



Lakehead University, Fall 2021  
Department of Sociology

# SOCI 3116: Sociology of Violence

Tr 7:00 – 10:00 PM, via Zoom: <https://lakeheadu.zoom.us/j/96472817044>

## Course Director

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Office Hours: By appointment, via Zoom

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## Course Description

The fact of violence goes almost without saying. Media reports of violent behaviour are common and violence is a prominent theme in both culture and entertainment. To speak of one's personal experience with violence is subsequently quite complicated because we are continuously reminded of the violence that happens to others and could possibly happen to ourselves.

We could even say that violence has become normalized, assumed, and taken for granted in society. This is apparent because our everyday use of the term tends to avoid a number of additional questions. For instance, is violence always physical? How does violence affect a person's sense of self? When is violence socially acceptable? Are witnesses just passive participants? Is there a space for ethical violence? Is it in our nature as humans to be violent?

While violence seems to be a pervasive feature of our lived social worlds, it is apparent that we rarely think about the concept itself or the range of relations that arise from it. To address this situation, this class will apply interdisciplinary methods of inquiry to examine the complex relationship between violence and social life.

**Please note:** This course will explore a number of topics that students may find upsetting. These include rape, domestic abuse, child abuse, torture, and violence against animals. Graphic images and video will be used throughout the term to connect theoretical topics with lived realities. While trigger warnings will be placed before such content, your presence in this course requires a willingness to engage with difficult material. Such is the nature of violence.

## Course Objectives

Students will practice being active agents, both individually and collaboratively, in the pursuit, production, and distribution of knowledge. They will apply skills like critical reading, analytical writing, effective researching, and collaborative problem solving in order to reveal taken for granted assumptions about violence. Beyond providing structured practice conducting academic research, a key goal of this course is to promote critical thinking and problem-based learning. This will help students advance their research skills and gain specialized knowledge of an extremely important social issue.

## Course Organization

All lectures will be delivered live via Zoom at the link above. Each class will be broken into two sections. In the first, a lecture will be given that explores a particular aspect of violence through the lens of the readings assigned. In the second, we will engage in a class discussion around a related topic. Since time will be split between group/class discussions and workshops, students are expected to attend all classes and have read all assigned materials in advance.

Please note that participation constitutes an important element of this course and a sizeable portion of the final grade. Although attendance will not be taken, your involvement in discussions during class is both important and necessary; attendance alone is not sufficient for a participation mark. Take this portion of your grade as seriously as the analytic papers.

## Evaluation

Final grades will be based on the following breakdown:

1. Analytic Paper - Topologies	15%	September 30, 11:59 pm
1. Analytic Paper - Manifestations	15%	October 28, 11:59 pm
1. Analytic Paper - Subjects	15%	November 18, 11:59 pm
2. Research Paper	40%	December 16, 11:59 pm
3. Participation	15%	~

1. Students are responsible for writing three **analytic papers**. Topics and due dates are listed above. Each will provide a critical overview of how a single week's reading(s) conceptualized violence and connect the material with a past/present world event, situation, or condition. Additional sources are expected. Each paper should be 3 - 5 pages, double-spaced, and follow standard writing conventions concerning style and citation. Page length does not include the bibliography. Papers must be submitted electronically on the course D2L site before the due dates listed above. MS Word or Apple Pages formats only; no PDFs or Google Docs, please. When uploading files, please use this naming convention: [Last name] - SOCI 3116 - [Assignment name].
2. The final **research paper** is your chance to explore a particular aspect of violence in more detail. Essays should be between 16 - 20 pages, double-spaced, and include mostly scholarly sources. Page length does not include the bibliography. Papers must be submitted to the course D2L site by 11:59 pm on December 16th. Standard academic formats relative to style, referencing, and structure apply. No conceptual limits will be placed on your topic but at least two course readings must be incorporated into the analysis. An example of a successful paper is posted online and I'm happy to help brainstorm ideas if needed.
3. Given the emphasis on discussion and collaboration, **participation** is a crucial component of your final grade. This entails attending lectures, doing readings in advance, and taking part in class discussions. Participation is active engagement with course material; showing up to class is not enough.

