

SOCIOLOGY 2240

DEVIANCE AND CONFORMITY
(WINTER 2002)

Grande Prairie Regional College

Course Description:

A study of the politics and social ramifications of conformity, deviance, and their relation to social change. The course examines how and why some behaviour patterns are defined as deviant or conformist.

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Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays: 14.30 - 15.30 Tuesdays & Thursdays: 13.30 - 14.15
Or By appointment

GOALS:

1. To understand how sociological concepts may help us analyze and comprehend our inclination to define and classify people and their behaviour.
2. To develop analytical and critical thinking skills through discussions of issues relevant to conformity.
3. To become aware of historical and contemporary attitudes, practices, and values relevant to concepts of deviance and conformity, and to their applications.

Course Prerequisite: SOCIOLOGY 1000

Required Reading:

Forces of deviance, second edition - Victor Kappeler, Richard Sluder, Geoffrey Alpert

Blue/Orange - Joe Penhall

Images of deviance and social control: A sociological history, second edition - Stephen Pfohl

Assignments:

Project: The objective of this assignment is to bring you beyond an intellectual consideration of your assumptions of deviance, and about the purpose and value of conformity. 'Stepping beyond' means doing something you would not have done prior to taking this course. It can include a wide variety of possibilities, but it must [begin to] make a difference in a person's or group's life. The person or group must be one society deems deviant. Deviance in such cases is assumed by society to be a master status. Project possibilities might be a form of service or participation. It might be a set of actions of whatever kind you think constructive to the person or group in question, from the standpoint of the person or group. This task must be based on more than your own assessment of value, because the purpose is to have you contemplate and affect the world in a manner different from what might have been conceivable by you at the start of the course. However, this should not be interpreted to mean you are to disappear from the project. Your reflection and intellectual vigilance, your personal, internal commentary, are essential. Whatever you decide to do, your effort must not intend harm to anyone. If you are uncertain of the appropriateness or the substance of your selected project, please consult with me. This assignment can be completed by yourself, or as part of a collective activity with at least one other individual. You will hand in by yourself, or jointly with who(m)ever you worked, a paper discussing what you chose to do and what motivated your selection. The paper is your opportunity to detail the experience, and in what way(s) you think your activity affected you and the person/people with whom you were associated. For example, did the project lead to your further understanding of the social connotations and consequences of the deviance-conformity relationship? Can you respond to this question from the vantage point of the individual(s) central to your project? Also, did your project respond to a need, and if so, what was it? Who concluded there was a need? How significant was the need, and what reactions were there to your response to it?

This assignment will be marked on a modified stanine system. The highest mark achievable is 5. No research is necessary for this requirement. The minimum length is 1000 words. All work must clearly stipulate your name, ID number, and course and section numbers. You can choose to give me paper copies of, or email me, your assignments. Disks are not acceptable. All written work for this course

must be double-spaced. The due date for the report on your project is the last class in March. **For your written assignments other than the journals there is a lateness penalty of 1 stanine per day, including weekends. If you hand something in late, or on the due date, but at a time when you are not sure I am on campus, have another faculty member or regular employee of the college sign and date it, and state in which area of the institution s/he is employed. Initials are not acceptable and signatures must be legible.**

Explanatory Essay:

- The due date for the explanatory essay is the last class of the semester.
- Essays or projects are marked on a 9-point stanine scale
- This is the 'intellectual', critical part of the course requirement. You must critically analyze your project, offering a critique of the social structure and its history, that produced the need or context of the situation your project addressed. You must show understanding of some the theory on deviance, and discuss how it might help clarify and advance thinking about your analysis. Additional research beyond the textbooks is required. Do not write a descriptive report; think about the ideas you express. Try to explain why these ideas persuade you.
- A minimum of six research sources are required. Four must be academic. Any combination of appropriate books or articles in journals or anthologies, is acceptable. Two can be informal, such as something from a newspaper, magazine, or a website. **Failure to observe each these minimum requirements will result in a lower grade.**
- The purpose of the research is to enable you to write an analytical paper. You may use first person words like 'I', but the paper is not a large opinion piece. It is intended to be analytical, based on thought and ideas, not quickly-generated opinions.
- The expected minimum standard is 1800 words. Your mark will be reduced by a half-stanine for inadequate length. This applies only to papers that are too brief.
- References must appear in the main text of your assignment, and in a **Works Cited** section at the end of the paper. Both are required. **If either is omitted, your assignment will be reduced by one stanine per section. All documentation [referencing] must be consistent with MLA style.** Remember that not all disciplines accept the same approach to writing up reference.
- You must reference more than quotations. Other authors' interpretations, analyses, perceptions, or ideas, deserve credit in your papers. Mentioning them does not disqualify your view of their analyses.
- If you hand in the assignment before the due date, I will comment fully on your essay, or on your project, and you will have the option of rewriting the paper. Otherwise, I will provide a general comment at the end of your papers or projects.
- Grammar is important to communicating precise meaning. Grammar will not be valued as highly as content, but it will be evaluated and has the capacity to adversely affect your standing in the course.

