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|---|--|--|
| Welcome | | 1. Course mechanics
(requirements, resources, etc.) |
| Administrative,
syllabus review,
motivation | | 2. Course structure
(syllabus review) |

McGill University is located on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. McGill honours, recognizes and respects these nations as the traditional stewards of the lands and waters on which we meet today.

<https://www.mcgill.ca/fph/welcome/traditional-territory>

see also:

Chelsea Vowel. "Beyond Territorial Acknowledgments." Âpihtawikosisân (blog), September 23, 2016. <https://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/>.

What do land acknowledgements do?

- ⋮ What is the intended purpose, generally?
- ⋮ What is the intended purpose at an institution like McGill?
- ⋮ What are some *unintended* consequences?

What might do it better??

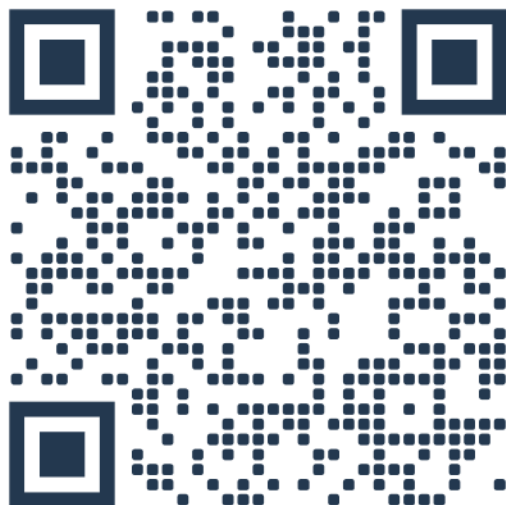
- ⋮ What kinds of practices can we as a university undertake to do a better job of subverting Indigenous erasure?
- ⋮ What can we as a McGill sociology class do?


Course mechanics



Syllabus is online

- Available at <https://soci210.netlify.app>
- Contains *schedule, assignments, assessment*, and other important information
- Updated with *links to slides and lecture recordings*, and with any schedule changes regularly



Schedule 	
Introduction and foundations	
Wed, Jan 8 Administrative, syllabus review, motivation Lecture topics: Introduction: Course mechanics and overview Readings: * Salvaggio (2024), <i>Challenging The Myths of Generative AI</i> (scholarly) Optional: Chelsea Vowel (2016), <i>Beyond territorial acknowledgments</i>	Fri, Jan 10 Making sense of the social world Lecture topics: Thinking sociologically Readings: * Erikson (2017), <i>The View from the Fourteenth Floor</i> (scholarly)
Wed, Jan 15 Theoretical anchors Lecture topics: Structuring social inquiry Theoretical perspectives part 1: <i>structural functionalism</i> Readings: * Erikson (2017), <i>Coming to Terms with Social Life</i> (scholarly) Optional: Conerly, Holmes, and	Fri, Jan 17 Modern Society Lecture topics: Sociological methods and theory Nation states and societies European colonialism Readings: * Erikson (2017), <i>Worlds Beyond</i> (scholarly)

Class periods

- ⋮ Scheduled classes will be a mix of lectures, class-wide discussions, and activities for individuals and small groups
- ⋮ E.g. discussions with partners, contributing to online document, brainstorming ideas, ...
- ⋮ Content covered during class will be essential to the class, and can be covered on exams





Questions

- ⋮ **General questions (mechanics, content, etc) should go in the "Q and A" channel in Teams**

Students should feel free to answer questions here as well!

- ⋮ **Personal questions about grades, feedback, etc, can be sent to TAs and instructor via Teams**

[Use this link to open a chat with them](#)

- ⋮ **You may also contact me directly with more specific questions (e.g. accommodations), preferably on Teams**

- ⋮ **Questions and comments are also welcome in class! (just raise your hand)**

Assessments



ASSESSMENTS: READINGS

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Perusall for online reading/evaluation

- ‡ Collaborative reading environment
- ‡ **To register for this class's Perusall**, see MyCourses
- ‡ Each reading is automatically scored 0 points or 1 point
If you did the reading but were not given credit, send me a message on Teams!
- ‡ Scores based on active engagement with the readings and the annotations
<https://soci210.netlify.app/pages/perusall.html>
- ‡ Can miss 4 readings over the semester without penalty

Texts

- ‡ (About) 3–4 readings per week
- ‡ **Textbook** (Connerly et al. 2021; Little 2016) for background info and terminology
- ‡ **Scholarly readings** (articles and chapters) examine a particular case / position / method / topic. *These readings are the focus of the course*



Essay topics

- ‡ Three essays over the semester (each contributing 18% to your final grade)
- ‡ Each student will be randomly assigned two relevant required readings to juxtapose
- ‡ Assignments will be distributed at least two weeks before deadline

Essay content

- ‡ **Summary** of relevant arguments, methods and findings from readings
- ‡ **Parallels** between readings
- ‡ **Divergences** between the readings
- ‡ **Contextual synthesis** of the readings – what does the pair of readings do in the context of the rest of the class?

