SOCI 331

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 of extremist political and social activism, such as the modern-day American “Patriot” movement and the sovereign citizen movement. We will also briefly touch on 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. Several of the videos, images, and audio clips we will analyze will be graphic in nature. Please consider this a warning.

Course Materials

Weekly Readings
Each week we will examine a selection of scholarly articles. You will be expected to come to class prepared to discuss them.

Suggested Texts


ON RESERVE AT LIBRARY

Teaching Assistants (TA)

TA Name TBA
TA Contact
TA Coordinates
Course Evaluation

Exam #1 – worth 15% of total grade
Exam #2 – worth 20% of total grade
Final Exam – worth 25% of total grade
Essay – worth 30% of total grade
In-class discussions – worth 10% 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 American Sociological Association (ASA) format. You will be expected to identify and explore a specific case relating to the subject of the course. 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 15th of August.

Case Studies
Throughout the course, we will devote a number of our Friday 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

Exam number one
22 July

Exam number two
05 August

Essay
15 August

Final exam
19 August

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.
# Department of Sociology

## Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 04</td>
<td><strong>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?</strong></td>
<td>Rydgren, J. (2007). The Sociology of the Radical Right. <em>Annual Review of Sociology</em>, 33, 241–262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Where did groups like the Ku Klux Klan or the Neo Nazis come from? What social, economic, or political events surrounded the emergence of extremism social movements?</strong></td>
<td>Wintrobe, R. (2006). “Introduction: The Problem of Extremism” in <em>Rational extremism: The political economy of radicalism</em>. Cambridge;New York:: Cambridge University Press. AVAILABLE FROM LIBRARY WEBSITE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 11</td>
<td><strong>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?</strong></td>
<td>Smith, R.B. (2003). Political Extremism: Left, Center, and Right. <em>The American Sociologist</em>, 34(1/2), 70–80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Week 3
#### July 18

**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?


### Week 4
#### July 25

**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?


- **EZEKIEL, R. S. (2002).** An ethnographer looks at neo-nazi and klan groups: The racist mind revisited. *American Behavioral Scientist, 46*(1), 51-71

**CASE STUDY AND DISCUSSION:**

Bohlen, Ann; Rafferty, Kevin; Ridgeway, James. (1991). “Blood in the Face” *First Run Features*

VIDEO AVAILABLE ON YOUTUBE
Week 5  
August 1

**Religious Extremism: From Jihad to Westboro and Places Stranger Still**

In this section, we will critically analyze the role of religion and religious fervor in the rise of extremism. We will look at the roots of Islamic extremism, Christian extremism, and a few others besides. We will highlight the complex interplay between faith, culture, and politics on display in religious violence.


**EXAM #2**

Week 6  
August 8

**Watering the Tree of Liberty**

The contemporary Patriot and Militia movements are quintessentially American phenomena; where did they come from? How did they manage to grow and spread across the United States? Why do they believe?


**CASE STUDY AND DISCUSSION**

Article and Video on the Toronto Star Website: “Anti-government sovereign citizen movement claims 30,000 members and growing in Canada” by Dene Moore, 2013 *Canadian Free Press* (Also read the linked *Law Society of BC* bulletin found in the body text of the article).
**Blunting the Spear:**
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 three different examples of how states and groups tackle the issue of political extremism, racism, terrorism and violence. We will look at two government briefings – one Canadian, the other American – and one example of a local anti-racist organization to see some examples of how extremism is being countered using both traditional methods and newer, online-based strategies of action.

We will also spend a full class sharing and discussing our course projects.


COURSE PROJECT DUE

FINAL EXAM
# Department of Sociology Evaluation and Writing Expectations

*Effective September 2012*

## 100-level courses

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

## 200-level courses

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

## 300-level courses

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

## 400-level courses

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

**Undergraduate Records, University of Victoria, 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passing Grade</th>
<th>Grade Point Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90 – 100</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>85 – 89</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>80 – 84</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>77 – 79</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>73 – 76</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70 – 72</td>
<td><strong>COM</strong> Excluded Grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Failing Grades</th>
<th>Grade Point Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>F is earned by work, which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/X</td>
<td>Excluded Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/X</td>
<td>Excluded Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.