

Sociology 3460 –T06/ Labour Studies 3110  
**Social Challenges of Our Times**

University of Manitoba  
 Department of Sociology and Criminology & Labour Studies Program  
 Winter 2019 (3 credit hours)  
 Tier 215  
 Tuesday and Thursday, 4PM-5:15PM

Instructor: David Camfield  
 Office: Isbister 116  
 Phone: 204-474-6160  
 E-mail: david.camfield@umanitoba.ca<sup>1</sup>  
 Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 2:45PM-3:45PM, and at other times by prior appointment.

Most people think about the problems in their lives as personal or private. However, not even our most intimate problems exist outside of society. Many of them are caused by how our society is organized. As the sociologist C. Wright Mills argued, “people do not usually define the troubles they endure in terms of historical change and institutional contradiction.” People are “seldom aware of the intricate connection between the patterns of their own lives and the course of world history.” As a result, most people try to deal with their “personal troubles” without addressing “the structural transformations that usually lie behind them.” Most people are not conscious of where they are located within the social relations that make up their society. In addition, when we do study how social relations (such as class, gender and “race”) cause “personal troubles” we often think about them separately rather than as interconnected phenomena.

This course will focus on a number of important challenges of our time and how they might be interconnected. We will grapple with four questions:

1. What distinctive social challenges are young people experiencing in Canada and similar societies today?
2. What is society doing to the Earth System?
3. To what extent are today’s social challenges interconnected?
4. Can anything be done about these serious challenges?

To answer these questions, we will look at some of today’s best critical social and ecological research.

The course offers you an opportunity to answer these questions using some key concepts of critical social inquiry, to understand distinctive aspects of society today, and to explain the forces that have produced them. It also offers an opportunity to strengthen your abilities to think critically, to discuss ideas in a collaborative way and to communicate effectively in writing. These abilities will help you succeed in further academic study and in the world of paid work.

---

<sup>1</sup> Please note that I do not check e-mail in the evening or on weekends.

Much of what we will examine in this course is directly relevant to your life today and in the future, and matters to anyone who cares about human well-being.

I have chosen the readings and designed assignments to provide you with the opportunities described above. I will strive to make our classes a stimulating learning environment in which all students participate. I am available to meet outside of class to assist you.

If you want to learn as much as you can from this course, you will need to do the readings before class, attend and participate in all classes in a manner that is respectful of others and complete the assignments. The format of our classes will vary depending on the number of students and the questions we are dealing with, but your participation will always be important.

In order to get the most out of your time in class, I recommend that you: a) carefully read the required reading(s) *before* class, b) think about how what you have read helps to answer the key question(s) for each topic (see the schedule of topics), c) make note of any questions you have and d) raise your questions in class.

**Required course texts** (available from the university bookstore):

James Cairns, *The Myth of the Age of Entitlement: Millennials, Austerity, and Hope*.  
 Ian Angus, *Facing the Anthropocene: Fossil Capitalism and the Crisis of the Earth System*.  
*Required readings for Sociology 3460/Labour Studies 3110.*

### Grading scheme:

Class participation 10%  
 Mini-assignments 5%  
 First Assignment 10% (Jan. 15)  
 Reading Responses 2 x 10% each  
 Critical Reflection 2 x 15% each (Feb. 5; Mar. 21)  
 Take-Home Exam 25% (assigned Apr. 9, due Apr. 16)

<b>Grades:</b>	A+	85-100%	C+	65-69%
	A	80-84%	C	60-64%
	B+	75-79%	D	50-59%
	B	70-74%	F	0-49%

**Please note:**

1. Evaluative feedback, including comments as well as grades on paper copies of assignments, will be provided prior to the voluntary withdrawal date, which is March 20, 2019.
2. Students will not be permitted to write make-up tests or make-up missed assignments without documented medical or compassionate reasons.
3. Students should acquaint themselves with the University's policy on plagiarism, cheating, exam personation ("Personation at Examinations" (Section 5.2.9) and "Plagiarism and cheating" (Section 8.1)) and duplicate submission by reading documentation provided at the Arts Student Resources web site at <http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/student/index.html> Ignorance of the

regulations and policies regarding academic integrity is not a valid excuse for violating them. If you have any questions about this, please speak to me.

4. Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 2% per day. The penalty will be waived in the case of documented serious illness or personal emergency (such as the death or serious illness of a close family member). To request the extension of a due date, contact me.

5. Students appealing any term work whether it be an informal or formal appeal must do so within 10 working days of receiving their mark.

6. All final grades are subject to departmental review.

7. Assignments submitted by e-mail or fax will not be accepted. If you are unable to hand in an assignment in class, please give it to me during my office hours or hand it in to the Sociology office (if you are registered in SOC 3460) or the Labour Studies office (if you are registered in LABR 3110).

8. Students are responsible for all material covered in class.

9. Recording of classes in any form is not permitted.

10. Any term work that has not been claimed by students will be held for 4 months from the end of the final examination period for the term in which the work was assigned. At the conclusion of this time, all unclaimed term work will be destroyed according to FIPPA guidelines and using confidential measures for disposal.