Essay assessment

- ‡ 40% based on peers' assessments
- ‡ 40% based on TAs' assessments
- ‡ 20% for assessing others' essays



Two exams

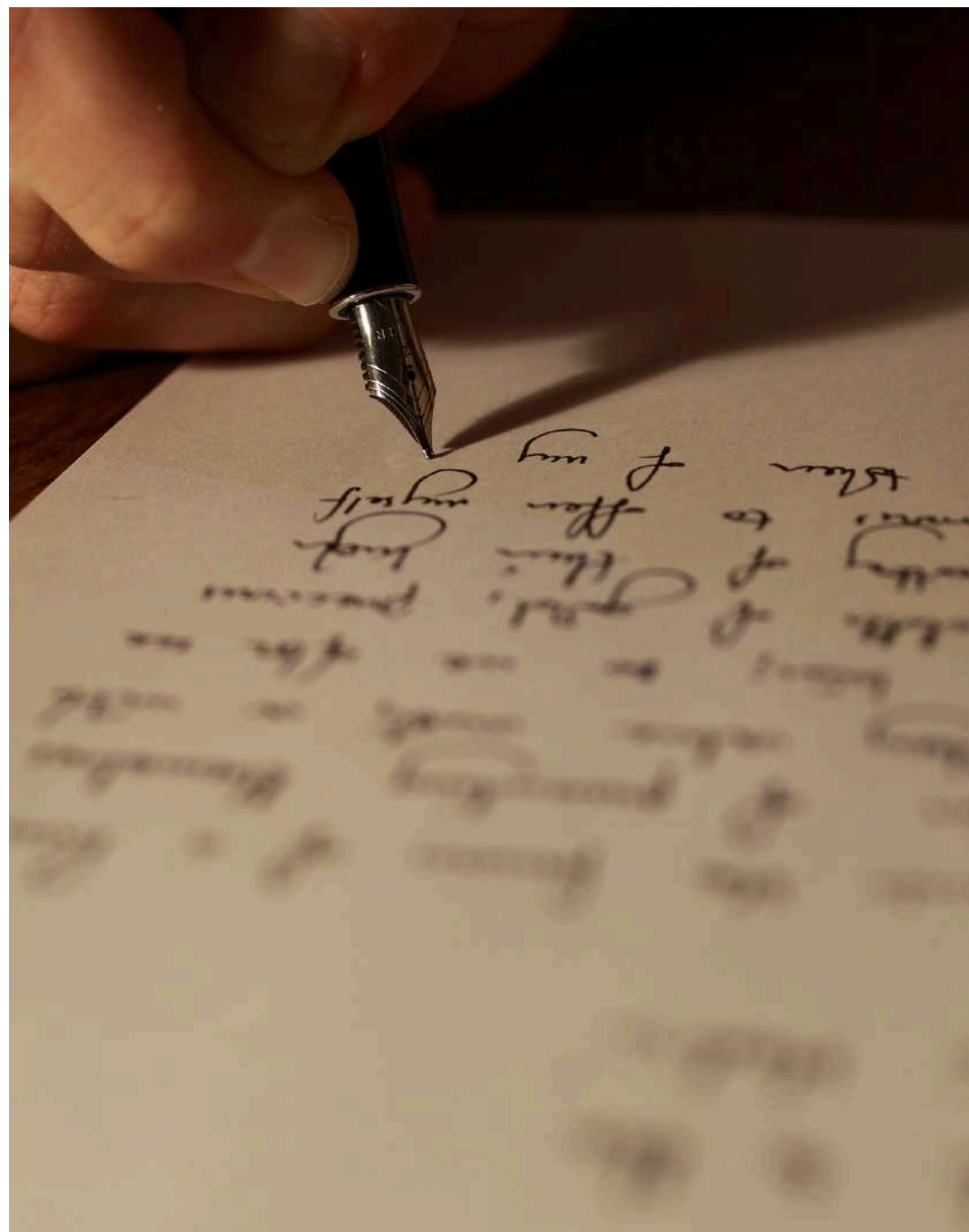
- ‡ **Midterm:** 80 minutes; in-class (Feb 21)
- ‡ **Final:** 3 hours; through exams office
- ‡ *Both intended to take much less than the allotted time*

Exam structure

- ‡ Multiple choice questions
- ‡ Short answer
 - ~ 1–2 paragraphs per response
 - selection of prompts to choose from

Reference (crib) sheet

- ‡ Composed by groups of 10–15 students ahead of exam
 - randomly assigned
- ‡ Approved and printed by instructor





"Generative AI"

- ⋮ The use of "generative AI" is prohibited in this class
- ⋮ *E.g. Microsoft Copilot (provided by McGill), Apple Intelligence, OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's Gemini, Meta's Llama, etc.*
- ⋮ Turning in text written by an LLM as your own work is a violation of McGill's policy on plagiarism.

