

SOCI 438-Self, Society and Social Media in the Age of COVID19 1

Instructor: Sara Naderi
Email: snaderi@uvic.ca

Course Description:

This course will focus on the uncertain time of COVID 19 and its impact on our collective and individual lives. In some aspects, the COVID 19 age may seem like a new phenomenon. Outside of wartimes, history can barely remember any episodes during which the entire world would undergo such rapid, forceful lifestyle changes. However, this era can also be perceived as a radical strengthening of tendencies that have already gradually begun to prevail in our lives.

One of these tendencies with increased public legitimacy during the time of global pandemic is the dominance of cyberspace over personal and social life. In recent years, social media and virtual connectivity have gradually overtaken in-person, human relationships, and COVID 19 has accelerated this trend. As a sociologist, one may ask how has this quick transition from actual to virtual life affected people's relationships with their "self" (e.g., self-image, mental wellness), "significant others" (family members, friends), and the larger society or community at large?

Additionally, from a political perspective, the pandemic necessitated new regulation and governing of public spaces, the economy, and political borders. From a biopolitical perspective, we witness the new regulation of body movements in space and new definitions of our physical bodies' boundaries. Again, the same sociologist(!) may ask how these transformations of regulation over political/biopolitical entities and borders may change human subjectivity at individual and collective levels.

Sociology teaches us that we may discover more sophisticated and multilayered aspects of social reality if we begin to observe our seemingly personal (individual) experiences from a collective critical lens. C. Wright Mills (1916-1962) conceptualizes this notion as "Sociological Imagination" and describes it as the promise of sociology. This course aims at providing a collective platform to share our sociological insights and to reflect on our individual and particular experiences of the COVID19 age from a collective and critical perspective. The topics include, but are not limited to:

- The rapid digitalization of society and its effects on our individual and collective self's perception.
- "Zooming" our life: Public and private in the age of COVID 19.
- Whose life does matter? The political economy of COVID19.
- Biopolitics in the age of COVID19.

¹ This online outline is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. Detailed course outlines will be made available for all registered students on the first day of class. Only those outlines are to be considered official.

Take your Sociological Insight, Build a Collective Story!

At the end of the semester, students will be provided with the possibility of engagement in the Royal BC Museum project as a part of their final paper (see the link: <https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/tell-us-your-covid-19-story>). Therefore, students are encouraged to take advantage of their sociological knowledge, acquired during the course, to contribute to BC's collective story of the pandemic. Of course, this participation is optional.

Course Materials:

Camus, Albert., 1991. *The plague*. Translated by Stuart Gilbert. New York: Vintage international.

All other reading materials (journal papers, book chapters, videos and online sources) will be accessible via Bright Space.

Mode of Delivery:

The course will be taught online and as a synchronic seminar. All sessions of the course will be live-streamed. Each session will be a combination of the instructor's short lecture, students' presentations and class discussions. Students' active participations will be a vital aspect of the course. Students are expected to share their reflections on reading materials and their personal experiences/insights of COVID19 regarding the session's related agenda.