SOC 435 A1/503 A1: Theorizing the Social (Sociology for Mortals)
Fall 2018
Thursdays 1:00 - 3:50pm
T1 108

Instructor: Zohréh BayatRizi
Office: Tory 6-11
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-2 or by appointment
Email: Bayatrizi@ualberta.ca
Phone: NA

COURSE PREREQUISITE:
For 435: SOC 212 or Soc 335 or consent of the instructor. For Soc 503: None.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
Life and death are not merely personal experiences. They are core biopolitical questions. With modern technological advances, we are often faced with difficult decisions regarding creating, preserving and destroying life. Medicine allows us to extend life and defy death. Powerful weapons allow us to kill on an unprecedented scale. And global climate change will destroy innumerable lives. This course focuses on the contributions of social thinkers to the conceptualization and understanding of some of the most fundamental issues at hand.

Whose life is worth living? Who decides? Does modern culture make it harder for us to face our own death? How about other people’s death? We will read a number of core theoretical texts from a variety of sociological traditions: Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Jacqueline Rose, Nikolas Rose, Zygmunt Bauman, Edward Said and others.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:
The best lesson that our search for knowledge teach us is that the more we know, the less we know. A sense of humility before the vast unknown. This course doesn’t even scratch the surface of what there is to know about life and death from a sociological perspective, and by the time it has ended you should have more questions and more unknowns than you started with. That is a good thing. Certitude is anti-scientific.

COURSE MATERIALS:
Digital readings will be posted on e-Class.
SKILLS

Students who pass this course will hone their skills at

- evaluating and applying abstract concepts and theoretical perspectives to particular cases of violence
- synthesizing theoretical materials with personal observations and experiences
- organizing and summarizing information and textual material
- conducting library and media research
- writing research reports and essays
- critically analyzing information presented in multi-media
- expressing informed views on national and international issues

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term paper outline</td>
<td>Hand in Dec. 3 Present Dec. 6</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Guideline will be handed out in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term paper</td>
<td>December 7, with an automatic 1 week extension</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Guideline will be handed out in class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar worksheets and attendance</td>
<td>Every class</td>
<td>8x5% = 40%</td>
<td>You will have to turn in at least 8 of them. You have to be in class for your seminar worksheet to count.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Arrange with instructor</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>May be done individually or as a group.</td>
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EXPLANATORY NOTE ON COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Term paper outline: A brief 1-2 page description of your topic, main argument, key concepts and readings to be used. NO POINT FORM!

Term paper: See guideline.

Seminar worksheets: Seminar worksheets consist of 3-5 questions that are designed to help you navigate the readings, systematize your thoughts, identify the author’s key argument, discuss key passages in the text, and reflect on the readings critically and comparatively. They will also be used to create discussions in class. Worksheets will be posted in the Assignments section of eClass prior to the due date. Students will have to fill them out (maximum word limit is usually 500), post them online on eClass and also bring a copy (digital or hard copy) to class for discussions. You must be present in class in order for your seminar worksheet to be graded.

Seminar presentation: I will lead all class discussions for the first 3 weeks of class. After that students are expected to pick readings from an extended bibliography (see below) and present them in class.
Presentations can be individual or done in groups. Presenters must create a seminar worksheet on the Monday before their presentation and send it to me to post on eClass. These worksheets will help guide discussions in class. You can use my seminar worksheets as a model. Presentations will be evaluated based on your ability to: identify key issues to discuss in class; generate discussions (mainly by designing a well-thought out seminar worksheet); answer questions; use audio-visual and other material to bring theory to life.

**Attendance:** You will have to attend class regularly enough to hand in 8 seminar worksheets. That is at least 8 of the 13 classes. If you do not attend class, your seminar worksheet will not be graded even if you posted it on eClass.

**GRADING:**

For undergraduate students, marks for graded course requirements are given in percentages, to which letter grades are also assigned, according to the table below. The percentages are the same for graduate students. However, marks below C+ are considered a failure. The percentage mark resulting from all graded components produces the final letter grade for the course. Marks for grades are not curved or scaled. Below is a grading scale recommended by the Department of Sociology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Pts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90-100</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>70-73</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-49</td>
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<td>Fail</td>
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ATTENDANCE, ABSENCES, AND MISSED GRADE COMPONENTS:

Since presence at lectures, participation in classroom discussions and projects, and the completion of assignments are important components of most courses, students will serve their interests best by regular attendance. Those who choose not to attend must assume whatever risks are involved.

Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult the Attendance section of the University Calendar.

Absence from Term Work

Students are required to contact me within two working days following the missed exam or term work (or as soon as you are able, with regard to the circumstances) to apply for an excused absence. Excused absences are not automatic and are at my discretion. Below is a list of acceptable documentation to support an absence:

- For incapacitating medical illness, students can present one of the following:
  - “University of Alberta Medical Statement” signed by a doctor (this cannot be required, but must be accepted if provided in lieu of other documents).
  - “Medical Declaration Form for Students” (for Faculty of Arts students).
  - “Statutory Declaration” (for students in Faculties other than Arts, to be obtained from home Faculty or the Office of the Registrar).

