

SOCI-4411-FA The Individualized World

Classes (days/times): September 10, 2012 – December 3, 2012; Tuesday & Thursday, 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

Location: RB2044

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Course website: <http://go.to/sociology> (file password: sociology)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the course is to explore the notion of 'individualism' as a uniquely modern construct. This will be done by combining the philosophical, sociological and historical insights in an attempt to understand (i) where does individualism come from, (ii) how do we understand it, (iii) how does it manifest itself in the contemporary society, and (iv) what might be some of the problems, or challenges, that individualism poses in terms of the way people come to understand and experience themselves and others, and come to relate to the 'world out there'. The starting assumption and the principal idea that drives the course is that individualism is not a "natural state of being" but a socio-historical construct that gets created at a certain point in our history and that, over the course of time, becomes a "natural state of existing in the world" with all the positives and negatives associated with it. Thus, our exploration of individualism will be focused, firstly, on understanding the process(es) of its socio-historical making and, secondly, on examining the consequences of its "naturalization" in the contemporary Western society.

We will begin at the beginning, i.e. with the clarification of the two foundational concepts of our course – 'individualism' and 'modernity' – and with the exploration of these concepts in the context of a "sociological conundrum" of the individual/society relationship. After that, we will examine the changing nature of political, economic, and socio-cultural realities of the modern world and their impact on the 'deepening' of present-day individualism. Finally, we will look at the consequences – or "costs" – of individualism and the challenges that ever-increasing individualization of – or, rather, in – society poses for what we may term as a 'meaningful existence in the world'. We will finish the course by trying to tie these three streams of our intellectual journey together, without necessarily offering the 'grand finale', or 'grand resolution', to all the issues, problems and questions we shall encounter and raise along the way.

Readings for the course will reflect a multi-disciplinary nature of our approach to the subject-matter, and will range from the dense and abstract to the light(er) and more experiential. Some will be more sweeping in their scope, while others will focus on specific episodes and/or particular cases. Regardless of their nature, content and intent, all readings will demand an intellectual effort on your part and should therefore be read carefully and thoroughly. This is a fourth-year class and a certain level of conceptual, critical and academic competency is presumed.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Overall, the objective of the course is to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the diverse philosophical/conceptual, historical and contemporary aspects of 'individualism', 'modernity', and the relationship between the two. By the end of the course, the diligent student will possess a robust competence in thinking about all the issues considered in the course, as well as a great deal of independence in assessing critically their everyday practical manifestations and real-life impacts.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

The following required textbooks are available at LU bookstore:

- *Liquid Modernity*, by Zygmunt Bauman. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000. ISBN-10: 0745624103 | ISBN-13: 978-0745624105.
- *The Malaise of Modernity*, by Charles Taylor. Concord: Anansi, 1991. ISBN-10: 0887845207 | ISBN-13: 978-0887845208.
- *The New Individualism: The Emotional Costs of Globalization* (2nd ed.), by Anthony Elliott and Charles Lamert. New York: Routledge, 2009. ISBN-10: 0415560705 | ISBN-13: 978-0415560702.

All additional readings are available on our course website: <http://go.to/sociology>.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Your performance in the course will be evaluated on the basis of reflective commentaries, term paper, final exam, and class participation:

Reflective commentaries (25%)
Term Paper (35%)
Final Exam (take-home) (25%)
Class participation (15%)

Reflective commentaries are written reflections *on the weekly readings*. Only five of these reflections will be submitted for marks. Submission dates will be selected randomly and students will not know beforehand which week a commentary will be due. The commentaries will be collected at the **beginning of randomly selected Tuesday class** (this is **not negotiable**). Late submissions will not be accepted. It is therefore in your best interest to prepare your commentary for each week and to bring it with you to a Tuesday class, just in case it is due. Absolutely no make-up commentaries will be allowed. If you anticipate missing a class, you may wish to ask a fellow student to bring in a hard copy of your reflection for potential submission. Under extraordinary circumstances (for which you need to provide appropriate documentation), you can make *prior* arrangement for emailing the commentary before the lecture.

