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| Agenda
Thinking
sociologically | 1. Administrative
2. Making sense of the social world
3. Discussion |
|---|---|

Persuall

- ⋮ Scores are released after deadline
- ⋮ Aim for ~7 annotations on "scholarly" readings
- ⋮ Textbook readings can be a bit sparser

Synthesis essays

- ⋮ Adjusted word count:
now 800–1,000 words

Checking in

- ⋮ Lingerin questions from last week?
Readings?
Exams?
Online tools?
Course content?

Making sense of the social world



There is a sociology of everything. You can turn on your sociological eye no matter where you are or what you are doing. Stuck in a boring committee meeting ... you can check the pattern of who is sitting next to whom, who gets the floor, who makes eye contact, and what is the rhythm of laughter (forced or spontaneous) or of pompous speechmaking. Walking down the street, or out for a run, you can scan the class and ethnic pattern of the neighborhood, look for lines of age segregation, or for little pockets of solidarity. Waiting for a medical appointment, you can read the professions and the bureaucracy instead of old copies of *National Geographic*. Caught in a traffic jam, you can study the correlation of car models with bumper stickers or with the types of music blaring from radios. There is literally nothing you can't see in a fresh way if you turn your sociological eye to it. Being a sociologist means never having to be bored.

Collins, Randall. 1998. "The Sociological Eye and Its Blinders." *Contemporary Sociology* 27(1):2-7



'Sociological' questions

- ∴ Kai Erikson's uses the analogy of looking down from a tall building to view human behavior as *"a mass of humanity in motion, a swarm of particles that weave in and out as if moving along invisible tracks."* (13)
- ∴ *"When sociologists speak of the social, then, they tend to be speaking of tides, forces, currents, pulls—something in the nature of social life that induces people to behave in fairly predictable ways at least part of the time."* (14)

Sociological questions and answers

- ∴ Sociologists often prefer explanations based on social forces
- ∴ From this perspective, sociological explanation aims to generalize, finding regularities across apparently unrelated situations

Social forces as things

- ∴ Emphasis on the *durability* and *substance* of the forces patterning society

Finding the strange

- ∴ Framing the commonplace as surprising through *generalization* and *juxtaposition*



Oil and gas extraction



Alberta oil sands

Raises many good *non-sociological* questions

- ⋮ What are the costs, subsidies, and profits associated with the industry?
- ⋮ Which communities will be harmed by extraction and transport?
- ⋮ What are the effects on the climate?
- ⋮ How should the industry be regulated?



Trans-mountain pipeline

Also raises *sociological* questions

- ⋮ How is this similar to other events in the history of Indigenous–settler relations?
- ⋮ How does socio-economic class influence people's stance on the debates around oil and gas?
- ⋮ How are locals' reactions examples of more general social processes?
- ⋮ How do Canadians understand 'undeveloped' land?

DISCUSSION

8

2024 Canadian postal strike through the "sociologist's eye"

Form groups of 3–5

⋮ You can move around if needed

Generate a question

⋮ Discuss the readings and your own experiences and thoughts to *generate a sociological question relating to the 2024 Canadian postal strike*

(2–4 sentences is a good length)

Post

⋮ Select one group member to post your group's question as a reply to the "Jan 10: Sociological questions" post on Teams

(In the "In-class discussions" channel)

Individually

⋮ Read through other group's questions and upvote (❤️) 2–3 of your favorites



Lecture topics:

- ⋮ Structuring social inquiry (theory)
- ⋮ Theoretical perspectives part 1:
structural functionalism

Readings:

- ⋮ * Erikson (2017), *Coming to Terms with Social Life*
- ⋮ Conerly, Holmes, and Tamang (2021),
chapter 1 (*optional*)

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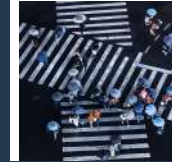


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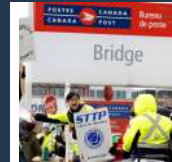


Photo from [Montreal Gazette](#)



CBC: Nov 24, 2024