

SOCIOLOGY 2240
DEVIANCE AND CONFORMITY
(WINTER 2004)

Grande Prairie Regional College

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.

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Office Hours: Mondays: 15- 16.00 Tuesdays & Thursdays: 14.00 - 15.00
Or By appointment

GOALS:

1. To understand how sociological concepts may help us analyze and comprehend our inclination to define and classify people and their behaviour.
2. To develop analytical and critical thinking skills through discussions of 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.

Course Prerequisite: SOCIOLOGY 1000

Required Reading:

Constructions of deviance: Social power, context, and interaction, 4th edition - Patricia & Peter Adler, Editors

Blue/Orange - Joe Penhall

Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices - Edited by Stuart Hall

Assignments: *All written work must be submitted by email, as a regular message. Do not send as an attachment. Attached items will count as late papers. There is a lateness*

penalty of one letter grade per day, including weekends, for all late papers. The 'received date' indicated in my College mailbox will count as the final statement of submission. If your assignment reaches me at any time on the calendar day prior to the due date and your mark is lower than a B, you will have an opportunity to rewrite it. However, you cannot receive higher than a B on a rewrite. Journals cannot be rewritten.

Essay or Project Outline: Due the third class of February: (Approximately 24% of the final grade) A full outline is expected, not a few generalities. Section headings and subheadings, listing appropriately the details you consider useful to that point, must be included. Grades will be applied as follows: A, B, C, or D. No plus or minus signs will be used. I will not accept any final assignments if I haven't previously read an outline from you.

Essay or Project: Due the Last Class of the semester: (Approximately 24% of the final grade) The objective of this assignment is to bring you beyond your assumptions about deviance and the purpose and value of conformity. Deviance is assumed by society to be a master status. When contemplating your essay or project, you should not aim for a summary or description of other people's supposedly deviant behaviours. Instead, a critical analysis of the idea of a master status, and the concepts you think are relevant to the analysis, must be examined. You must do more than merely attach labels or describe/apply theories. You may use first person words like 'I', but the paper is not a large opinion piece. You will select your own topics, and the assignment will be graded using all the grade increments. If you opt for a different kind of major assignment, for example a fine arts project, critical thinking must still be evident. Consult with me about how this might be done. In these types of assignment, an 800-word paper explaining the sociological significance of what you hand in must also be provided.

You must use as research at least the two main texts for the course, and any other academic or non-academic items you think relevant. Pertinent concepts discussed in the Adlers' or Hall's book must be explicitly utilized. **You must reference more than quotations. Other authors' interpretations.** All research must be presented in the MLA style, both in the text itself and the 'Works Cited' section at the end of the paper. The minimum length is 1500 words. All work must clearly stipulate your name, ID number, and course and section numbers. Omitting any of these requirements will result in a lateness penalty equivalent to that of one day. Grammar and general coherence are reasonable expectations of university-level written work, and will be included in the evaluation of your assignments.

Three Journals: (Approximately 53% of the final course evaluation)

- Each journal is due the first class of each month, beginning in February.
- Each journal will receive a mark between B and C+.
- Journals must specify your name and course number.

- Anything pertaining to the sociology of deviance, class discussions or lectures, class interaction, personal life relevant to our examination of sociology, or course observations and suggestions, is a suitable topic. No research is necessary or expected. The purpose is to allow informal communication with the instructor.
- Grammar and general writing clarity are expected in all written assignments in university courses. While recognizing that we speak and write informally when communicating our personal observations, the journals should be coherent and reasonably articulate. Evaluations will reflect this expectation.

Discussion Bonus:

- Everyone may (but not necessarily will) receive a bonus mark based on a combination of the frequency and quality of the participation.
- Discussion postings to the webCT discussion forum also will be considered class participation.
- You will be eligible for a bonus mark only if you display commitment to the course by reading and completing the required assignments. Although attendance is not relevant to the regular assignments for the course, it is important to your eligibility for a bonus mark. If you are absent for more than 5 daytime or 3 evening classes, you will not receive a bonus grade.
- The bonus mark offers an A, B, C, or D. No plus or minus signs will be used.
- If you receive a bonus mark, it will be added to your overall grade total prior to working out a final mark.

There will be no final exam.

Tabulation of marks

All letter grades in the new marking system correspond to numerical values called grade points. Consult your College Calendar for the conversion. The College utilizes the following grade thresholds:

A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D

Your final mark will be formulated by adding the grade point value for each letter grade you receive, and dividing by the GPA total you have accumulated in this course [not including the bonus mark]. NOTE: (1) No class averaging will be done. (2) All marks will appear on webCT. *You are responsible for monitoring your grade input, and informing me that a mark has not appeared for which you deserve credit.*

Discussion Sequence

1. ***Introduction to the course***

Class Discussion: What are your perceptions/understandings of deviance? Some people think of it as a breach of social convention, others as a wrong committed against a person or society. Does either of these fit with your assumptions regarding deviance? Do you rank deviant behaviour in a hierarchy of ascending and increasing wrongdoing?

Your Questions:

2. ***Hall: Introduction; Adler: General Introduction, Part 1 Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2***

Class Discussion: What is the connection in Hall's mind among representation, discourse, language, and culture? Explain the relationship that Kai Erickson sees between social institutions and deviance. What does a sociology of deviance try to achieve? Why are middle class norms relevant to our study of deviance and conformity?