### **Penalties for Academic Dishonesty:**

The minimum penalty for plagiarism on a written assignment is F on the paper and may result in an F-DISC (discipline) in the course. This notation appears on the student's transcript. For repeat violations, this penalty can also include suspension from the Faculty of Arts for a period of up to 1 year.

The minimum penalty for academic dishonesty in a test or final examination is F for the test/examination, and an F-DISC (discipline) in the course plus a suspension from the Faculty of Arts for a period of one year. The F grade and disciplinary notation appears on the student's transcript. For repeat violations, the penalty may include suspension from the Faculty of Arts for a period of up to 5 years.

The Faculty also reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism.

### **Schedule of Class Topics and Readings:**

I may occasionally send the class an e-mail with a link to an extra required or optional short reading, video or other material on the internet. Please check your University of Manitoba e-mail address regularly.

The readings by Naiman and Camfield are in the required readings package. The reading by Foster, Clark and York is available in the UMLearn section for this course. All other readings are from the books by Cairns and Angus.

**Jan. 8 Introduction**

**Jan. 10 Understanding Society**

*What is society? What are relations of power?*

Naiman, J. (2008). *How societies work: Class, power and change in a Canadian context* (pp. 1-24). Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

**Jan. 15 Millennial Entitlement?**

*Are the attitudes of young people today a problem for society?*

Cairns, ch. 1

**Jan. 17 What Are Entitlements?**

*What different kinds of entitlements exist?*

Cairns, ch. 2

**Jan. 22 and 24 Work and Young People Today**

*What conditions do young people experience in the world of paid work today?*

Cairns, ch. 3

**Jan. 29 and Jan. 31 Post-Secondary Education**

*How is post-secondary education changing? Do students expect too much?*

Cairns, ch. 4

**Feb. 5 Young People and the Ecological Crisis**

*Are people entitled to a healthy environment?*

Cairns, ch. 5

**Feb. 7 and 12 What Should People Be Entitled To? How Do Expectations Change?**

*Those are the questions!*

Cairns, ch. 6

**Feb. 14 Introduction to Society and Nature**

*How should we understand the relationship between nature and society?*

Foster, J.B., Clark, B. & York, R. (2010). *The ecological rift: Capitalism's war on the Earth* (pp. 73-87). New York: Monthly Review Press.

Feb. 19 and 21: No classes

**Feb. 26 and 28 The Earth System, Epochs and Planetary Boundaries**

*What does it mean to understand the Earth as an integrated system? What is the Anthropocene?*

*What are planetary boundaries?*

Angus, 25-77 (optional: 9-24)

**Mar. 5 and 7 Climate Change**

*What is happening to the Earth's climate, and what are the biophysical causes of the change?*

Angus, 78-106

Mar. 12 and 14 **Capitalism and Nature**

*Does the transition to the Anthropocene have societal causes? If so, what are they?*

Angus, 107-151

Mar. 19 and 21 **Accelerating Into the Anthropocene**

*What specific developments have driven the transition to the Anthropocene? How does the way society is organized affect the consequences for people of this transition?*

Angus, 152-188

Mar. 26 and 28 **Is There An Alternative?**

*Could the relationship between human society and the rest of nature be transformed for the better?*

Angus, 189-223 (optional: 224-232)

Apr. 2 **Why Isn't There More Revolt?**

*That's the question!*

Camfield, D. (2017). *We can do better: Ideas for changing society*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 100-108

Apr. 4 **Can Significant Change for the Better Happen?**

*That's the question!*

Camfield, 110-128

Apr. 9 **Should We Act? If So, What Should We Do?**

*That's the question!*

Camfield, 129-132

## **Course Assignments**

*All assignments must be typed and double-spaced. Print them double-sided if possible. Submit them in class (assignments by e-mail will not be accepted). It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each assignment. If you are unable to submit an assignment in class, you may hand it to me during my office hours. As a last resort, you may submit it to the Sociology Department Office (if you are registered in this course as SOC 3460) or to the Labour Studies Office (if you are registered in this course as LABR 3110).*

### **First Assignment**

*This assignment is designed to help you reflect on your understanding of a question that is important for this course, to develop your ability to read for deeper understanding, and to communicate effectively in writing.*

First, take some time to think about these two questions. Then answer them in writing. Do not do any research. Please write your answers on the basis of your current understanding, before you read the chapter assigned for Jan. 15's class.

1. Are the attitudes of "Millennials" a problem for Canadian society today? Explain why you think they are or are not such a problem.
2. Reflect in writing on how you have come to the viewpoint presented in your answer to the first question (consider what experiences shape your outlook on this subject and how your thinking has been influenced by things you have read, seen or heard).

Second, carefully read the reading for Jan. 15. Summarize the central argument that Cairns develops in this chapter.

Third, answer this question: Does the author's analysis change your thinking about whether the attitudes of "Millennials" are a problem for society? If so, how? If not, why not? Explain clearly and in detail.

