



Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

School of Social and Cultural Studies

Te Kura Mahinga Tangata

Sociology and Social Policy

SOSC 415

Contemporary Issues in the
Sociology of Morality & Ethics

Course Outline

CRN 15486: 30 POINTS: TRIM 1+2/2013

Trimester dates: 4 March 2013 – 17 November 2013

Teaching dates: 4 March 2013 – 18 October 2013

Easter break: 28 March – 3 April 2013

Mid-trimester break Trimester 1/3: 22-28 April 2013

Mid-year break: 4 July-14 July 2013

Mid-trimester break Trimester 2/3: 26 August-6 September 2013

Last piece of assessment due: 18 October 2013

COURSE CO-ORDINATOR: DR RHONDA SHAW

Room 1007, Murphy Building

Tel: (04) 463 6134

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SEMINARS: TUESDAY 9.00 – 10.50AM: EA 201

COURSE CO-ORDINATOR AND LECTURER

Dr Rhonda Shaw

Room: Level 10, Murphy building, MY1007

Telephone: (04) 463 6134

E-mail: rhonda.shaw@vuw.ac.nz

Office Hours: by arrangement

CLASS TIMES AND LOCATION

Seminars: Tuesday 9.00 – 10.50am in Easterfield Building 201

PROGRAMME LOCATION

The Sociology Programme is located in the Murphy Building. The staff offices are on level 10 and the School Office is on level 9, which is generally open from 8.30am – 4.30pm.

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF CONTACT

Dr. Rhonda Shaw is responsible for the administration of SOSC 415 as the course co-ordinator. If you have an urgent query, and the course co-ordinator is not available, leave a message with the administrators at the school office.

WEBSITE

The School's website is at: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/sacs>. On the same page you will find *Sociolog*, <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/sacs/about/sociolog>, a chronicle of reflections written by Sociology, Social Policy, Social Science Research staff and postgraduate students

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information related to SOSC 415 will be communicated via Blackboard or e-mail.

OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION

Head of School:	Dr Allison Kirkman, MY1013 Tel: 463 5676 E-m: allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz
International Student Liaison:	Dr Hal Levine MY1023 Tel: 463 6132 E-m: hal.levine@vuw.ac.nz
Maori and Pacific Student Liaison	Dr Trevor Bradley, MY1101 Tel: 463 54328 E-m: trevor.bradley@vuw.ac.nz
Students with Disabilities Liaison:	Dr Russil Durrant, MY1120 Tel: 463 9980 E-m: russil.durrant@vuw.ac.nz
School Manager:	Carol Hogan, MY918 Tel: 463 6546 E-m: carol.hogan@vuw.ac.nz
School Administrators:	Suzanne Weaver, Alison Melling, Helen Beaglehole, MY921, Tel: 463 5317, 463 5258, 463 5677, E- m: sacs@vuw.ac.nz

COURSE PRESCRIPTION

This course will explore the kinds of contributions sociologists can make to debates about ethics. It will cover theoretical approaches that place the question of ethics and moral life on the sociological agenda, including debates about research ethics in the social sciences. The second part of the course will cover recent discussions in the social sciences and bioethics about giving and exchanging bodily fluids, tissues, and organs.

COURSE CONTENT

What kinds of contributions can sociologists make to debates about ethics in the contemporary context? What makes sociological investigation of morality and ethical issues distinct from philosophical concerns? Is there a place for a separate field within the discipline of sociology that deals specifically with questions of ethics and morality?

In this course, these and other questions will be considered in light of recent debates about altruism, reciprocity and gift-exchange relations. This will entail examining the impact of recent medical, technological and scientific advances, as well as everyday forms of routine giving, on our bodies, ourselves and our relations to others.

This course is divided into two sections. Part I introduces students to a variety of theoretical approaches that place the question of ethics and moral life on the sociological agenda.

Part II deals with substantive issues in moral theory and ethics in light of recent discussions about giving and exchanging bodily fluids, tissues and organs. This

part of the course is designed to put the theories discussed in Part I to the empirical test.

TEACHING LEARNING SUMMARY

A one two-hour seminar per week will offer students a broad, general introduction to each topic area. The seminars will involve an introduction to the general topic area under discussion, and a participatory discussion involving close readings and analysis of weekly articles or essays. The weekly seminar class is designed to encourage students to critically reflect on issues in light of their own experiences and reflection, and in relation to the literature.

Students should note that the course is divided into two parts. In the first part of the course we will look at social theory that examines the relation between sociology, morality and ethics. A key objective in this part of the course is to address the place of ethics in sociology and related disciplines and to discuss the significance of social science and ethnographic research in the emerging field of bioethics. In conjunction with this material we will look at debates around the gift relation. During Trimester 1 students will write a short précis of course readings each week. Part II of the course begins during Trimester 1. Part II will deal with substantive issues in and around the nature of contemporary gifts and gift-gifting, and the exchange of bodily fluids, tissues, and organs. Before the Mid-year break, students will have started their Research Essay assignment. The lecturer will be available for consultation at this time. Please note that lecturer office hours can be negotiated for SOSC 415 students.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course aims to introduce students to some of the key ideas and developments in the sociological study of morality and ethics. Until recently, this has been a relatively marginalised area of inquiry in the discipline of sociology, so students will be encouraged to read widely and to think beyond the confines of disciplinary boundaries.