Your Questions

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3. ***Hall: Chapter 1: Sections 1 -3, Readings A -D***

Class Discussion: Why does Hall introduce you to ideas of language, signs, codes, myth, and Saussure's concept of signification? *Prepare to discuss in groups, Activities 5 & 6.*

Your Questions

4. ***Hall: Chapter 1: Sections 4- 6, Reading E; Adler: Part 2 Introduction, Chapters 3-10***

Class Discussion: Why is Michel Foucault considered an important thinker when we contemplate meanings and expressions of deviance and conformity? Do we benefit from distinguishing between the normal and the pathological? Are these really polar opposites of each other? Does the term 'positive deviance' strike you as ironic or perplexing? *Prepare to discuss in groups, Activity 8.*

Theories: Prepare for a discussion of theories of deviance. As part of this you should be able to answer the following:

What assumptions underlie structural, cultural, and interactionist, explanations of deviance? Do the theories in these frames of reference overlap in any of their assumptions or conclusions?

What perceptions of social relationships convinces Durkheim to write of normality and pathology? What is functionalism?

What is anomie, and how does Merton theorize its place his analysis of social structure? What conceptual value do institutions have in his analysis? What does Merton identify as the three axioms of American culture? Do you think these are applicable to Canadian society? What is individual adaptation?

What logic do Sutherland and Cressey utilize in their differential association theory? What processes of such association do the authors outline?

Why does Becker consider labeling a powerful inducement of behaviour? What conceptual place in his theory does Becker assign to master and subordinate statuses?

What is control theory? What is the 'control' characteristic in society highlighted by Hirschi? How do commitment, involvement, and belief, fit into this?

As Quinney elucidates his idea of conflict theory, in what manner does de converge on, or move away from, the other perspectives of deviance? What conflict is he talking about? What is achieved by constructing an ideology of crime? Why does Quinney think it worthwhile to refer to it?

What does Joel Best think he has offered to our understanding of deviance?

Are you persuaded that any of these theories provides enlightening insight into what societies call deviance, or conformity? How does cultural deviance theory

Your Questions

5. ***Lecture on Ian Hacking: Constructing Social Categories of People; Hall: Chapter 2: Sections 1 -3; Adler: Part 3 Introduction, Chapters 11 -13***

Class Discussion: What is a paradigm? How does it apply to culture, norms, and deviance? What assumptions of deviance and research are evident in chapters 11-13 of the Adlers' book?

Your Questions

6. ***Hall: Chapter 2: Sections 4-6; Adler: Part 4 Introduction, Chapters 14-16***

Class Discussion: Explain the use of ‘paradigm’ in looking at French society. Are you persuaded that photographs can communicate and exemplify social paradigms, as is suggested in this chapter? Does Grande Prairie or any other place in which you’ve lived, have events that resemble the fetes populaire? What paradigm(s) are noticeable in the selections from the Adlers’ book? *Prepare to discuss in groups, Activity 3.*

Your Questions

7. ***Hall: Chapter 3 + Readings; Adler: Chapters 17-19***

Class Discussion: What is meant by the “poetics and politics of exhibiting”, expressed in Lidchi’s chapter 3 in Hall’s book? How might it affect your understanding of ‘representation’? What does differential social power refer to? Do you consider reasonable the examples offered in the selections from the Adlers’ book?

Your Questions

8. ***Hall: Chapter 4: Sections 1-3, Readings A & B; Adler: Part 5 Introduction, Chapters 20-22***

Class Discussion: What does Hall mean by “the spectacle of the ‘other’”? How might the Adlers explain identity to us? In what sense can identity be deviant? In what ways might identity be related to spectacle?

Your Questions

9. **Hall: Chapter 4: Sections 4- 6, Readings C & 1); Adler: Parts 6 & 7 Introductions, Chapters 23-27**

Class Discussion: If we could abolish race as a context of difference and exploitation, would we abolish stereotyping at the same time? Does the spectacle of the 'other' arise mainly from stereotypes? Explain the conceptual connection among stereotypes, power, and fetishism. How does stereotyping become a signifying practice? What is commodity racism? Why does Hall mention Jacques Derrida? Is disavowal the same thing as stigma management? Do you accept the examples of stigmatization presented in Adlers' book? Would you delete from or add to, the list? *Prepare to discuss Activities 2 and 5.*

Your Questions

10. **Hall: Chapter 5, Readings A & B; Adler: Part 8 Introduction, Chapters 28-32**

Class Discussion: How crucial is the word "exhibiting" to Sean Nixon's discussion of masculinity? Is there a relationship between the exhibition referred to here, and the spectacle discussed in an earlier chapter in Hall's book? Based on the readings in the Adlers' volume, would you say that masculinity is organized in social life in a similar manner to how deviance is organized? Do the illustrations of chapters 28-3 2 stand up to scrutiny?

Your Questions

11. **Hall: Chapter 6, Readings A & B**

Classroom Discussion: What is the genre of gender? What is meant by genre as text, and the fiction of everyday life? Prior to reading this chapter, would you have conceived of the soap opera as an element of some type of hegemony? What is hegemony? *Prepare for group discussions of Activities 1, 3, and 4.*

Your Questions

12. ***Adler: Part 9 Introduction, Chapters 33-36***

Class Discussion: In what manner do cruising for sex, manufacturing fantasy, medical crime, and fraternity rape indicate a structure of deviant acts?

Your Questions

13. ***Penhall: Blue/Orange: The Entire Book to be Read Aloud in Class***

Classroom Discussion: Apply the theories and general ideas regarding deviance from the Adlers' book, to the plot, and the interplay and characterization of the protagonists in this play..

Your Questions

14. ***Adler: Part 10 Introduction, Chapters 37-39***

Class Discussion: Do the Adlers establish a case through their selection of articles, that there is a structured means of entering and departing deviance? What do these chapters tell us about our society, its social margins, its rewards and penalties?

Your Questions

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