The purpose of the commentary is not to summarize the weekly readings. Rather, it is (1) to offer your own thoughts about the claims/arguments presented in the readings, and (2) to formulate three discussion questions about what you find to be the most constructive, or problematic, aspects of the claims/points made in the readings. In formulating your questions you have to explain their importance in terms of getting at the key issues, problems and/or questions in the weekly readings. Each commentary has to reflect the nature of specific discussion themes assigned for a given week of the class. The best commentaries are usually those that are more analytical than descriptive and that raise some interesting points and questions for discussion. *All of the weekly readings must be addressed in your commentary.*

The length of each commentary should not exceed three pages of typed text, using 1.5 line spacing and 12 pt Times New Roman font. Please corner-staple your commentary and do not use paper clips, plastic covers or binders. In the interest of environmental responsibility, avoid using a cover page and put your name and your student ID number in the top-left corner of page 1.

The **term paper** should be thought of as a substantive piece of work that demonstrates all of your intellectual, analytical and research skills as they apply to the topic of our course. The objective of the paper is to demonstrate your understanding of the key issues we will be exploring throughout the course by engaging either with the conceptual dimensions of our course themes or with the empirical manifestations of specific issues we will consider in our lectures/class discussions. Your paper can thus be crafted as either a theoretical piece or as a theoretically informed case-study analysis. Either way, the paper has to reflect some aspect of the course's key conceptual and/or thematic concerns.

Your term paper will be completed in two stages. For Stage 1, you will have to produce and submit a required work which will be assessed and returned to you with feedback and suggestions that will help you improve on what you already have and successfully complete your project:

Stage 1 (due October 19) (15%): you are required to submit a substantive proposal for the paper that (1) clearly identifies and discusses your topic and your key research questions/objectives, (2) provides a preliminary annotated bibliography of peer-reviewed resources you will be using for the project, and (3) offers a detailed exploration of your paper's all key sections and clear indications of the work to be done for each section. Your paper proposal should not exceed 6,000 words. Please use 1.5 line spacing and 12 pt Times New Roman font.

Stage 2 (due November 29) (20%): you are required to submit the final version of your term paper. You should follow the ASA style for all formatting, referencing and citations. The main body of your paper should not exceed 8,000 words (plus footnotes and a list of references). Please use 1.5 line spacing and 12 pt Times New Roman font.

In order to successfully complete your term paper you will most likely need to do an advanced reading of our course materials and consult extra resources. Feel free to discuss your work with me as you see necessary.

Please note: late work is subject to a 10%-per-day penalty (weekend counts as one day).

The term paper submitted has to be the new and original work rather than being copied from other texts/resources or written for another course. This, of course, does not mean that you cannot consult other resources in completing your work (you are, in fact, required to do so), but these need to be clearly recognized and referenced within your own writing. Using other people's work without acknowledging it, or claiming someone else's work for your own, constitutes an act of plagiarism and is taken for the most serious academic offence (for details, see your *Lakehead University 2012-2013 Academic Calendar*, section IX – *Academic Misconduct*). **Committing plagiarism in this class carries the penalty of automatic course failure.**

The **final exam** will be take-home. It will be given out on the last class (November 29) and will be due electronically one week later (December 6). You will need to answer in essay style three questions that will test not simply the mastery of facts and concepts but also — and more importantly — the ability to synthesize course material and to construct an argument concisely. The final-exam questions will be based on the course readings, lectures, and anything else presented during our class time. Each answer may not exceed 3 single-spaced pages (i.e. 9 pages maximum for the exam). **Late exams will absolutely not be accepted.**

We will make our class time as interactive and dialogical as possible. Informed **participation** is therefore highly encouraged. In order to be able to take part in the class dialogue you should be well prepared for each of our class sessions by doing the assigned readings and writing your commentary, and by being willing to share your comments and questions with other students. Participation mark will thus reflect your *active and meaningful* input in our class discussions. *Passive classroom presence does not warrant any participation marks.*

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following grading scale will be applied in evaluating your course work:

90-100% (A+)

Outstanding Performance: superb mastery of the principles and materials treated in the course; exceptional fluency in communicating that mastery and a high degree of originality and independence in applying material and principles.

80-89% (A)

Excellent Performance: comprehensive in-depth knowledge of the principles and materials treated in the course; fluency in communicating that knowledge and originality and independence in applying material and principles.

70-79% (B)

Good Performance: thorough understanding of the breadth of materials and principles treated in the course and ability to apply and communicate that understanding effectively.