The course will also encourage students to apply complex and sophisticated theoretical ideas to concrete empirical cases, events, and examples.

The overall aim is to build student confidence in applying analytic skills to applied and real-life situations. To this end, assignments are designed to assist you to develop your skills in:

1. close reading and summarising arguments
2. relating everyday life and theory
3. understanding key terms and ideas and expressing them clearly (in short comments, essays and in seminar presentations)
4. developing and clarifying research problems and proposals
5. presenting, communicating and discussing ideas with others

By the end of the course students will be familiar with contemporary literature in the sociology of ethics, as well as material on gift-giving, reciprocity, and altruism from a variety of social science and humanities' disciplines. Students will be able to identify and apply various theoretical approaches and frameworks to specific issues. Where appropriate, students will also be able to outline the implications of these for social policy development.

Traditions covered in Part I will include material from sociology and social psychology (e.g., Simmel, Schwartz, Gouldner, Schmidt, Piliavin, Komter, Titmuss, Bauman); from anthropology (e.g., Mauss, Sahlins, Levi Strauss, Godelier, Strathern, Weiner, Bourdieu); from continental philosophy (e.g., Bataille, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, Foucault, Lingis, Marion); and feminist theory (e.g., Irigaray, Cixous, Rubin, Vaughan, Diprose).

The work of key theorists who deal with the substantive issues discussed in Part II will also be discussed (e.g., Titmuss, Scheper-Hughes, Fox and Swazey, Lock, Cheal).

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Lectures are not compulsory. However, class attendance is an integral part of the learning process. In lectures you will learn about and discuss important ideas. Through formal and informal discussion you will be supported in exploring ideas and developing your assignments.

This course is 100% internally assessed (there is no final examination). Your final mark will be made up of three components:

- **40% Précis: 8 précis worth 5% each (approx. 500 words).
Due date: Friday each week from 22 March until 7 June 2013, see below**
- **40% Research Essay: Due date: Friday 18 October 2013**
- **20% Seminar Presentation (Trimester 2)**

PRECIS- (8 x 500 words: worth 40% of final mark) (Learning objectives 1, 3 & 5)

Due date: 4pm Friday each week from 22 March until 7 June 2013

On the Tuesday before each Friday seminar, you are required to submit a 500 word précis of the assigned readings for the upcoming week. Your précis should briefly account for two or three of the most compelling ideas in the text(s). It should not take the form of a book review, nor must it account for each and every idea raised by the assigned text(s). Rather, your précis should reflect your sense of what is most important in the text(s), and what you would most like to discuss in class. At the end of each précis, please suggest one or two critical or interpretive questions for further discussion. These questions may pertain to your reading of the text itself, but they may also suggest connections between texts and/or reflections on the themes discussed. More information about this aspect of the coursework will be made available at the beginning of the course, in the first lecture.

These short assignments may be handed in at any time up to the Tuesday of each week. The final précis is due on Friday 7 June 2013. Extensions will only be given for illness (with a medical certificate) or bereavement.

RESEARCH ESSAY (Learning objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4)

Due date: 4pm Friday 18 October 2013

Weighting: 40%

Word count: 5000 - 6000 words

This assignment is a substantive research essay designed to put the theories in Part I of the course to the empirical test. Students will choose topics in consultation with the lecturer. It is recommended that students consult Chapters 6 & 7 of Emerson, L. (2005) *Writing Guidelines for Social Science Students* (Second

edition), Thomson/Dunmore Press: Victoria, Australia. More information about this assignment will be made available to students in Trimester 2.

SEMINAR PRESENTATION (Learning objectives 2, 3, 4 & 5)

**Due date: during trimester 2 in-class,
date to be arranged with course coordinator**

Weighting: 20%

The seminar presentations will commence in the second trimester. Dates for seminar presentations will be arranged at the beginning of the course. Students will also be required to select one topic from the second part of the course for discussion in a seminar presentation. Ideally, the seminar presentation will form the basis of your substantive essay. The aim of the exercise is to see how well you can explain, clarify, or resolve issues using theories you have been learning about in lectures and from your reading.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

To meet mandatory course requirements you must:

- Submit 8 weekly précis assignments of the assigned readings
- Submit the research essay
- Complete the seminar presentation

EXPECTED WORKLOAD

You should expect to spend, on average 10 hours a week across the course, including class contact hours, on meeting the requirements of this course.

EXTENSIONS ON DUE DATES

Assignments are due on the dates stated. If for some serious reason you don't think you can get work in on time, see your course co-ordinator in advance of the due date and discuss the problem. Extensions of time are not permitted except for illness, or bereavements.

