Sociology seeks to introduce us to the non-obvious aspects of social relations and interactions. It teaches us to look beyond the taken-for-granted meanings of social living, to use common sense but also to go beyond it. In pursuing sociological knowledge one encounters many vigorous debates and there is much controversy as participants to the debates all advance their own theories and explanations for the way things are. Because the issues we treat are so close to our conceptions of ourselves and our societies, controversies in sociology touch all of us in myriad ways. We all presume we ‘know’ what we are talking about so sociology problematizes ways of knowing, for example, theology vs. science, and suggests that certainty may not always be that certain. A distinctive feature of sociological thinking is its insistence on the claim that social behaviour is more socially structured than it is individually volitional. Human behaviour is just too patterned to be the result of happenstance, but this is not easily accepted by the population at large given the culture that socializes them to an individualistic ethic. In all of this the concept of ideology stands front and centre. As filters through which we grasp social reality, ideologies are mobilized belief systems and can come in the form of economic, political, religious, national, educational and even deeply held racial and gendered ‘truths.’

In this course we will explore some of these ideologies and the controversies they inform. We will define sociology broadly as the study of social order, social disorder and social change, and in this context we will examine ideologies of order or conservative ideologies, ideologies of disorder or anarchist ideologies, and ideologies of change or radical ideologies. In sociology the functionalist theory of social inequality is best understood as ideologically conservative, while the conflict theory of social inequality could be understood as ideologically radical. While functionalism sees inequality as natural, integrative and functional, conflict theory is diametrically opposed, sees inequality as socially engineered and potentially disruptive. So where do we stand? What, for example, is our government’s take on the inequality that characterizes First Nations individuals and communities?
Learning objectives:
1. to get the students to move beyond common sense understandings of their world;
2. to get the students writing in a sophisticated manner about issues of social import;
3. to get the students to appreciate the importance of theoretical thinking;
4. to get the students to transcend an individualistic and volitional mind-set, and to appreciate
   the importance of structural explanations of social behaviour.

Learning outcomes:
1. The student will have developed some clear critical reading, thinking and analytical skills;
2. The student will learn the difference between reading for information and reading for style;
3. The student will appreciate the importance of keeping abreast of the news;
4. The student will develop library research skills;
5. The student will learn how to construct an argument and defend it;
6. The student will learn the importance of logic, evidence, clarity and consistency in arguing;
7. The student will learn that Canada and the United States are not the centre of the universe.

Required readings
The required readings for this course are all included in the official course pack, which is for sale
in the book store. The table of contents follows:

Course Pack
Controversies in Sociology (SOC 1026F 001)
Professor Antón Allahar


Macpherson, C.B.  1965.  The real world of democracy.  (Chapter 1).


McIntosh, Peggy. 1998. “White privilege and male privilege; a personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in women’s studies.” (Pp. 94-105) in Race, Class and Gender; an Anthology. 3rd ed. Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins (eds). Toronto: Wadsworth.


**Scholastic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site: 

**Assignments**
Assignment #1: in-class, mid-term multiple choice and True-False format (30%).
Assignment #2: 1500-2000 word (6-8 pages) written essay (30%).
Assignment #3: Final exam in exam period; short answer and essay format (40%).

*Essay assignment*: The essay is due in class no later than November 28th. In this assignment you are to do three things: (a) choose a controversial course-related theme that you will clear with the Teaching Assistant, (b) show how someone who thinks individualistically would understand and defend it, and (c) critique that argument from the point of view of someone who thinks sociologically (structurally). Be sure to keep the focus sociological by using such key concepts as social order, social disorder, social change, social control, social inequality (various dimensions), ideology and power.

**Syllabus**

**Week 1: (September 12)**
Thinking Sociologically: questions of theory, method and empiricism.
What is structural thinking? Ways of knowing; belief vs. ‘truth.’ Ontology and epistemology.
“What do you know for sure?”


**Week 2: (September 19)**
What are theories and ideologies?
What is the relationship between theory and ideology?
Theories and ideologies of order as conservative (functionalism, racism);
Theories and ideologies of disorder as disruptive (anarchism, terrorism);
Theories and ideologies of change as radical (feminism, Marxism)
reformist ideologies (liberal feminism, Afrocentrism)


**Week 3: (September 26)**

**Economic controversies**
“Is globalization the solution to world poverty or the cause of world poverty?”
“Where would the Third World be without us?”
Controversial theories of social and economic change: social evolutionism, modernization and dependency theory.
Controversial economic ideologies (free trade, protectionism, neo-liberalism, socialism)
Controversial practice: outsourcing of jobs.
Controversial question: Are sweat shops morally defensible?

