. Thus a C is 30% rather a C is equidistant from a C+ (4) and a C- (2) on the scale; a C is a factually complete answer which suffers from limited analysis. Mechanically, you assign each of your letter grades the comparable numerical weight in your calculation in the following way:

|         |        |        |       |  |
|---------|--------|--------|-------|--|
| A+ = 10 | B+ = 7 | C+ = 4 | D = 1 |  |
| A = 9   | B = 6  | C = 3  | F = 0 |  |
| A- = 8  | B- = 5 | C- = 2 |       |  |

On a test with two questions, which received a letter grade of A- and C+, your average grade is  $8 + 4 \div 2 = 6$  or B. I take all of your tests and assignments and calculate them together, as weighted by their relative value and derive a final numerical value for the course. The final cutting points for your letter grade are very important, because the minus grades must now disappear. They give you a higher final numerical grade because a weak A answer was an A- instead of a B+. But in the final analysis, all A- would become a B+. You would need some A or A+ grades to pull you over the cutting point. The cutting points are:

|    |             |              |
|----|-------------|--------------|
| A+ | (9.6 - 10)  | exceptional  |
| A  | (8.3 - 9.5) | excellent    |
| B+ | (6.6 - 8.2) | very good    |
| B  | (5.3 - 6.5) | good         |
| C+ | (3.6 - 5.2) | satisfactory |
| C  | (2.3 - 3.5) | adequate     |
| D  | (0.5 - 2.2) | marginal     |
| F  | (0.0 - 0.4) | failure      |

This grading scheme gives you the benefit of the buoyancy of the minus grade. If you fail to make it over a threshold, even by a fraction, it is unlikely that I will raise your grade unless you have

shown significant improvement over the term; have submitted an exceptional piece of work, or have made positive contributions to class discussion. Otherwise, an 8.24 will remain a B+ and not an A.

### **Student Responsibility and Academic Integrity**

I encourage collaborative and cooperative work ethics. Feel free to discuss your thoughts with other members of the class and thereby develop your comprehension and critical analysis. But remember, when it is time to submit your assignments, do your own work. The written material of your colleagues is the fruit of their labour and under no circumstances should you avail yourself of it when preparing your own answers. Likewise the printed work of other scholars must be properly recognized. You should acquaint yourself with the University's policy on "Plagiarism and Cheating" (Sections 7.1, page 27) and "Personation at Examination" (Section 4.2.8, page 26) in The University of Manitoba 2005-06 Undergraduate Calendar). Note especially the following statement: "**...students are expected to acknowledge the sources of ideas and expressions they use in their written work, whether quoted directly or paraphrased**", and "To provide adequate documentation is not only an indication of academic honesty but also a courtesy which enables the reader to consult your sources with ease. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism." The Faculty of Arts also reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism.

Disruptions due to excessive talking or early departures from the classroom are especially distracting in large classes. Please be considerate and respectful of the needs and rights of others in the class. Students should be aware that persistent disruption may result in debarment from the course. Any student who has a legitimate reason for leaving class early should inform the instructor at the beginning of class.