

SOCIOLOGY 2240
DEVIANCE AND CONFORMITY
(Fall 2010)
3 UT Credits
Grande Prairie Regional College

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Office Hours: Mondays & Tuesdays: 16:30 – 17.15
Or By Appointment

Office: C410, 539-2011

Course Prerequisite: SO1000

Course Description: A study of the politics and social ramifications of conformity, deviance, and their relation to social change. The course examines how and why some behaviour patterns are defined as deviant or conformist.

Course Delivery Mode: Discussion, occasional lecture

GOALS:

1. To understand how sociological concepts may help us analyze our inclination to define and classify people and their behaviour.
2. To develop analytical and critical thinking skills regarding issues relevant to conformity.
3. To become aware of historical and contemporary attitudes, practices, and values relevant to concepts of deviance and conformity, and to their applications.

Required Reading:

The Relativity of Deviance - John Curra

Assignments:

Photo Project: (F, D- to A+)

This assignment requires you to submit a photographic portfolio of at least 10 photos of Grande Prairie or its region. The pictures will signify an idea, impression, or provocation around the meaning(s) of your portfolio. Along with the portfolio the assignment must include an explanatory essay of at least 1200 words. The essay will discuss your interpretation of your portfolio. Additional research may be drawn in but is not required. Grammar is important to communicating precise meaning. Although it will not be

valued as highly as content, but it will be evaluated and has the capacity to adversely affect your standing in the course. **Due Date:** First Class of November. A penalty for lateness will be assessed. One letter grade per calendar day will be deducted. Insufficient length will also affect your mark, by one letter grade.

Museum Presentation: (F, D- to A+)

This will be a group presentation and the mark will be assigned collectively. You will consider yourselves curators of a new museum exhibition. The topic of the exhibit is entirely your choice, but you will bring items/objects to class and set up an exhibit. In doing so you will think about the presentation and sequence(s) of the items included. There must be a minimum of 12 items displayed. As a group you will explain to the class the significance and meaning(s) of your exhibit, and the logic of its display-sequence. Afterward, there will a break of some minutes and you will rearrange the same items/objects. Your group will then present along the same lines, a completely different interpretation of the exhibit, and again discuss with the class the logic of the display-sequence. Each presentation should be approximately 40 minutes. **Presentation Dates:** Sometime in December.

Two Journals: (F, C+ to B)

Each journal is to be at least 350 words. Anything pertaining to deviance and conformity, ideas introduced in class discussions or lectures, class interaction, personal experience, etc., is suitable. Observations about, and suggestions for, the course are also suitable. No research is necessary or expected. The journals are an informal type of communication with me. **Due Dates:** Last class of October and November. For every 2 calendar days of lateness, your mark will be reduced by one letter grade. You also must observe the minimum length.

Discussion Bonus: Class discussion is a vital aspect of this course. Everyone may (but not necessarily will) receive a bonus mark for the QUALITY of your class discussion, based on a combination of the frequency and quality of the participation. You will be eligible only if you display commitment to the course by doing your reading and completing the required assignments, **and if you have not missed more than 3 classes during the term.** The bonus system will be assessed using an A to D system, without pluses or minuses. Moodle discussions will be considered for the bonus grade. The bonus mark offers an A, B, C, or D. No plus or minus signs will be used. The bonus effect will not cause more than a 3-level rise in final grades.

Tabulating Grades:

The total GPA available from your assignments is 17. Your GPA based on your marks will be totalled and divided by this number. A percentage will be derived based on this tabulation, and the percentage will be reconverted to a final grade.

NOTE: (1) No class averaging will be done. (2) All marks will appear on Moodle. If you are unfamiliar with this system, employees of the library will instruct you for access. You are responsible for monitoring your grade input, and informing me that a mark has not appeared for which you deserve credit. (3) The bonus mark offers an A, B, C, or D. No plus or minus signs will be used. (3) The bonus effect will not cause more than a 3-level rise in final grades.

Grade Equivalency:

A+	95-100%
A	90-94%
A-	87-89%
B+	83-86%
B	80-82%
B-	77-79%
C+	73-76%
C	65-72%
C-	60-64%
D+	55-59%
D	50-54%
D-	45-49%

NOTE: On the College's marking grid there is no D-. Therefore no such final mark will be recorded. However, for the assignments that will be evaluated on a full grading grid, I will use D- as a non-failing mark.