Rationale

- ⋮ *They are bad for the world.*
- ⋮ *They are bad for students (you).*

Environmental impact

- Generative AI uses huge amounts of electricity and water to train and to use

"Just Five ChatGPT Queries Can Use 16oz of Water, Say Researchers"

- Generative AI contributes significantly to climate change

"Google emissions jump nearly 50% over five years as AI use surges"



Human exploitation

- Generative AI relies on underpaid humans to label (often harmful) content

"What's behind the AI boom? Exploited humans"

- Generative AI is built on countless humans' uncredited, uncompensated creative work

"Typical" text

- ‡ The technology that makes generative AI work is essentially like the predictive text on your phone, but trained on as much of the internet as corporations can get their hands on.

One thousand Redditors (or Github projects) in a trenchcoat

- ‡ The models are trained solely to sound *unsurprising*, not to recognize important or interesting ideas.

"When ChatGPT summarises, it actually does nothing of the kind."

Writing is its own end

- ‡ Struggling to compose an essay or summarize a reading is *useful*—that is where the thinking (and learning) happens. The final result is just an artifact.

"We can also save time by undercooking fish, but it's not ideal." — Eryk Salvaggio

- ‡ Using AI to write or summarize will hinder your learning
- ‡ AI-generated code contains frequent mistakes that can be hard even for experts to spot
- ‡ *You are here to learn, and AI will hinder that learning*



Online syllabus

- ⋮ <https://soci210.netlify.app/>
- ⋮ General information, schedule, links to lecture slides, and updates

MyCourses

- ⋮ Class announcements, grades, and assignments
- ⋮ **FeedbackFruits** peer assessment tool is accessed through MyCourses

Perusall

- ⋮ Platform for annotating required readings
- ⋮ Reading grades are tracked here

Microsoft Teams

- ⋮ Q&A
- ⋮ Lecture streams and recordings
- ⋮ Direct communication with instructor and TAs
- ⋮ Collaborative work (e.g. exam reference sheets)

Course structure

The Archipelago of Sociology



The Archipelago of Sociology

Islands of highly specialized topics

- ∴ E.g. *gender in the workplace*
- ∴ E.g. *social movements and language use*

Hard to describe the "boundary" of sociology

- ∴ Any topic has a sociological aspect

Hard to slice into distinct pieces

- ∴ There is no obviously correct way to divide sociology into smaller subdisciplines

Sociology is bound by a *perspective*

- ∴ Sociology is not *what* topics are studied, but *how* those topics are studied

One way to slice it

a.k.a. *our syllabus*

⋮ Foundations

Methods overview

Classical (European) social theory

⋮ The individual in society (*bottom-up*)

Ethnicity, race, and nationality

Disability

Gender and sexuality

Class and culture

⋮ Populations and publics (*top-down*)

Inequality and stratification

Demography

Politics and economy

Social movements

⋮ Social systems (*middle-out*)

Interaction

Institutional change

Organizations and groups

Media and technology

Making sense of the social world

Required:

| : Erikson (2017)
| *The View from the Fourteenth Floor*

Image credit



Photo by [Natasha Wheatland](#) on [Flickr](#)



Still from [Across the Universe](#) (2007)



Clip from [Mean Girls](#) (2004)



Photo from [Northwest Trophy](#) ([nwtrophy.com](#))



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Screenshot from "Dancing with the Stars" (ABC), via the [Baltimore Sun](#)

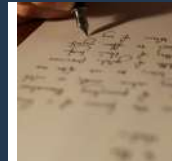


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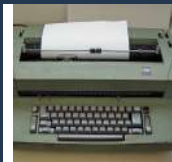


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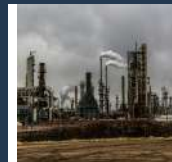
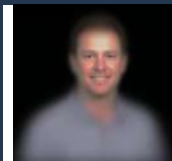


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[Faces of 500 professional golfers, averaged](#) by [Reddit user u/osmutiar/](#)



A scattering of islands in Palau. Photo by [flickr user LuxTonnerre](#)