

SOC256H1S: LIVES AND SOCIETIES

2024 WINTER TERM

Class meets: Tuesdays, 3:10 – 5:00 PM

Professor: Bonnie H. Erickson
E-mail: ericson@chass.utoronto.ca

Teaching Assistant: Michelle Nadon Belanger
E-mail michelle.nadonbelanger@mail.utoronto.ca

Office hours: Because of COVID-19, your instructor and teaching assistant will not hold office hours in person in an office. Students can consult with the instructor and the TA by email at any time, or on Zoom by appointment.

Readings: Available through Quercus

Prerequisite: SOC100H1. Students without this requirement will be removed at any time discovered, without notice.

INTRODUCTION

Much sociological work considers people at one point 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 very large scale comparative picture: very different kinds of society (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.

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 (using a pseudonym) 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 will 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. Proposals should be two or three double spaced pages of text. They should be uploaded to Quercus by midnight on January 30.

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 at different times in the same society (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 checked 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, which will be discussed in the January 23 class. Interviews should not be conducted until you have received feedback on your essay proposal, which we hope to provide by one week after you submit them, that is, February 6. 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 15 pages double-spaced and be uploaded to Quercus by midnight on March 19.

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. Both tests will be essay tests. Examples of possible questions will be provided to students prior to each test. Test 1, on February 13, will primarily cover material from the first half of the course (January 9 through February 6). Test 2, on April 2, will primarily cover material from the second half of the course, February 27 through March 26.

GRADING SUMMARY

Research Paper Proposal	10 points	January 30
Test 1	25 points	February 13
Final Research Paper	40 points	March 19
Test 2	25 points	April 2
Total	100 points	

Course e-mail policies:

- 1) We will only accept e-mails from your University of Toronto e-mail account. Please put "SOC 256" in your subject line so we know the message is course-related.
- 2) We cannot provide instant response. We will make every effort to reply to e-mails within 48 hours.
- 3) Many important course announcements will be sent to you through the University of Toronto e-mail address recorded for you on Quercus. Be sure to check this e-mail account regularly.
- 4) E-mails asking for information in this course outline (e.g. "How much is the essay worth?) will NOT be answered. Read this outline!

TOPICS AND REQUIRED READINGS

January 9: Introduction: Types of Societies

In this class we review a theory of the evolution of human societies from ones with very simple subsistence technologies to ones with very elaborate subsistence technologies. The theory includes discussions of important differences between societies with different subsistence technologies. We will spend the rest of the course considering the consequences of these societal differences for the lives of people living in these societies.

Required Reading

Chapters 3 and 4 from Patrick Nolan and Gerhard Lenski, 2015, *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*, Twelfth Edition. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

January 16: Introducing Hunter-Gatherer Societies

Your reading and the video we will watch in class introduce you to the history and way of life of two very well studied, and very different, hunting and gathering societies: the Ache and the !Kung. We will use this material as examples of the Nolan and Lenski model of the societal consequences of a foraging subsistence technology, and, as examples of how foraging societies differ from each other in ways that affect life courses.

Required Reading

Pages 41-57 and 65-73 from Kim Hill and A. Magdalena Hurtado, 1996, *Ache Life History: The Ecology and Demography of a Foraging People*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Figure 5.3, page 117, from Patrick Nolan and Gerhard Lenski, 2015, *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*, Twelfth Edition. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Special resources: Class will start with the video “A Human Way of Life” (Videocass 001452 from the Audiovisual Library).

January 23: The Life Course for Hunters and Gatherers

Howell, and Hill and Hurtado, describe the life courses of the !Kung and the Ache while they were still living in foraging societies. To give some life to these life course descriptions, please read the selection from Shostak, in which an intelligent and articulate !Kung woman tells us about some of the important events in her own life story.

Required Reading

Chapter 2: Life History Stages, pages 26-57 in Nancy Howell, 2010, *Life Histories of the Dobe !Kung: Food, Fatness, and Well-Being Over the Life Span*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Pages 149-166 from Marjorie Shostak, 1981, *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*. New York: Random House.

Pages 219-237 from Kim Hill and A. Magdalena Hurtado, 1996, *Ache Life History: The Ecology and Demography of a Foraging People*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

NOTE: This class will include a tutorial on how to prepare your essay proposal, due next week. The tutorial will be held in the second hour of our class time (there is no tutorial hour for this class).

Required reading:

Chapter 1 (on general principles of inquiry), and Chapter 3 (on ethical issues) from:

Earl Babbie and Lance W. Roberts. 2018. *Fundamentals of Social Research, Fourth Canadian Edition*. Toronto: Nelson Education. ISBN-13: 978-0-17-657011-8.

The file “SOC256_proposal_instructions”

January 30: Life Course Stages in Different Societies: Timing and Types of Stages

Here we compare different types of societies in terms of the kinds of life stages they have and how they are timed, with special attention to the role of functional versus chronological age. The readings for the previous week provide rich information for hunting and gathering societies. Gillis discusses the transition from pre-industrial, advanced agrarian society to industrialized society in Europe. Gee provides the changing ages at which people in Canada made key life transitions during industrialization.

