

SOCI 390

Political Sociology: Extremism in North America

Course Description

This course will introduce students to the sociological examination of political and social extremism in the North American context. In this course, we will trace the origins, beliefs, practices and activism of some of the more common extremist organizations and engage with the theoretical and empirical traditions which undergird their study.

We will explore the history of political extremism in the 20th and 21st centuries in the United States and Canada. We will examine the origins of some of the most prolific movements, from the Ku Klux Klan and Neo Nazi organizations to more modern manifestations, such as the modern-day American “Patriot” movements, and Incel movements. We will also examine the influence of extremist politics in North American political life. Throughout the course, we will take the theoretical and empirical knowledge from our weekly readings and apply it to specific case studies drawn from contemporary examples of political or social extremism.

This course will be discussion heavy; you will be expected to come to each class prepared to critically engage with the readings, and to draw upon your sociological imaginations in your discussions with me and with each other to build a more complete and nuanced understanding of extremism in North America.

This course will deal with themes of hatred, violence, sexism, homophobia, racism, genocide and dehumanization. Some of the material we will analyze will be graphic in nature. Please consider this a warning.

Department of Sociology

Summer 2021

MW: 10:30 – 12:20pm Pacific

Thu: 10:30 – 11:20pm Pacific

Classroom: Zoom online classroom &
Brightspace

Instructor: Dr. Edwin Hodge

Email: edhodge@uvic.ca

Phone: (250) 472-4723

Office: Cornett A328

(Virtual) Office Hours: Thursdays:
12pm – 2pm via Zoom (see
Brightspace for more information)

Course Materials

Textbooks:

Simi, Pete; Futrell, Robert. 2015.
*American Swastika: Inside the white
power movement's hidden spaces of
hate*. Rowman and Littlefield,
Lanham, Maryland

Additional Articles

Required readings each week include
journal articles that are listed in
CourseSpaces.

It is important that you come to class
each week prepared to discuss the
assigned readings, as both lectures and
classroom discussions will draw on them.

Exams and assignments are graded
using a rubric and answer key that are
available for student review upon
request. All grading is conducted in
accordance with [UVic's grading
guidelines](#) for undergraduates.

Teaching Assistants (TA)

TA Name TBA

TA Contact

Course Evaluation

Mid-term exam: 20% of total grade
Final Exam: 25% of total grade
Research project: 35% of total grade
Critical Assessment: 20% of total grade

Course Project: Essay

The major course project will be a research essay, 10-13 pages in length, double-spaced, font size 12 Times New Roman, and written using APA, ASA, or Chicago format.

You will be expected to identify and explore a specific case rooted in course content. You will be required to explore the history of your chosen topic and reveal those sociologically relevant aspects that you feel demand to be interrogated. Examples can include an investigation of how white supremacist movements adapted their recruitment strategies to take advantage of the emergence of the internet in the 1990s, or the gender dynamics present in modern militia or patriot groups in a specific region of the United States or Canada. You will be expected to make heavy use of library resources, in addition to non-academic sources of information where required. The guidelines for the project will be given to you on the first day of the course, and the project will be due by the 9th of August.

Case Studies

Throughout the course, we will devote several our Thursday sessions to examining some specific topics in the study of extremism. In each of these case studies, we will use the theoretical and empirical knowledge we have talked about in class to assist us in our analyses.

Since these sessions will be discussion-focused, please come to class prepared. These discussions will count towards your in-class discussion mark, so try to think of some questions or comments that will help facilitate a critical conversation with your classmates.

Important Dates

Critical Assessment:
Monday, July 19th

Midterm exam
Thursday, July 29th

Research paper
Monday, August 9th @ 11:59pm
Pacific via Brightspace

Final exam
Thursday, August 19th

Course Experience Survey (CES)

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, as in all other courses at UVic, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future.

The survey is accessed via MyPage and can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with more detailed information nearer the time but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings
Week 1 July 04	Introductions, Course Expectations, and A History of Violence What do we mean when we say “extremism”? How do we define the term, and how do sociologists investigate the origins of political and social extremism? What are the “isms” of extremism?	Rydgren, J. (2007). The Sociology of the Radical Right. <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i> , 33, 241–262 Simi and Futrelle, Chapters 1+2 CASE STUDY AND DISCUSSION: YouTube Video: “The Secret History of the Ku Klux Klan” 2015.
Week 2 July 11	Theorizing Extremism: Sociological Theories of Extremism We will finish up our discussion from last week, and then move on to a new set of questions. What makes an extremist? Moral panic? Status threat? A fear of a loss of purity or a simple distrust of the Other? If extremism is a social phenomenon, then how ought we to understand the dynamics of social action? Are extremist groups like any other social movement?	McVeigh, R. (2004). Structured Ignorance and Organized Racism in the United States. <i>Social Forces</i> , 82(3), 895–936 Polletta, F., & Jasper, J. M. (2001). Collective Identity and Social Movements. <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i> , 27, 283–305

