

University of Toronto – Department of Sociology

SOC 256H1S: Lives and Society

Winter 2010

Tuesdays: 16:00 - 18:00

Instructor: Brigid Burke
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Classroom: RW116 – Ramsay Wright, 25 Harbord Street
Office hours: Mondays 11-12, Rm 335 (Dpt. of Soc. – 725 Spadina Avenue, 3rd Floor)
Course website: [Quercus \(q.utoronto.ca\)](http://q.utoronto.ca)
Teaching Assistant: Stephanie Babinski

Course Description

Much sociological work considers people at specific points in their lives: while working, while in school, while parents of young children, and so forth. Life course analysis makes its special contribution by paying attention to biographies and to the ways that (1) human life histories are shaped by a person's place in society and in social history, and (2) how human life decisions cumulate to affect societies.

In this class we will consider the large scale comparative picture: very different kinds of societies (from hunter-gatherer groups to modern industrial societies) and the differences that kind of society makes to: qualitative differences in life course stages, the timing of stages, transitions between stages, the basic facts of birth and death, and the ways people see the life course.

Prerequisites: SOC101Y1 or SOC102H1 or SOC100H1. Students without this requirement will be removed without notice at any time they are discovered.

GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this course, students will learn how to:

1. Think critically about how societal structures affect the life course.
2. Explore how life transitions and their timing differ based on social location.
3. Interrogate the role of technology and the environment in driving social change.
4. Develop qualitative methodological skills to conduct semi-structured interviews and critically analyse differences in how life course transitions are experienced and perceived.

ASSIGNMENTS AND TESTS

1. *Research Paper Proposal*: Students will write a brief proposal where they identify the transition rite they have selected to investigate for their final paper and identify who they plan to interview so as to gather the data needed for completing the assignment. They should outline any relevant ethical concerns with conducting the interview and identify the methods they use to attend to them. In addition, the proposal should address why the transition rite they have selected is sociologically significant. A handout will be distributed with more detailed assignment instructions. Proposals are worth 10% of the final grade, should be no more than 500 words and must be uploaded to Quercus by midnight on January 28th.
2. *Final Research Paper*: Transition rites are rituals marking a change from one life stage to another or, marking steps in the life course. Students will write a research paper comparing the same kind of transition rite in two different societies, based on a qualitative interview they conduct with an informant. For example, you could interview a person who has lived in two different society-types about the differences in a transition rite they have observed (e.g. a Canadian wedding and a Syrian wedding). You could also interview a person who has experienced the same transition rite across different generations (e.g. what was your grandparent's experience of high school graduation like, compared to what they observed as a guest at a recent graduation ceremony)? Your informant and topic (i.e. transition rite) should be vetted through the proposal process. If you wish to change topics/informants after having submitted the proposal you must email the instructor for approval. Interviews must follow ethical guidelines and must not be conducted before the January 28th lecture. The goal of the paper is to use course materials to explain similarities and differences in the "same" rite in different types of societies. A handout will be distributed with more detailed assignment instructions. Papers are worth 40% of the final grade, should be no more than 10 pages double-spaced and be uploaded to Quercus by midnight on March 13th.
3. *In-class Tests*. Students will write 2 in-class tests, worth 25% each, assessing their ability to think critically about the readings and lecture materials. The tests will consist of 4 questions, of which students will provide written answers to 2. A bank of possible questions will be provided to students prior to each test. Test 1 will primarily cover material from Section 1. Test 2 will primarily cover material from Section 2.

GRADING SUMMARY

Research Paper Proposal	10 points	Jan.	28 th
Test 1	25 points	Feb.	11 th
Final Research Paper	40 points	Mar.	13 th
Test 2	25 points	Mar.	31 st
Total	100 points		

CLASS FORMAT AND ATTENDANCE

This class will promote an active learning environment. The instructor will facilitate class discussions, lead case studies and clarify key concepts, arguments and ideas. Students are expected to be engaged and contribute to the class through participation in discussions, debates, case studies and group activities. To ensure a productive intellectual dialogue among class participants, students are asked to actively listen, process and analyze what others are saying, and thoughtfully and respectfully respond in a diplomatic manner.

Attendance is mandatory. Students are responsible for all material presented in class. Students who are unable to attend class are responsible for obtaining information about any announcements that may have been made in class as well as notes on the material covered from their classmates.

PROCEDURES AND RULES

Course Webpage

The course syllabus, links to all the readings, handouts, assignment submission links and course announcements will be posted on Quercus. You are responsible for all course content posted to Quercus. Please make sure to check your official utoronto.ca email addresses as well as the course Quercus page regularly. All students should review their Quercus settings to ensure that course notifications are turned on.