60-69% (C)

Satisfactory Performance: basic understanding of the breadth of principles and material treated in the course and an ability to apply and communicate that understanding competently.

50-59% (D)

Marginal Performance: adequate understanding of most principles and material treated in the course, but significant weakness in some areas and in the ability to apply and communicate that understanding.

40-49% (E)

Failure: inadequate or fragmentary knowledge of the principles and material treated in the in the course, or failure to complete the work required in the course.

1-39% (F)

Failure: inadequate or fragmentary knowledge of the principles and material treated in the in the course, or failure to complete the work required in the course.

0% (F)

Academic Dishonesty: demonstrable violation of the academic rules of conduct as defined by Lakehead University academic standards.

Your grade is a reflection of your performance in the course, which is the only criterion for your final mark. *There will be no rescaling of grades at the end of the course* and no adjustments except for legitimate clerical errors. Please take note of that.

According to Lakehead University defined standards, grade 0-49% constitutes unsatisfactory academic performance and means failing the course; 50-59% is a minimally accepted level of performance for passing the course, while 90-100% constitutes outstanding performance. For details on evaluation and grading see your Lakehead *University 2012-2013 Academic Calendar*, section University Regulations (V Standing).

If you wish to review your course work you can do so within *one week from the day exam marks* have been posted.

GENERAL POLICIES

Academic Statement: Each student is asked to submit a brief statement about his or her academic background as it relates to the Sociology program in general and this course in particular. The statement should be accompanied by either your recent photograph or a photocopy of your Lakehead University student ID card.

Email: Emailing is to be regarded as an official form of communication. Only emails sent through Lakehead University account will be read and replied to. All other email messages will be ignored.

Cell phones: Cell phones are to be turned off during lectures (except under exceptional circumstances in which approval has been granted by the instructor).

Notebooks/portables: Use of notebook computers and/or portable devices during lectures is **not allowed** (except under exceptional circumstances in which approval has been granted by the instructor).

Audio/video devices: Use of audio/video recording devices during lectures is **not allowed** (except under exceptional circumstances in which approval has been granted by the instructor).

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Class attendance is not mandatory but is highly recommended. If you decide to attend, you are expected to arrive on time and be respectful to other students in class. Disruptive and otherwise inappropriate behaviour in the classroom will not be tolerated. Students engaged in such behaviour will be dealt with accordingly.

Disclaimer: The information in this Course Outline is subject to change; any changes will be announced in class.

WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change; any changes will be announced in class)

Week 1 (Sept 10-14)	Course introduction; syllabus walk-through, introductory review
Week 2 (Sept 17-21)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Society of Individuals”, by Norbert Elias (available at http://go.to/sociology) • “Part One: The Semantic History of Individualism”, by Steven Lukes (available at http://go.to/sociology)
Week 3 (Sept 24-28)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Part Two: The Basic Ideas of Individualism:”, by Steven Lukes (available at http://go.to/sociology) • “Part Three: The Relations between These Ideas”, by Steven Lukes (available at http://go.to/sociology)
Week 4 (Oct 1-5)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Foreword: On Being Light and Liquid”, in <i>Liquid Modernity</i> • “Individuality”, in <i>Liquid Modernity</i>
Week 5 (Oct 8-12)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Time/Space”, in <i>Liquid Modernity</i> • “Community”, in <i>Liquid Modernity</i>
Week 6 (Oct 15-19)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Work”, in <i>Liquid Modernity</i> • “Emancipation” (pp.16-41), in <i>Liquid Modernity</i>
Week 7 (Oct 22-26)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Malaise of Modernity</i>, by Charles Taylor
Week 8 (Oct 29-Nov 2)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Individualization</i> (Ch. 1-4), by Ulrich Beck & Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (available at http://go.to/sociology)
Week 9 (Nov 5-9)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Individualization</i> (Ch. 5-7), by Ulrich Beck & Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (available at http://go.to/sociology)

Week 10 (Nov 12-16)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The New Individualism</i> (Ch. 2 & 6), by Anthony Elliot and Charles Lemert
Week 11 (Nov 19-23)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The New Individualism</i> (Ch. 1 & 4), by Anthony Elliot and Charles Lemert
Week 12 (Nov 26-30)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The New Individualism</i> (Ch. 3 & 5), by Anthony Elliot and Charles Lemert