Three Journals:

- Due the first class of each month of the semester, beginning in February.
- Each is worth a maximum of 1.3 stanines. **However, a benchmark of 1 will apply to all journals.**
- Each journal is to be one typewritten page or two handwritten pages.
- Anything pertaining to deviance and conformity, ideas introduced in class discussions or lectures, class interaction, personal experience, etc., is suitable. Observations about, and suggestions for, the course are also suitable. No research is necessary or expected.
- The journals are an informal type of communication with me.

Discussion Bonus:

- Class discussion is a vital aspect of this course.
- Everyone may (but not necessarily will) receive a bonus mark for the **QUALITY** of your class discussion, based on a combination of the frequency and quality of the participation.
- You will be eligible only if you display commitment to the course by doing your reading and completing the required assignments, **and if you have not missed more than 3 classes during the term.**
- The bonus system will have a maximum grade of 3.
- WebCT discussions will be considered for the bonus grade.

Tabulating Grades

The total of all stanine marks available from your assignments is 18.5. Your marks will be totaled out of this number, a percentage will be obtained, and the percentage will be reconverted to a final stanine grade according to the following table.

Stanine Grade	Percentage Equivalent
9	90 - 100
8	80 - 89
7	72 - 79
6	65 - 71
5	57 - 64
4	50 - 56
3	45 - 49
2	26 - 44
1	0 - 25

NOTE: (1) No class averaging will be done. (2) All marks will appear on webCT. If you are unfamiliar with this system, employees of the library will instruct you for access. **You are responsible for monitoring your grade input, and informing me that a mark has not appeared for which you deserve credit.**

DISCUSSION SEQUENCE

1. Introduction to course: General, Sociological, and Historical

Class Discussion: General perceptions of deviance and conformity: What behaviours do you consider deviant? Do you react to these similarly to how you respond to conforming behaviour? Do you rank deviant behaviours in a hierarchy of ascending 'transgressiveness', and if so, based on what criteria? Should sociologists contemplate such a hierarchy?

2. Pfohl: Chapter 1

Class Discussion: Why refer to "images" of deviance? Is this a casual phrasing, or does Pfohl communicate something more substantial? What value might there be in using the concept of 'image' in this discussion, and what images are introduced in this chapter? What does Pfohl mean by a constructive viewpoint on theory? Are conformity and deviance considered equal sources of social problems? Are the terms themselves considered problematic? If your answer is 'yes', are they equally problematic? What counts as a social problem? In this discussion, and throughout the course, you should contemplate this question. What discourses of control and deviance, and what vocabularies of categorization, control, and public judgment, can you identify?

3. Forces of deviance [FOD]: Chapter 1

Class Discussion: Do the ideas in this chapter fit well with, or digress from, those articulated in the first chapter of Pfohl's book? Why contemplate deviance at all when referring to society's police? Are there some interpretations of deviance that do or do not apply to police work? Are some of these more applicable than others, in the event you acknowledge that some concepts apply reasonably to policing? What kinds of police deviance are mentioned?

4. Pfohl: Chapter 2

Overview of Ian Hacking's views of constructing social categories of people.