Electronic communication and electronic learning technology

You are encouraged to use email communication to enhance your learning and experience in the course. With that said, it is essential that you follow a few rules:

- Assignments will not be accepted via email. See above for how to submit them.
 - All course communication should be conducted through Quercus.
 - All online communication must include the course code (i.e. SOC256) in the subject line.
 - All online communication must be signed with the student's full name and student number.
 - Online communication from students will generally be answered within 48 hours of receipt (except on weekends or holidays).
 - All online messages should be treated as a form of professional communication.
 - Online messages asking questions that are already answered in the course syllabus or website (e.g., "how much is assignment X worth; when is the assignment due; when is the test...") will not receive a response.
 - Online messages must identify a specific question or concern. Students asking questions that are very involved or in-depth may be asked to visit office hours.
- *Online communication that do not follow these guidelines will not receive a response.**

Grade Appeals

Students who are dissatisfied with their grades have one week to address their concerns, in writing, to the teaching assistant. Students contesting a grade will submit a 1-page typed document to the TA, outlining why the grade is believed to be inappropriate. The teaching assistant will then review the claim and respond in writing, either by email or hard copy. Students who remain unhappy with the response should make an appointment with the course instructor to review the case.

Missed Deadlines

Late work will receive a **5% late penalty off the assignment grade for each day past the due date. Assignments more than 1 week late will not be accepted.**

In case of illness, you must supply a duly completed **Verification of Student Illness or Injury form** (available at www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca) or a completed doctor's note; these must indicate the start and anticipated end date of the illness. The original form must be given to me in person, within 10 business days, with the opportunity for me to make a Xerox copy. Forms that are scanned or Xeroxed will not be accepted.

If a personal or family crisis prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must get a **letter from your college registrar**. It is recommended you always advise your registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies. Should this occur, I advise you to inform both me and your registrar as soon as possible so we can coordinate any needed accommodations. If you delay, it becomes more difficult to put accommodations in place.

If you feel like you are falling behind or experiencing academic difficulties in the course, I encourage you to make an appointment with either me or the course TA so we can assess the situation and recommend a strategy for moving forward. Again, if this is the case it's imperative you reach out as soon as possible, as the longer you wait the harder it will be for us to help you.

Academic Integrity and Turnitin

Students are expected to know and adhere to the University's principles of academic integrity.

Any act of plagiarism or other unethical behavior will be addressed in accordance with University guidelines. Plagiarism is presentation of the writing of others as though it were your own. This includes copying passages from works written by others and including them in your essay without quotation marks. It is NOT sufficient to cite your sources; if you use their words, you must put them in quotation marks AND give proper citation. Even if you are not using direct quotations, references must be provided any time you are drawing on others' work or ideas.

Please see the "[Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#)" for specific information on academic integrity at the U of T.

To deter and detect plagiarism, in this course will make use of the turnitin.com system. Essays submitted to Turnitin.com will be reviewed for textual similarity and detection of possible

plagiarism. In submitting their papers to *Turnitin.com*, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the *Turnitin.com* reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the *Turnitin.com* service are described on the *Turnitin* web site. Please follow the online [instructions on how to use Turnitin](#).

Assignments not submitted through *Turnitin* will receive a grade of zero (0%) **unless a student instead provides, along with their assignment**, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submitted was truly their own. The alternative (not submitting via *Turnitin*) is in place because, strictly speaking, using *Turnitin* is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

Student Accommodations

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you require any accommodations, please feel free to email and/or approach me and visit the [Accessibility Services Office](#) at the earliest date possible.

Writing Support

A significant portion of your grade in this class is based on writing a research paper. For many students, this will likely be the first time you have been asked to write a paper based on your own, primary research. I strongly urge students to seek assistance from the [University of Toronto Writing Centre](#) to receive additional support with this task.

COURSE SCHEDULE

SECTION 1

- Jan. 7th Lecture 1: Introduction and Types of Societies
- Nolan, P. & Lenski, G. (2015). *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*, 12th Edition. New York & Oxford: Oxford (Ch. 3 & 4)
- Jan. 14th Lecture 2: Hunter and Gatherer Societies
- Hill, K. & Hurtado, A. M. (1996) [Ache Life History: The Ecology and Demography of a Foraging People](#). New York: Aldine de Gruyter. (Pp. 41-57 and 65-73)
 - Nolan, P & Lenski, G. (2015). *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*, 12th Edition. New York & Oxford: Oxford (Fig. 5.3, p. 117)
- Jan. 21st Lecture 3: The Life Course for Hunter and Gatherers
- Howell, N. (2010). [Life Histories of the Dobe !Kung: Food, Fatness, and Well-Being Over the Life Span](#). Berkeley: University of California Press. (Ch. 2, Pp. 26-57)
 - Shostak, M. (1981). [Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman](#). New York: Random House. (Pp. 149-166)
 - Hill, K. & Hurtado, A. M. (1996) [Ache Life History: The Ecology and Demography of a Foraging People](#). New York: Aldine de Gruyter. (Pp. 219-237)