DISCUSSION SEQUENCE

1. Introduction to course: General, Sociological, and Historical

Class Discussion: General perceptions of deviance and conformity

What behaviours do you consider deviant? Do you react to these similarly to how you respond to conforming behaviour? Have you ever been thought of as deviant by others, or yourself? Do you rank deviant behaviours in a hierarchy of ascending 'transgressiveness', and if so, based on what criteria? Should sociologists contemplate such a hierarchy?

2. Introduction; Theories of Deviance

Anomie, Social Structure, Status, Differential Association, Labeling, Control, Constructionism, Conflict Theory, Queer Theory, Stigma, Anomie, Discourse, Culture – Subculture – Counterculture, Positive Deviance. From now on we will raise these theories when delving into the rest of the assigned readings in the course.

3. Curra: Preface, Chapter 1

Class Discussion:

Prefaces of books seek to establish a framework of purpose and intellectual assumption for the text. What are Curra's purposes and assumptions? After reading chapter 1, what do you think is

dynamic about deviance? What is the most significant idea(s) of the chapter? Prepare to explain the meaning of a dialectical relationship in an analysis of deviance - or conformity? What is the social construction of reality? Of what value to us is the difference between 'the ideal' and 'the real'? Primary and secondary deviance refer to what? Do we also have primary and secondary conformity? Prepare to discuss the validity of the terms, and then the conceptual relationship among, pathology, harm, and human rights

3. Curra: Chapters 2 & 3

Class Discussion:

Is there any merit to distinguishing between saying one is deviant, or is being deviant? Would Curra perceive a difference? What contribution does social attribution (blame, moral condemnation, praise, etc) make to our perspectives on deviance or conformity? Is it really possible to have a spoiled identity? How would you explain the meaning of a sociocultural matrix? Do social networks suspend, obstruct, or assist a drift 'into' deviant, or conforming, thought or behaviour? What might explain my decision to connect these two chapters for the class' analysis?

4. Curra: Chapter 4

Class Discussion:

'Mental Disorders' is a prominent category in our society and culture. When you examine your own thoughts and assumptions about the category, do you find some thought similar to what Curra means when he writes of transforming diversity into disease? Outline the logic of his outlook; are you persuaded by his position? Does the transformation he detects slide easily into another of his chapter sections, the manufacture of madness? From transforming and manufacturing, Curra moves into a conversation about myth as it applies to what we call mental health. From a sociological standpoint, what are myth and mythology? What value do these concepts have to Curra's argument in this chapter?

5. Lecture on Ian Hacking's Views of Constructing Social Categories of People

Class Discussion:

The social construction of persons.

6. Curra: Chapter 5

Class Discussion:

Many people would say that murder and violence are self-evident. So where is the real central idea of this chapter? Is Curra straining to make something out of nothing? What do sociologists communicate when they claim that aspects of social existence are constructed? Does this meaning have any substantive relevance to this topic? What is the relationship between ideology and what we

perceive as normal in a society? The 'Other' is a powerful concept of sociological analysis. What does it refer to, and how might it play into Curra's discussion in chapter 5? Using discourse theory, what questions have you about Curra's purpose in this and the other chapters we have discussed?

7. Curra: Chapters 6 & 8

Class Discussion:

What are cultural scripts? Are they another way of referencing discourse, or social constructionism, or ideology? Prepare to discuss the cultural scripts pertinent to violence of various kinds, that you have absorbed while growing up. As part of this preparation, think also about the specific sexual scripts you are aware of. Curra write of the symbolic organization of sexual violence. Assess his meaning and the validity of his point. Before reading the chapter, what questions did you have about violent behaviour, and sexual violence particularly? Why do you think I have asked you to a chapter on sexual violence, with the one discussing sexual diversity?

8. Curra: Chapter 9

Class Discussion:

On page 262 Curra mentions the three images encompassed by the Greek word for 'drug'. Do you recognize similar images actively embedded in our word(s) describing similar behaviour? Explain Curra's criticism of our discourse of addiction? In sociology we often contemplate the force of social power. How might this idea apply to this chapter? Who and what are moral entrepreneurs?