SOCI 375: Suspect Minorities in Canada
Fall term, 2017

Morton Weinfeld

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Class meets Mon and Wed. 4:05 to 5:25, Currie Gym, room 408-9

This is a new course, first offered last year in 2015-2016, so we will all be experimenting and learning together. Its focus is a possibly controversial topic which can fall within various areas of sociology, as well as disciplines of political science and modern history, all with reference to Canada. So the readings in this course will be drawn from a number of disciplines. Canada is a case study of liberal-democratic society and polity, that has been and is highly diverse in terms of ethnic, national, racial, and religious groups. So many of the issues we shall study will resonate with the experiences of other countries, notably the United States, Australia, and Western/European states.

The idea is to explore how various such groups, as well as other types of minority groups (hippies, LGBTQ) have been perceived in extreme cases as “suspect” ie, not simply as different, or inferior, but as threatening to the basic security, integrity, and foundations of the Canadian state, and Canadian society. The issue of terrorism, while much in the news, will not form the sole focus of this course. Rather, the major, broader focus is on minority groups of various kinds who are perceived to be in serious opposition to mainstream Canadian values or security interests. And in addition, this course will focus on the various types of responses -- forms of agency -- by these various Canadian groups to their victimization.

Readings:

The texts to be used in this course are two. The first is an edited collection of readings.


The second is a coursepack with additional readings.
Both are available in the bookstore, and on reserve in the library. You may be able to find second hand copies. There are about 3-5 readings per week.

**Structure of the Course.**

I will lecture for about 50 mins or so and for the balance of the time we will have discussion/conference, and Q and A format for the balance of the time.

In my lectures I will essentially review the arguments of the readings for that week. The course is divided into 12 sections of two lectures each, and will also include an introduction and wrap up, for a total of 13 weeks.

I am also thinking of showing a few documentary films which would start at around 5 PM, and so some would run past the scheduled end of the class (assuming the room would be free….) and which deal with the course material, but they would be completely optional!

**Evaluation:**

There will be no specific mid-term or final examination of any kind, and no major research paper.

Rather, there will be four short papers/take homes to be done, each covering three of the 12 sections. So there is no need to memorize specific facts or elements of the readings.

In the last class after third section, I will hand out or email or post two questions based directly on the readings. Students will have a period of around one week to answer ONE of those two questions. Answers or papers should be a minimum of two double spaced pages and a maximum of four. And maximum means maximum…☺ I will stop reading after four pages…

The last assignment will be given out on Wed. Dec. 6. The last class is on Dec. 7, a Thursday but it follows a Wed. schedule. It will be a wrap up for the course as well, with discussion and helpful pointers for the last paper…☺

Your grade will be based on the four assignments. **Each paper counts for 25%**. Please note that the answers to each of the four assignments must be handed in on or before the due date, in **hard copy**.

If students cannot meet due date, they must submit a medical note, or written proof of a true family or other emergency. Late papers without any such explanation will be penalized, after two days, an A-paper gets a B+, after four days, an A-paper gets a B, etc. Having a lot of academic work is not a legitimate excuse. The reason is that I must be fair to all the students, treat them all equally, including others who have lots of problems but will still get the paper in when due.
These questions will involve comparisons with all or some of the readings in each of the sections. So in theory it might be possible to answer a question while avoiding doing all of the readings in the three sections per paper☺.

One reason to attend the lectures is to get a kind of overview of all the readings directly. Better not to try to cram things into the one week of writing. A few of the readings may be more demanding, with some jargon, so I will try to explain the major points. Another is to get a sense of what I might think is important or interesting in the various readings. A third is that one hopes the lectures and the class discussions, in which students can respond to and debate the issues raised in the readings, will be of intellectual interest☺…!!

According to an old proverb, a wise scholar once said: “I have learned a great deal from my teachers, even more from my peer group of fellow students, and most of all from the students I have taught…”☺

Trigger warning: As you can see from the course outline below, many of the topics deal with complex and controversial episodes, or issues, in Canadian modern history or recent experience. And I think you will find this class a rewarding and stimulating experience. Some in the class may have well-formed opinions about some of these issues. Others will not. Both are fine!

Many of the readings are mainly informative. But others make arguments, based on evidence and/or reason. So at times it is possible that a few—likely very few—of the readings might present or review points of view which differ in nuance from your own views, or perhaps what you may have encountered in other courses. And it is possible that a few students may be offended by or upset one or two such readings, or sections in a reading. And that is very unfortunate, and understandable, and such students can speak to me privately. But there is no alternative. Part of a serious educational experience in an upper level university undergraduate course in the humanities and social sciences is learning to understand and confront a variety of arguments. Unlike perhaps in some other courses, students here need not feel obliged to agree with any of the readings, or my own expositions or interpretations. Not at all! And indeed such differences are welcome and should be discussed in class, and in your papers….

So this is a general trigger warning for the entire course…. 

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives. « Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue). »

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).
Lectures

Introductory Class – Sept. 6

Week 1: Understanding Dual and Competing Loyalties: Diasporas and Transnationalism


Week 2: Liberal Democracies, Free Speech, and Rights of Dissent


Week 3: Challenges of Foreign Policy and Citizenship


First paper questions handed out Sept. 27, due back Oct 4.

Week 4: Japanese, Germans, and Italians in WWII and the Politics of Redress


Week 5: Francophones as Suspect for English Canada


**Week 6: Anglophones and Allophones as Suspect in Quebec**


**Second paper topics given out Oct. 23, due back Oct. 30**

**Week 7: First Nations**


**Week 8: Muslims in Canada (Part I)**


**Week 9: Muslims in Canada (Part II)**


**Third paper topics handed out Nov 15, due back Nov. 22.**

**Week 10: The Case of Jews as Iconic Other in Canada**


Week 11: Sikhs and Tamils


Week 12: Other Suspect Minorities: Gays, Hippies, Leftists/Communists


Wrap up class, Dec. 7. This is a Thursday but will follow a Wed. schedule.