Students are expected to make every effort to hand in their work on time, so assignments received later than the due date will be penalized 5% per day, including weekends. In those rare instances where circumstances beyond the student's control have prevented an assignment from being submitted on time, exceptions to the lateness penalty may be granted. These

situations will require supporting documentation and be at the sole discretion of the professor.

Numeric marks will be assigned in conformance with Lakehead's standard grading structure. For a rough breakdown of the expectations associated with each letter grade, please consult the 'Literature & Theory' section of this reference:

- <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/english/marking-standards>

## Zoom Etiquette

You know what's worse than teaching online? Teaching to a sea of faceless, black boxes. As such, my expectation is that your webcam will be on for the entirety of class time. Zoom has a bunch of backgrounds you can use to hide your surroundings, so please use those if you're concerned with privacy (or just don't want to clean your room...).

## Email Policy

Please include a subject line that begins with "SOCI 3116" in every email you send me or your TA. This will draw attention to your message and help us respond to it more quickly.

## Important Course Information

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information concerning student behaviour and disciplinary procedures. Pay specific attention to the guidelines and restrictions surrounding plagiarism; it will not be tolerated:

- <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/provost-vice-president-academic/academic-integrity-plans-policies/academic-dishonesty-regulations>

## Class and Reading Schedule

There are no textbooks to purchase. All readings are found on the course website.

### **Week 1**      September 9      **Course Introduction**

Syllabus

### **Week 2**      September 16      **Topologies of Violence**

Bufacchi, V. (2005). Two concepts of violence. *Political Studies Review*, 3, 193-204.

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Hamby, S. (2017). On defining violence, and why it matters. *Psychology of Violence*, 7(2), 167-180.

### **Week 3**      September 23      **Manifestations of Violence: Law**

Benjamin, W. (1986). Critique of violence. In P. Demetz (Ed.), *Reflections: Essays, aphorisms, autobiographical writings*. (E. Jephcott, Trans). New York: Schocken Books.

**Week 4**      September 30      **Manifestations of Violence: Everyday**

Lawrence, P. (1997). Violence, suffering, Amman: The work of oracles in Sri Lanka's Eastern War Zone. In Das et al. (Eds.), *Violence and Subjectivity* (pp. 171-178). Berkeley: University of California Press.

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Kleinman, A. (1997). The violences of everyday life: The multiple forms and dynamics of social violence. In Das et al. (Eds.), *Violence and Subjectivity* (pp. 226-241). Berkeley: University of California Press.

**Week 5**      October 7      **Manifestations of Violence: Outsiders**

Girard, R. (1972). *Violence and the Sacred*. (P. Gregory, Trans.). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. (pp. 1-38)

**Week 6**      October 14      **Reading Week**

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**Week 7**      October 21      **Manifestations of Violence: Language**

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power*. (G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Trans.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (pp. 66-89)

**Week 8**      October 28      **Subjects of Violence: Villain**

Collins, R. (2008). *Violence: A micro-sociological theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (pp. 39-82)

**Week 9**      November 4      **Subjects of Violence: Victim**

Collins, R. (2008). *Violence: A micro-sociological theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (pp. 134-155)

**Week 10**      November 11      **Subjects of Violence: Witness**

Fowles, J. (1999). *The Case for Television Violence*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. (pp. 74-93, 119-132)

**Week 11**      November 18      **Ethics of Violence: Consequences**

Singer, P. (1993). *Practical Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (pp. 218-246)

**Week 12**      November 25      **Ethics of Violence: Precariousness**

Butler, J. (2006). *Precarious Lives: The powers of mourning and violence*. New York: Verso. (pp. 19-49)

**Week 13**      December 2      **Course Conclusion**

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