<p>Week 3 July 18</p>	<p>Get 'em When They're Young: Recruitment, Retention, and Reproduction How do extremist groups recruit? Who are their primary targets? What methods or avenues yield the best results?</p>	<p>Swain, C. M., & Nieli, R. (2003). Interview with Jared Taylor. In C. M. Swain, & R. Nieli, <i>Contemporary Voices of White Nationalism in America</i> (pp. 87 -113). New York, New York: Cambridge University Press</p> <p>Simi & Futrelle, Chapter 3</p> <p>CASE STUDY: Our own social media: Can we identify problematic or extremist materials in our own news feeds? How do extremist movements use our own social media networks against us?</p> <p>CRITICAL ASSESSMENT #1 DUE</p>
<p>Week 4 July 25</p>	<p>Skin Deep: Racism, White Supremacy, and White Power Are all white supremacists Skinheads? Are the Klan and the Aryan Nation the same thing? Who belongs to what and who do they hate?</p>	<p>FUTRELL, R., & SIMI, P. (2004). Free Spaces, Collective Identity, and the Persistence of U.S. White Power Activism. <i>Social Problems</i>, 51(1), 16–42</p> <p>Simi and Futrelle: Chapters 4 + 5</p> <p>TAKE HOME EXAM #1</p>
<p>Week 5 August 1</p>	<p>Fascism and Conspiracism The 21st Century has seen the rise of new strains of fascist ideology. Distinct from other forms of extremist ideology, fascism is built on foundations of hate, mythologies of racial and cultural supremacy, and conspiratorial ideology. This week, we examine the structure of fascism, and assess its relationship with conspiratorial thinking.</p>	<p>Eco, Umberto. (1995). Ur-fascism. <i>The New York Review of Books</i>, June 22</p> <p>Altemeyer, Bob. (2006). Chapter 2 in <i>The Authoritarians</i>. 52-75 ENTIRE BOOK AVAILABLE ONLINE</p> <p>Oliver, J., & Wood, T. (2014). Conspiracy Theories and the Paranoid Style(s) of Mass Opinion. <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>, 58(4), 952-966. Retrieved May 30, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/24363536</p> <p>CASE STUDY: Taub, Amanda. 2016. "The rise of American Authoritarianism." <i>Vox</i>. https://www.vox.com/2016/3/1/11127424/trump-authoritarianism</p>

<p>Week 6 August 8</p>	<p>Networks of Hate: Online extremist movements How have extremists adapted to infiltrate social media networks? How have Far Right activists been able to infiltrate everything from video game forums to “mommy blogs” and yoga?</p>	<p>Hodge, E., & Hallgrimsdottir, H. 2020. Networks of hate: the alt-right, “troll culture”, and the cultural geography of social movement spaces online. <i>Journal of Borderlands Studies</i>, 35(4), 563-580.</p> <p>Hodge, Edwin. 2019. “The Sovereign Ascendant: Financial collapse, status anxiety, and the rebirth of the Sovereign Citizen movement.” <i>Frontiers in Sociology</i>, https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2019.00076</p> <p>Simi and Futrelle, Chapter 6</p> <p>COURSE PROJECT DUE AUGUST 9TH BY 11:59PM, VICTORIA TIME</p>
<p>Week 7 August 15</p>	<p>Activism in the 21st Century What can slow the growth of extremist movements? Increased security or surveillance? Education? Crackdowns? In this last week, instead of reading standard scholarly works, we are going to look instead at some examples of how states and groups tackle the issue of political extremism, racism, terrorism and violence.</p>	<p>Government of Canada. (2013). Building Resilience Against Terrorism: Canada’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy. <i>Ministry of Public Safety</i> PDF AVAILABLE ONLINE <i>I don’t expect you to read the whole thing; simply skim it to get the broad strokes.</i></p> <p>Lockhart, P.R. 2019. “High school students of color are protesting racism and inequality” <i>Vox</i>: https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/4/2/18287053/student-protest-charlottesville-fieldston-racism-inequality</p> <p>Lavin, Talia. 2020. “How to be an antifacist from your couch: you don’t have to punch Nazis to fight fascism.” <i>The Nation</i>. https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/antifa-online/</p> <p>Simi and Futrelle, Chapter 8</p> <p>FINAL TAKE HOME EXAM</p>

Department of Sociology Evaluation and Writing Expectations

100-level courses

Minimum writing requirement	In-class or take-home assignment spanning at least 5 pages in length.
Evaluation	Primarily multiple-choice exams, short assignment, possibly written component on exams.
Format	Lectures and tutorials. Primarily textbook readings. Students also read original sociological research.

200-level courses

Minimum writing requirement	At least one assignment involving library research that spans at least 8 pages in length.
Evaluation	A combination of multiple choice and written exams, including short-answer and essay questions.
Format	Lectures. Primarily textbook readings. Students also read original sociological research.

300-level courses

Minimum writing requirement	An essay involving literature reviews and applications of concepts. A minimum of 10 pages in length.
Evaluation	Short-answer and primarily essay-type exams, written assignments.
Format	Lectures. Assigned readings include scholarly articles and/or primary sociological writing. Readings may also include textbook chapters.