**Reading:** Hebron, Lui and John F. Stack Jr. 2011. Globalization; debunking the myths. Toronto: Longman. (Chapters 1-2).

**Video:** TVO Best lecture, “Why is the whole world not developed?” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3N6HEW9wnT8

**Week 4: (October 3)**

**Political controversies**
“Is liberal democracy right for all peoples?”
“Is democracy a prerequisite for economic development?”
Controversial theories of political organization (democracy, monarchy, communism)
Radical political ideologies (Marxism)
Controversial practice: the Western and NATO countries seek to bomb for democracy; torture in the name of defending democracy.
Controversial question: should the Queen be the head of state in an independent, democratic Canada?

**Reading:** C.B. Macpherson. 1965. The real world of democracy. (Chapters 1-2).
**Reading:** Allahar, Anton L. and James E. Côté. 1998. Richer and Poorer. Toronto: James Lorimer (Chapter 1).

**Week 5: (October 10)**

**Religious controversies**
“Did Charles Darwin kill God?”
“Should religion be taught in schools?”
Controversial take on religion: Religion as false consciousness, as the opiate of the masses.
Controversial religious ideologies (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism)

**Video:** http://watchdocumentary.com/watch/did-darwin-kill-god-video_c4b2b8e29.html

**Week 6: (October 17)**

**Gender controversies**
“Are men really from Mars and women really from Venus?”
“How does mainstream feminism regard the woman of colour?”

Controversial practice: women professors are given more time than men before coming up for tenure consideration.

Controversial questions: should women be given special consideration to compensate for centuries of discrimination? Is pay equity for women anti-meritocratic?

**Reading:** McIntosh, Peggy. 1998. “White privilege and male privilege; a personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in women’s studies.” (Pp. 94-105) in *Race, Class and Gender; an Anthology.* 3rd ed. Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins (eds). Toronto: Wadsworth.


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**Week 7: (October 24)**

**Sexual orientation controversies**

“Is homosexuality biologically driven or a personal choice?”

“Are homophobes insecure about their own sexuality?”

Controversial practices: legalization of same sex marriages; sex change operations are paid for with public funds.

Controversial questions: should a trans-gendered male athlete be permitted to compete against females? Should gays be permitted to adopt?


**Video:** “Trading Recipes.”

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**NOTE:** October 31st there is no class. Fall mid-term break.

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**Week 8: (November 7)**

**In-class Test**

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**Week 9: (November 14)**

**Racial and ethnic controversies**

“Do biological races exist?”

“Are black people less intelligent than white people?”

Controversial practice: ‘race norming’ in the US school system.

Controversial question: should police, immigration officials and airline authorities be permitted to engage in racial profiling?


Video: Rushton-Suzuki debate

**Week 10: (November 21)**

**Ethno-Cultural controversies**

“Are Muslims assimilable to Canadian society?”

“Is wishing someone ‘merry Christmas’ an offence to a non-Christian?”

Controversial practice: the Residential School system and the Native Canadians.

Controversial question: Is assimilation synonymous with integration?

**Week 11: (November 28)  (NOTE: The essay assignment is due today).**

**Immigration controversies**

“Does Canada’s immigration law (dis)favour certain ethnic groups?”

“Is Canada multicultural or mono-cultural and multi-ethnic?”

Controversial practice: the point system

Controversial question: should those with money to invest be fast tracked into Canada?


**Reading:** Satzewich, Vic and Nikolaos Liodakis. 2010. ‘Race’ and ethnicity in Canada: an introduction. (2nd ed.) Toronto: Oxford university Press (Chapter 3).

**Videos:** “Who gets in?” “El Contrato.”

**Week 12: (December 5).**

**Educational controversies**

“What is the idea of the university?”

“Grade inflation and the disengagement compact.” “Dumbing down and the helicopter parent.”

Should everyone go to university? Is it elitist to suggest not?

**Controversial practice:** the black-focussed school in Toronto.

**Controversial question:** “Should universities be sites of job training?”


**Reading:** Côté, James E. and Anton L. Allahar. 2007. *Ivory Tower Blues.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press (Introduction and Chapter 1).

Summary and conclusions. Exam review.
Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.