Class Discussion: Is the title of this chapter melodramatic? Pfohl uses different words in conjunction with his discussion of deviance: construct, discover, discern. Are these words synonymous with each other, or do they represent different conceptualizations of deviance? If the second is the case, does Pfohl effectively make the case for these distinctions? Of what value to the 'procedures' of deviance control was/is confession? Does our constant effort to control deviance suggest rationality or irrationality in our understanding of human existence? What types of control are mentioned in this chapter? Considering Hacking's ideas, do you think you embody categories of people? If so, what categories do you identify? What practises do you perceive in society, that could be placed in the various theoretical sets mentioned by Pfohl? Does any theory strike you as being more explanatory than the others? What accounts for this - better reasoned, more encompassing, more politically astute, etc. ?

5. Pfohl: Chapter 3

Class Discussion: What is hedonism and why mention it in a chapter on the classical perspective? What is the classical perspective? Explain the supposed value of rational punishment to the preservation of the social contract? What is the social contract and how does it fit into Pfohl's discussion of deviance? Is deterrence more than rhetoric? Are justice and rational punishment compatible? Does it matter if they are not? Why cite them when writing about deviance?

6. Pfohl: Chapter 4

Class Discussion: What is pathology and does it add anything important conceptually to understanding deviance? Would our construction of deviance change if notions of pathology were removed from it? What components of pathological theorizing does Pfohl identify? Considering the logic developed in the chapter on this point, are you persuaded such a thing as a criminal personality exists?

7. FOD: Chapters 2 - 4

Class Discussion: What institutional factors in police work influence police deviance? In any occupation, is it possible to avoid deviant behaviour? Should we try to avoid it? Why cite ideology and culture in a book about police activity? Is there really such a thing as a world view? What differentiates a psychological from a sociological approach to policing?

8. Pfohl: Chapters 5 & 6

Class Discussion: In these chapters, how are social change, social disorganization, functionalism, and deviance linked conceptually? Are there points at which the logic of the linkages weakens? In what ways can a society become disorganized? What is functional deviance?

9. Pfohl: Chapter 7

Class Discussion: What are the various understandings of anomie discussed in this chapter? How does anomie deviance connect with, and diverge from, other kinds of deviance referred to by Pfohl?

10. Pfohl: Chapter 8; FOD: Chapter 5

Class Discussion: How do we learn to be deviant? What meaning[s] does 'learning' have in this consideration? How does a person acquire deviance? Is deviance an identity, or a matter more of identification than of developing or adhering to, an identity? Is this question relevant? Does chapter 8 have any bearing at all on the motives to, and justifications for, deviance, as listed in FOD in chapter 5? Whether your answer is yes or no, do you find anything else in Pfohl's book so far, to be more valuable in your understanding of police deviance than what is assessed in chapter 8?

11. Pfohl: Chapter 9

Class Discussion: Should we think it important that Pfohl has written a chapter on societal reactions, but as chapter 9 instead of 1 or 2? Does this chapter present a less intellectually viable outlook on deviance than those preceding it? What elements of social control are discussed here? Should we distinguish state and social institutions from each other? What forms of resistance and response are brought forward by Pfohl? In what ways do deviants contest social definition?

12. Pfohl: Chapters 10 & 11

Class Discussion: What is power? Of what sociological and conceptual value are the author's references to knowledge, pluralism, authority, social structure, hegemony, agency, heterosexism, anarchism, feminism, and racism? How does each fit into a concluding analysis of conformity and deviance? What meaning does Pfohl hope to convey when he writes of critical praxis; power-reciprocal control; corporate and government deviance? What is your analysis of the possibility of achieving what he asks on page 409, at the end of the first paragraph? What does the title of chapter 11 mean?

13. FOD: Chapters 6 - 9

Class Discussion: Prepare to discuss your reactions to the types of behaviours mentioned in these chapters. Would you include any of them in a book on policing? Should we abandon the idea of deviance when contemplating police work? If not, is there a basis for saying some police forces are prone more to certain kinds of deviance than are other police forces?

14. FOD: Chapters 10 & 11

Class Discussion: Does Pfohl's chapter on social change help us to analyze and discuss the last two chapters of the FOD book? Is social change conceptually compatible with the idea of influencing or controlling police deviance? When the authors of FOD write of "forging the boundaries of police behavior," are they expressing similar thoughts to what Pfohl means by social change?