We will also go over essential ethical considerations in your research and the consent

form which you must use.

If there is time we will begin work on how to conduct your interview. For this, read the file “SOC256Transition_Rites_Interviews_Tutorial”

Required Reading

Gee, Ellen 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, John 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.

The files “soc256_essay_ethics” and “soc256_consentform_2024”

Note: your essay proposals are due by midnight of this day

February 6: Transitions between Stages: Transition Rites

Required Reading

Davis-Floyd, Robbie Elizabeth. 1991. “Ritual in the Hospital: Giving Birth the American Way.” Pp. 275-284 in Philip Whitten and David E. K. Huner (eds.), *Anthropology: Contemporary Perspectives, 6th Edition*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Pages 151-166 from Marjorie Shostak, 1981, *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*. New York: Random House. You have read this earlier, but now focus on the material on transitions rites.

Stearns, Deborah 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, Deborah 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.

NOTE: This class will include the second tutorial on collecting your data: how to conduct your interview. This tutorial will be in the second hour of our class time. The notes for this are in the Module for January 30.

See the file “SOC256Transition_Rites_Interviews_Tutorial”

Required reading: Chapter 11 (Qualitative Interviewing) from:

Earl Babbie and Lance W. Roberts. 2018. *Fundamentals of Social Research, Fourth Canadian Edition*. Toronto: Nelson Education. ISBN-13: 978-0-17-657011-8.

February 13: In-class mid-term test

February 20: Reading week, no class

February 27: Childhood in Different Societies

Required Reading

Bradbury, Bettina. 1993. "Conclusions." Pp. 214-186 in Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

"Comparative History of Childhood." 2004. Pp. 226-231 in Paula S. Frass (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA.

Gleason, Mona. 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, Stephen. 2004. "Age and Development." Pp. 38-45 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.

NOTE: this lecture will include a tutorial on: analysing your data and writing it up.

MARCH 5: Old Age in Different Societies

Required Reading

Keith, Jennie. 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.

March 12: Societies and Mortality – How and When do People Die?

Required Reading

Pages 174, 210 from Kim Hill and A. Magdalena Hurtado, 1996, *Ache Life History: The*

- Ecology and Demography of a Foraging People*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- McCracken, Kevin and David R. Phillips. 2005. "International Demographic Transitions." Pp. 36-60 in Gavin J. Andrews and David R. Phillips (eds.), *Ageing and Place: Perspectives, Policy, Practice*. London: Routledge. For this week, focus on the material on mortality.
- Meckel, Richard. 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.
- Pages 248-250, 309, 316-17 from Marjorie Shostak, 1981, *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*. New York: Random House.

March 19: Societies and Fertility; Social Implications of Mortality and Fertility
Required Reading

Pages 262, 267, 467-9 from Kim Hill and A. Magdalena Hurtado, 1996, *Ache Life History: The Ecology and Demography of a Foraging People*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

"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.

McCracken, Kevin and David R. Phillips. 2005. "International Demographic Transitions." Pp. 36-60 in Gavin J. Andrews and David R. Phillips (eds.), *Ageing and Place: Perspectives, Policy, Practice*. London: Routledge. Read parts on fertility.

Optional Reading on changes in mortality and fertility as a society changes:

Howell, Nancy. 2000. "Return to Dobe." Pp. 362-382 in Nancy Howell, *Demography of the Dobe !Kung, Second Edition*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

NOTE: Essays due today!

March 26: How People in Different Societies See the Life Course
Required Reading

Collings, Peter. 2000. "Aging and Life Course Development in an Inuit Community." *Arctic Anthropology* 37: 111-125.

Klassen, Sherri. 2001. "The Life Cycle." Pp. 193-203 in Peter N. Stearns (ed), *Encyclopedia of European Social History from 1350-2000*. New York: Scribner.

Optional Reading

Ikels, Charlotte, et al. 1992. "Perceptions of the Adult Life Course: A Cross-cultural Analysis."

Ageing and Society 12: 49-84.

April 2: In-class final test

PROCEDURES FOR PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

Students are permitted, under our conditions of use, to opt-out of using the university's plagiarism detection tool. If a student chooses not to submit their assignment through the University's plagiarism detection tool, instructors will need to find alternative arrangements to check their work as rigorously. (It should be noted that very few students choose to opt out.) Students cannot be penalized for choosing to opt out. If students choose to opt out, they should let their instructor know well in advance of submitting their paper. In this case, the instructor may ask them to submit all of their rough work for an assignment or the instructor may have a short meeting with them and ask pointed questions about their research methodology. Students who do not use the plagiarism detector, and who do not make acceptable alternative arrangements, will receive a grade of zero.

If students in this class wish to opt out of the plagiarism detection tool, they must notify their professor at the start of the course (for our course, by our second class, January 16). They must provide additional materials to show they have done their work themselves. This may include annotated bibliographies, notes for the paper or proposal, and working drafts. They should discuss what they will provide, and when, with Professor Erickson and set up a schedule by January 23. This is quite a bit of extra work, so few students choose this option, but you are welcome to do so.