400-level courses

Learning outcomes	One term paper, involving advanced literature reviews and the application of a sociological model, spanning at least 15 pages in length.
Evaluation	Major paper, short-answer and primarily essay-type exams.
Format	Lectures/seminars. Assigned readings include scholarly articles, original monographs, and primary sources. Textbooks are not used.

Official Grading Standards

Undergraduate Records, University of Victoria, 2018

Passing Grade	Grade Point Value	Percentage	Description
A+	9	90 – 100	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
A	8	85 – 89	
A-	7	80 – 84	
B+	6	77 – 79	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.
B	5	73 – 76	
B-	4	70 – 72	
C+	3	65 – 69	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
C	2	60 – 64	
D	1	50 – 59	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
COM	Excluded Grade		Complete (pass). Used only for 0-unit courses and those credit courses designated by the Senate. Such courses are identified in the course listings.
Failing Grades	Grade Point Value	Percentage	Description
E	0	0-49	Conditional supplemental. Supplemental examinations are not offered by all departments and the allowable percentage may vary by program (e.g. 35-49). Students will be advised whether supplemental will be offered and if the percentage range varies when assessment techniques are announced at the beginning of the course.
F	0	0-49	F is earned by work, which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.
N	0	0-49	Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.
N/X	Excluded Grade		Did not complete course requirements by the end of the term; no supplemental. Used only for Co-op work terms and for courses designated by Senate. Such courses are identified in the course listings. The grade is EXCLUDED from the calculation of all grade point averages.
F/X	Excluded Grade		Unsatisfactory performance. Completed course requirements; no supplemental. Used only for Co-op work terms and for courses designated by Senate. Such courses are identified in the course listings. The grade is EXCLUDED from the calculation of all grade point averages.

University Course Policies

Examination and Assignment Policy

As per university policy, absence is only permitted in cases of illness, accident, family affliction, or religious obligations. Missing an exam for other reasons will result in an “F.” Students are responsible for providing official documentation to justify their absence, e.g. a doctor’s note. In cases of justified absences, the student has the right to request a make-up exam. Please note that exams will not be rescheduled to accommodate students’ personal circumstances, including travelling plans. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Grading

In accordance with Senate Regulations, grading on the curve is not permitted. The grades students receive in this course reflect their performance in relation to specified academic expectations. Students should retain a copy of all submitted assignments (in case of loss) and should retain all their marked assignments in case they wish to apply for a Review of Assigned Standings. Students have the right to view their marked examinations with their instructor, providing they apply to do so within a month of receiving their final grades. All exams remain the property of the University of Victoria.

Attendance

As per university policy, attendance to all classes is mandatory. Students who are unavoidably absent because of illness, accident or family affliction should report to the instructor as soon as possible. Absences that cannot be justified in accordance with university policies will be subject to penalty at the discretion of the instructor. If you are absent for reasons other than those specified under university policies, then it is not the responsibility of the instructor or the TA to help you catch up with missed lecture material.

Academic Integrity

The Department of Sociology fully and rigorously enforces the Senate Policy on Academic integrity. It is of utmost importance that students who do their work honestly be protected from those who do not. Because this policy is in place to ensure that students carry out and benefit from the learning activities assigned in each course, it is expected that students will cooperate in its implementation. Students caught cheating in the course will be expelled and reported to the Chair of the Department of Sociology and the Dean of Social Sciences for disciplinary action.

Plagiarism and Cheating

Students must note the statement on “Plagiarism” in the UVic Calendar, and all regulations under the “Policy on Academic Integrity.” Quotes and citations must be used for any material longer than 5 words in succession that is not the student’s original work.

Harassment

The Department of Sociology supports the University’s policies on harassment, and is committed to ensuring that all students, staff, and faculty are able to exercise fully their rights to participate in activities at the University without fear of harassment.

Accommodations

The University of Victoria accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Disability Resource Centre. The University accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Please let your instructor know in advance, preferably in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodation on these grounds. As per university policy, students who plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, cannot assume they will be accommodated, and should discuss their commitments with the instructor before the drop date.

Classroom Etiquette

Distractions can easily hinder the difficult process of conveying knowledge. Please observe standard classroom etiquette. Entering the classroom after the instructor's presentation has started can be distracting both to the instructor as well as to other students. While occasional lateness may be unavoidable, your dedication to being on time is greatly appreciated. The use of electronic communication devices is also a distraction to both the instructor and classmates. This includes texting and surfing the internet. Please turn off your electronic communication devices before entering the classroom and refrain from using them during class. If there is a justifiable reason for using your device during class (e.g., expecting an urgent call related to health or illness), please notify the instructor ahead of time, keep the device on vibrate, and exit the room if you must receive a message.

Commitment to Inclusiveness and Diversity

The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive and safe learning and working environment for all its members. The Department of Sociology is committed to inclusiveness and to a welcoming, friendly learning and working environment. We condemn sexism, ageism, racism, ethnocentrism, homophobia and inappropriate behaviour toward people with a disability.