COURSE FEEDBACK

Please see http://www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display_staff.php to view a summary of the feedback for this course in 2012. Student evaluation of the course was extremely positive with students noting that the course was well organised, that feedback was helpful and constructive, that student seminar presentations and the précis exercises were especially helpful, and that students valued what they learnt from the course. In 2013 I will continue to focus on encouraging student participation and stimulating further interest in the issues raised in the course.

COURSE WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURES

If you decide for ANY reason at ANY stage to withdraw from SOSC 415 (or any other course) please check the Information on withdrawals and refunds at <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds> Failure to do so may have consequences for enrolment, bursaries, allowances, loans, etc., i.e. you will get credited with a fail, not a withdrawal, on your record if you do not act promptly.

ASSIGNMENT BOX

Assignments must be placed in the assignment box on level 9 of the Murphy Building by 4 pm on the due date.

They MUST NOT be placed in individual staff pigeonholes, or under staff office doors, or handed to the lecturer.

This is to ensure that all work is properly recorded when submitted, and to avoid problems that have arisen in the past, when work has 'gone missing'.

At 4 pm the Office staff will empty the box, date-stamp work and record its receipt, before handing it to the appropriate markers.

Students must always make and keep a photocopy of the assignment before handing it in. Faxed or e-mailed assignments will not be accepted.

Unless students have followed this procedure, we will accept no responsibility for pieces of written work claimed to have been handed in.

Identifying your Essay or Assignment – Cover Sheet

Please include the School's Assignment Cover Sheet (a sample of which can be found at the end of this Outline) as a front sheet when submitting your assignments. This ensures that you have provided essential information. You may wish to have a front page of your own on your assignment, but the top sheet must be the School's Assignment Cover Sheet. Further copies can be found at the School's Administration office on level 9 of Murphy building, and also on the School's assignment box (level 9 Murphy, beside the lifts).

GRADES

Sociology and Social Policy follows University policy in giving letter grades for all internally assessed work instead of giving numerical marks. The following table sets out the range of marks within which each letter grade is assigned. Your final grade and marks for the course will be an aggregate of the grades you achieve during the course.

PASS:	A+	85% or over
	A	80% - 84%
	A-	75% - 79%
	B+	70% - 74%
	B	65% - 69%
	B-	60% - 64%
	C+	55% - 59%
	C	50% - 54%

FAILURE:	D	40% - 49%
	E	Below 40%

All the instructors are requested to make sure that each student is informed about the above system of assessment.

PENALTIES FOR LATE SUBMISSION

Late submissions for student assignments in all Sociology and Social Policy undergraduate courses are subject to a penalty. The exact deduction will be calculated on the basis of one half mark per day late for each 10 marks, i.e.

Mark out of maximum of:	Then deduct the following marks for each day it is late
10	$\frac{1}{2}$
20	1
30	$1\frac{1}{2}$
40	2

Where the due date is a Friday, any written work not handed in by 4 pm will be liable to a two-day penalty. To be effective, this policy will be consistently applied in all Sociology and Social Policy courses.

WHERE TO FIND MORE DETAILED INFORMATION

Find key dates, explanations of grades and other useful information at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study. Find out how academic progress is monitored and how enrolment can be restricted at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress.

Most statutes and policies are available at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy except qualification statutes, which are available via the *Calendar* webpage at: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar (See Section C).

Other useful information for students may be found at the website of the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic), at: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcademic.

Information for Māori Students:
www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/slss/infofor/maoristudents or
www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/tpa/index

Information for Pasifika students:
www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/slss/infofor/pasifikastudents or
www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/tpa/index

ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities in examinations and other assessment procedures. Please contact the course coordinators, in the first instance, for information on how to make arrangements for this.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet

- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such material

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism>

COURSE READINGS

There is no single text for this course. There will be course readings assigned, which will be placed on BlackBoard. Depending on demand, supplementary readings may be placed on two-hour loan in the library. The following journals will provide you with material that is relevant to many of the issues covered in this course. Please note that this list is not exhaustive. Students are also able to request journal articles through inter-loan if an item is not available in the VUW Library. A small charge for each article will be applied. Books can be inter-loaned free of charge.

Journals

American Sociological Review

Australian Feminist Studies

Body & Society

Bioethics

Current Anthropology

Current Sociology

Economy & Society

Feminism and Psychology

Feminist Review

Feminist Theory

Health Care for Women International

Health Sociology Review

Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness & Medicine

Hypatia

Journal of Bioethical Inquiry

Journal of Medical Ethics

Philosophy & Public Affairs

Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society

Sociology

Sociology of Health & Illness

Social Science and Medicine

The Sociological Quarterly

The Sociological Review

Theory, Culture & Society

Women's Studies International Forum

The required readings make up the content of the course reading pack. The readings have been organised by lecture/topic sequence and will be made available in advance of the lectures/seminars.