Length: 500-750 words

Due: Jan. 15

This assignment is worth 10% of the final grade.

I will be evaluating the assignment by considering how well it discusses your initial ideas, summarizes the author's analysis, and answers the question about whether or not their analysis changes your thinking. I will consider both your ideas and how you communicate them in writing.

*For this assignment and all other written assignments in this course, you must cite a source for everything that is not your own original idea or common knowledge. This applies to quotations from course readings and ideas from course readings and other sources that you present in your own words. You must provide a reference list (bibliography) that includes all the sources you consulted. Please use APA style. For helpful material on how to avoid plagiarism and how to*

*cite sources, check out the Write and Cite section on this webpage:*  
[http://umanitoba.ca/libraries/how\\_do.shtml](http://umanitoba.ca/libraries/how_do.shtml)

## **Responses to Readings**

*These assignments are designed to help you to develop your abilities to read for deep understanding, to think critically about what you read, and to communicate effectively in writing.*

Students will write two reading responses during the term. A reading response may be written about the reading for any one of the topics after Jan. 15 (listed in bold in the Schedule of Class Topics and Readings section of the syllabus).

A reading response should

- concisely summarize the main argument(s) and ideas in the reading  
**and** either
- *evaluate* the reading  
**or**
- *reflect on* the reading

To *evaluate* a reading, consider how well it helps you to understand its subject. What are its strengths? What are its weaknesses? [The focus is on the reading.]

To *reflect* on a reading, consider questions like these: Does this change how I understand an issue, or society more broadly? Does this affect how I think about my life in some way? Does it change my opinion about something? Why did the author write this? [The focus is on how your thinking is affected by what you have read, or on other questions raised by the reading.]

At the beginning of a reading response be sure to make clear which reading you are responding to and whether you are summarizing and evaluating or summarizing and reflecting on it.

Due: On the date the topic will be discussed. If the topic will be discussed over two days, the due date is the first day.

Length: 400-600 words

Each reading response is worth 10% of the final grade.

I will be evaluating this assignment by considering how well it *summarizes* the main argument(s) and idea(s) and either *evaluates* the reading or *reflects* on it. I will also consider how well you communicate your ideas in writing.

You may find this handout about writing summaries useful:

[http://umanitoba.ca/student/academiclearning/media/Summarizing\\_NEW.pdf](http://umanitoba.ca/student/academiclearning/media/Summarizing_NEW.pdf)

## Critical Reflection I

*This assignment is designed to help you use concepts from the course to examine the society in which we live, and to help you develop your ability to communicate effectively in writing.*

Think of a situation in which you heard someone make a generalization about Millennials. *Describe* what happened. If you have never heard someone make such a generalization, find an example in the media and describe it (remember to include this source in your reference list).

*Analyze* what was said about Millennials using concepts and information from the book by Cairns. In doing this, be sure to explain concepts in a clear and concise way.

*Reflect* on this analysis. Does this change how you understand the generalization about Millennials that you described? Does it change how you understand generalizations about Millennials more broadly? What have you learned from this analysis? Does this change how you think about something? Does what you have learned matter?

Length: 500-750 words

Due: Feb. 5

This assignment is worth 15% of the final grade.

I will be evaluating this assignment by considering how well it describes a relevant situation (or media example), analyzes it using concepts from Cairns' book, and reflects on your analysis. I will also consider how well you communicate your ideas in writing.

## Critical Reflection II

*This assignment is designed to help you use concepts from the course to examine the relationship between humans and the rest of nature, and to help you develop your ability to communicate effectively in writing.*

Read the material about the debate surrounding a carbon tax in Manitoba that I will provide you. *Describe* the issues and viewpoints involved.

*Analyze* the debate using concepts and information from the book by Angus. In doing this, be sure to explain concepts in a clear and concise way.

*Reflect* on this analysis. Does this change how you understand the debate around the carbon tax in Manitoba? Does it change how you understand what governments are doing about climate change? What have you learned from this analysis? Does this change how you think about something? Does what you have learned matter?

Length: 500-750 words

Due: Mar. 21

This assignment is worth 15% of the final grade.



I will be evaluating this assignment by considering how well it describes the issues and viewpoints in the debate around a carbon tax, analyzes it using concepts from Angus' book, and reflects on your analysis. I will also consider how well you communicate your ideas in writing.

## **STUDENT RESOURCES**

The Academic Learning Centre is located in 201 Tier Building. Advisors provide a wide range of services focused on improvement of academic learning skills. In addition to individual consultations, the Centre offers workshops on test-taking, note-taking, essay and term paper writing, and listening skills.

Writing Tutors operate from both the Elizabeth Dafoe Library and the Academic Learning Centre and can be accessed either by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Check scheduled hours of availability on-line through the Academic Learning Centre site.

Students with disabilities should be in touch with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to facilitate the implementation of accommodations. If you would like to meet to discuss accommodations recommended for you by SAS please do not hesitate to contact me.