DO NOT PLAGIARIZE

Be careful to avoid plagiarism. That is, do not copy words from someone else's writings and present them as your own. If you include someone else's words, use quotation marks and give proper references. It is NOT enough to just include your source in your list of references. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense with very heavy penalties (see the Academic Handbook). Your essay will be compared to texts from many sources, including earlier student essays and almost everything on the internet. See also the section "More on academic integrity" below.

LATE ESSAY PROPOSALS

Penalty for lateness: 10% of the maximum grade for every day late. For example, if you submit your proposal on January 31, (one day late) and get a grade of 80%, you will lose 10% and get a grade of 70%.

LATE ESSAYS

Penalty for lateness: 10% of the maximum grade for every day late. For example, if you submit your essay on March 20 (one day late) and get a grade of 80%, you will lose 10% and get a grade of 70%. These are heavy penalties, so – don't be late! The maximum penalty is 100% of your grade, for proposals 10 or more days late.

POLICY FOR MISSED TESTS AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Students who miss a test or are late in submitting an assignment for medical reasons, need to email the instructor (not the TA), and also declare their absence on the system (ACORN). This can only be used once during the semester.

Students can access the absence declaration tool in ACORN, under the Profile and Settings menu. The Absence Declaration Tool helps students create an official record of their absence that can be used to support a request for academic consideration in their courses, without the need to present further documentation. Read more about the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool process [here](#).

Students who miss the test or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

College registrars are very experienced, very discreet, and there to help you. The registrar will assess your situation and send an email to your instructor with their recommendations. The registrar does not normally tell the instructor what the problem is, since your privacy should be respected. DO NOT approach the instructor, who is not qualified to assess your situation.

DATES FOR MAKE-UP TESTS

Dates will be arranged when we know who is entitled to write a make-up test and when they can do so. If you have to miss a test, send your instructor an e-mail no later than the day of the test. Include ALL the times you would be able to write the make-up test during the week following the test. Be prepared to provide suitable documentation as described above.

GETTING HELP IN WRITING YOUR ESSAY

Please remember that your college has a writing lab with lots of experience. These labs are always very popular and very busy, so you need to make appointments well in advance.

ESSAY TOPICS

All of you will write a research essay comparing the same kind of transition rite in two different societies, based on an interview with an informant. Your goal is to use course materials to explain similarities and differences in the “same” rite in different types of societies. Transition rites are rituals marking a change from one life stage to another, or marking steps in the life course. Since the February 8 lecture on transition rites will use funerals as an example, you should consider another kind of transition rite such as weddings or graduation ceremonies.

To compare two different kinds of society, you could:

- 1) compare Canada now to Canada some time ago, by interviewing an elderly person

who has taken part in the kind of transition rite you are interested in, both recently and decades ago. Your focus will be on major ways that Canada has changed in (say) the past half century, how these changes have changed the transition rite, and how some aspects of the rite may have survived extensive societal changes.

Or

(2) do the same thing for a different country, interviewing an older person who has experience of the same transition rite in that country in recent times and long ago.

Or

(3) compare the same rite in Canada today and a very different country today. The comparison country should be different in terms of the societal variables discussed in Lenski et al. In today's world, this means looking at a much less well developed society.

Be sure that you compare truly comparable transition rites. For example if your rite of choice is the wedding, it would not make sense to compare a Christian wedding in Canada with a Hindu wedding in India. It would be too difficult to establish which differences come from different religious traditions and which from the different societal contexts.

IMPORTANT: YOU MUST FOLLOW ETHICAL GUIDELINES !!

Since your essay will be based on an interview, you must follow the proper procedures for ethical research using human subjects. These procedures include: no research on vulnerable populations, protection of your informant's privacy and anonymity, gaining informed consent, and emphasizing the informant's freedom to not answer questions and to stop the interview at will. These matters will be discussed in more detail in the tutorial on January 25. Copies of the necessary "informed consent" form will be provided.. Since these are very important issues, do not start your research until *after* the lecture on ethics on January 23, and *after* you get approval of your essay proposal.

TIMING OF YOUR INTERVIEW

You **MUST NOT** start your research until your proposal has been approved (see previous paragraph). It is also highly advisable to wait until after the lecture on transition rites on February 6, since this will be of great help to you in preparing for your interview. You may look for a suitable respondent before these dates but do not interview them. You should also do the relevant course readings (especially those on transition rites) before your interview.

MORE ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. Academic integrity is a fundamental value of learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that your University of Toronto degree is valued and respected as a true signifier of your individual academic achievement.

The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this

document. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgment.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work).

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else's answers.
- Letting someone else look at your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

Misrepresentation:

- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact your instructor. If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from your instructor or other available campus resources like the College Writing Centers, the Academic Success Centre, or the U of T Writing Website.

STUDENTS WHO NEED ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please approach Accessibility Services at (416) 978 8060; accessibility.utoronto.ca.

Accommodations include getting a volunteer note-taker and writing tests under special conditions.

Do not approach your professor or TA about accommodations. Accessibility services has the necessary expertise, and they provide full confidentiality, so your privacy is protected.