- Jan. 28th** Lecture 4: Life Course Stages in Different Societies
- Gee, E. M. (1987). "Historical Change in the Family Life Course of Canadian Men and Women." Pp. 265-287 in *Aging in Canada: Social Perspectives, Second Edition*. Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside.
 - Gillis, J. R. (2004). "Life Course and Transitions to Adulthood." Pp. 547-552 in Paula S. Frass (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA. B. **(vic)**
 - Babbie, E. & Roberts, L. W. (2018). *Fundamentals of Social Research, Fourth Canadian Edition*. Toronto: Nelson Education. (Ch. 1 & 3)
 - **Paper Proposal Due**
- Feb. 4th** Lecture 5: Transitions Between Stages (Transition Rites)
- Davis-Floyd, R. E. (1991). " ." Pp. 275-284 in Whitten. P & Huner, D. (eds.), *Anthropology: Contemporary Perspectives, 6th Edition*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
 - Stearns, D. C. (2004). "Rites of Passage." Pp. 241-242 in Paula S. Frass (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA.
 - Stearns, D. C. 2004. "Grief, Death, Funerals." Pp. 401-404 in Paula S. Frass (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA.
 - Hsiung, Ping-Chun (2010) [Lives and Legacies: A Guide to Qualitative Interviewing](#) (All sections under "Interviewing" Menu)
- Feb. 11th** **In-Class Test 1**
- Feb. 18th** **Reading Week (No Class)**
- Feb. 25th** Lecture 6: Childhood in Different Societies
- Bradbury, B. (1993). [Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal](#). Toronto: McClelland and Stewart. (Pp. 214-186)
 - "Comparative History of Childhood." (2004). in Paula S. Frass (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA. (Pp. 226-231)
 - Gleason, M. (2004). "Canada." Pp. 129-131 in Paula S. Frass (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA.
 - Lassonde, S. (2004). "Age and Development." Pp. 38-45 in in Paula S. Frass (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA.
 - "Native American Children." (2004). Pp. 617-621 in Paula S. Frass (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA.

- March 3rd Lecture 7: Old Age in Different Societies
- Keith, J. (1985). "Age in Anthropological Research." Pp. 231-240 in Robert H. Binstock and Ethel Shanas (eds.), *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
 - Hsiung, Ping-Chun (2010) [Lives and Legacies: A Guide to Qualitative Interviewing](#) (All sections under "Analysis" Menu)
- March 10th Lecture 8: Societies and Mortality
- Hill, K. & Hurtado, A. M. (1996) [Ache Life History: The Ecology and Demography of a Foraging People](#). New York: Aldine de Gruyter. (Pp. 174, 210)
 - McCracken, K. & Phillips, D. R. (2004). "International Demographic Transitions." Pp. 36-60 in Gavin J. Andrews and David R. Phillips (eds.), [Ageing and Place: Perspectives, Policy, Practice](#). London: Routledge.
 - Meckel, R. (2004). "Infant Mortality." Pp. 474-478 in Paula S. Frass (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA.
 - Shostak, M. (1981). [Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman](#). New York: Random House. (Pp. 248-250, 309, 316-17)
- March 13th Final Essay Due**
- March 17th Lecture 9: Societies and Fertility
- Hill, K. & Hurtado, A. M. (1996) [Ache Life History: The Ecology and Demography of a Foraging People](#). New York: Aldine de Gruyter. (Pp. 262, 267, 467-9)
 - "Fertility Rates." 2004. Pp. 359-362 in Paula S. Frass (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA.
 - Howell, N. (2000). "Return to Dobe." Pp. 362-382 in Nancy Howell, *Demography of the Dobe !Kung, Second Edition*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- March 24th Lecture 10: Perceptions of the Life Course
- Collings, P. (2000). "[Aging and Life Course Development in an Inuit Community](#)." *Arctic Anthropology* 37: 111-125.
 - Hareven, T. K. & Masaoka, K. (1988) "[Turning Points and Transitions: Perceptions of the Life Course](#)". *Journal of Family History*. 13(1): 271-289
 - Chopik, W. J. et al. (2018) "[Age Differences in Age Perceptions and Developmental Transitions](#)". *Frontiers in Psychology*. Vol. 9
- March 31st In-Class Test 2**