- For all other cases, such as domestic afflictions or religious convictions, the student should submit documentation appropriate to the situation. This could include the following:
  - For a death in the family – a copy of the death certificate
  - For a religious conflict – a letter from the church or pastor
  - For a car accident – a copy of the accident report
  - For other serious afflictions – consult the Instructor or Department about appropriate documents

Policy for Late Assignments: Seminar worksheets can only be submitted prior to the seminar. Late worksheets will not be accepted. Skipping your presentation with no legitimate excuse will result in a grade of zero with no chance to make it up. Term paper outlines and term papers must be submitted on time except with a legitimate excuse as outlined above. I may grant an extension at my discretion.

ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES:

If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let me know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not already registered
with Accessibility Resources, contact their office immediately (1-80 SUB; Email sasrec@ualberta.ca; phone 780-492-3381).

CLASSROOM POLICIES/ATMOSPHERE:

This is a seminar that relies extensively on discussions. As in any class, some topics might be uncomfortable for some students. All ideas are welcome regardless of their political, religious, or ideological leanings, as long as they are presented respectfully and the speaker is open to discussion and respectful criticism.

LEARNING AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT:

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring that all students, faculty and staff are able to work and study in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels that this policy is being violated to:

• Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or

• If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the Office of the Student Ombuds. Information about the University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures is described in UAPPOL.

REQUIRED NOTES:

Academic Integrity
“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at https://www.ualberta.ca/governance/) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

Audio or Video Recording
“Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the Instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or Instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).”
Course Outline Policy
"Policy about course outlines can be found in Course Requirements, Evaluation Procedures and Grading of the University Calendar."

LECTURE SCHEDULE:

See below
Schedule: In the first three weeks of this course, I will present selected readings (marked with *) from each of the three sections the bibliography below. After that, students will pick their own readings from the bibliography and present them in class. You are also welcome to suggest your own reading but including it on the list will be at my discretion.

There will be one to four readings per week (depending on the length of the reading) but we will NOT cover all the readings in the biblio. So don't worry about the length of this bibliography.

PART I  POWER OVER LIFE

Life is a socio-biological reality whose political and economic significance was discovered in early modern times (Hobbes, BayatRizi). It was then treated as an object of scientific quantification and observation (Graunt, BayatRizi), and continuously redefined in terms of latest technological advances (Foucault, Rose).

- * Hobbes ‘Of The Naturall Condition Of Mankind.’ In The Leviathan
- * Graunt Selections from Observations on London Bills of Mortality
- * Foucault: Society Must Be Defended
- Rose: ‘The Politics of Life Itself.’
- Giddens: ‘Life Politics’
- Zelizer: ‘Human values and the market: the case of life insurance and death in 19th century America’
- Green: From accidents to risk: public health and preventable injury.

PART II  POLITICS OF DEATH

Far from a biological event, death has over time been treated as a political project (Aristotle), undergone a fundamental transformation in its relationship with sovereignty (Agamben, Foucault), and maintained an ambivalent relationship with modern political institutions (Mbembe, Butler, BayatRizi).

- *Aristotle: Politics
- *Foucault: History of Sexuality
- *Agamben: Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life
- Butler: ‘Violence, Mourning, Politics.’
- *BayatRizi: ‘Thou Shalt Not Kill Thyself’
- Razack: Dying of Improvement (Indigenous Deaths in Custody)
- Simpson: Savage States: Settler Governance in an Age of Sorrow
- Fanon: ‘The Fact of Blackness’
- Bauman: Introduction and Chap. 4 of Modernity and the Holocaust
- Baudrillard: Symbolic Exchange and Death
- Rose: ‘Deadly Embrace’
Part III Life and Death as Existential Questions in Contemporary Societies

Even though ‘the personal is political’, we should remember that the personal has to be at the end experienced by the living person. How do we face death in contemporary societies? We will look at this question from the point of view fiction, sociology, and philosophy.

- *Weber ‘Science as a Vocation’
- *Tolstoi: ‘The Death of Ivan Illich’
- Nabokov: ‘My Russian Education’
- James Joyce: ‘The Dead’
- *Elias: The Loneliness of the Dying
- *Giddens: ‘The self: Ontological security and existential anxiety’
- Mellor and Shilling: ‘Modernity, Self-Identity, and the Sequestration of Death’
- Mitford: The American Way of Death
- Becker: ‘Introduction’ in The Denial of Death
- Bauman: Mortality, Immortality and other Life Strategies
- Lifton and Olson: ‘Living and Dying’
- Kellehear: ‘Are We a Death Denying Society?’
- Walter: ‘The Revival of Death’
- Olson: ‘Knowing “Necro-Waste”’
- Jacobsen: “‘Spectacular Death’—Proposing a New Fifth Phase to Philippe Ariès’s Admirable History of Death”
- Leslie: ‘I can't put that on paper.’ How medical professional values shape the content of death certificates.