

Moravian College

SOC 370 - Seminar: The Sociology of Fear

Dr. Joel Nathan Rosen, Assistant Professor of Sociology
PPHAC 317

Phone: 610/625-7814

Email: jrosen@moravian.edu

Office Hours: T/Th 2-4 or by appointment

Required Text:

- Frank Füredi's *Culture of Fear Revisited* (available in bookstore)
- Supplemental readings as necessary

Recommended Text (some of which will be sampled during the semester):

- Frank Füredi's *The Politics of Fear*
- Barry Glassner's *The Culture of Fear*
- David L. Altheide's *Creating Fear*
- Stanley Cohen's *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*
- Joel Best's *How Claims Spread*

Course Description:

In a 2005 interview in Australia's *Sydney Morning Herald*, British sociologist Frank Füredi noted:

Fear itself has become a perspective on life. There used to be a time when people had specific fears, such as fear of spiders or heights. But increasingly, as we've lost touch with other people and become more lonely and isolated, we've adopted a perspective where just about every experience is looked at in terms of the worst possible outcome. This leads to an increase in counselling [sic] and therapy, which often increases fear instead of diminishing it, and an impoverishment of politics due to timidity and low expectations.¹

This course will introduce in a seminar fashion the notion of fear as both a sociological construct as well as a motif that has embedded itself into modern life. Throughout, we will explore fear as a sociological construct while tracing its evolution into the mainstream of contemporary life where social facts have

¹ In Duffy, Michael. "The Sum of Our Fears." *Sydney Morning Herald*. 2 August 2005.

come to be viewed through the prism of fear with discussions of risk and risk-taking taking an equally center stage in such discussions. In addition, because this is a seminar, this class requires regular preparation and participation by all students. As a result, students will assume a more active and take responsibility for more of the role interaction that will take place than in most previous classes.

Course Requirements:

Students will be required to take a midterm exam, review a book (to be chosen from compiled list), write a negotiated 13-15 page paper, lead a class session, and, generally perform other tasks as befitting a 300 level course (See Misc.). The midterm will be spaced at approximately 1/2 of the way through the course while fair warning will precede the exam and any other due dates.

Using a traditional grading scale, the breakdown of grades is as follows:

- Book Review 25%
- Midterm Exam Grade 25%
- Research Project (includes oral and other components) 25%
- Participation and Other Misc. Tasks 25%

As I typically employ letter grades on written assignments, I offer the below list of how each letter translates numerically:

- A+=100/A= 96/A-=92
- B+=89/B=86/B-=82
- C+=79/C=76/C-=72
- D+=69/D=66/D-=62
- F=55-50 [actual score depends on the severity of the error(s)/student will be notified]
- Failure to turn in work translates into a *ZERO*

Grade Advisory – While I respect that students have to be grade conscious, it is imperative that students understand that I treat evaluations as professional—not personal. Do not ask from me anything that steps outside the boundaries, and do not wait until *Zero Hour* to inquire as to your status.

Classroom Decorum and Expectations:

Attendance – Class attendance is mandatory and vitally important to your success. Failure to attend on a regular basis not only puts your grade in jeopardy but may also be met with a lowered mark for participation.

- There are no excused absences. If you have a legitimate emergency, it is your responsibility to bring it to the attention of your instructor at your earliest convenience.

Tardiness – Tardiness to class is not only detrimental to the learning process but quite disruptive and unfair to those who make it to class on time regularly. Recurring tardiness shows a lack of respect for the classroom, the instructor, and one’s fellow students and will not be tolerated. Therefore, once the door has been shut, you will not be permitted to enter.

Deadlines – Assignment deadlines are exactly that. Students are expected to comply with deadlines in accordance with all rules, guidelines, and expectations of each assignment proffered. Failure to do so will result in a tendering of no-grade for work not done to expectation or submitted on time. The policy for late papers is as follows:

- On minor assignments, you will be allowed to turn in one late assignment as long as it is within twenty-four hours for a ten point deduction. After your one exception, you will no longer enjoy this luxury
- Do not expect me to have to chase you down in order to turn in assignments!

Participation – Classroom discussions are a big part of the learning process. Your participation is not requested—it is required. Failure to do so is both in bad taste and could conceivably be detrimental to your ability to learn effectively.

Disruptions – Disruptive behavior, including talking, unengaged behavior, i.e. reading a book, magazine, or newspaper, sleeping, chronic tardiness alongside loud entrances, and any other unfortunate breach will not be tolerated. Learning is an active process, and failure to actively engage not only threatens the individual’s ability to learn but also affects those around him or her.

Academic Honesty – You are all responsible for knowing and adhering to the code of academic honesty here at Moravian College. For those of you unfamiliar with this code, it can be found on pages fifty-two through fifty-seven in your student handbook.

Please note: It is your responsibility to see to it that these expectations and guidelines are met satisfactorily and consistently. I take the classroom quite seriously, and I expect all of you to do the same as well.

Out of Class Submission Expectations:

- a title page with a suitable title, your name, the course, section, and my name all spelled correctly
- 12 font (in black) with default margins and spacing set at 1½ to 2
- page numbers
- a *References* section (if necessary) at the end of the work done in the most recent citation form of your choice (depends on your major and other factors)²

² Work not properly cited will not be graded and could be submitted to the Academic Standards Committee for an investigation of a plagiarism charge. Also, *Wikipedia* and other types of non-academic encyclopedias will under no circumstances be considered legitimate sources!

- or every unedited internet site you must have at least ***two*** published sources
- with few exceptions, single & two-digit numbers (zero *through* ninety-nine) are to be spelled out; three digits are to be written numerically
- be wary of overuse of abbreviations and/or contractions
- a staple in the upper left hand corner (no frilly covers)

****Please Note that all in-class work must be done in blue or black ink****

On Writing and Research:

As this instructor is particularly driven by written expression, you should expect that there will be an emphasis placed on written expression in this course. I should also like you to know from the start that I spend a great deal of time pouring over your writing and expect that you will read and explore my commentary on all things ranging from content to grammar, punctuation, and syntax. Please try to check your ego at the doors and realize that this is a learning experience while convincing yourself that blips and missteps are all part of the process.

You should also note that where applicable, this instructor expects his students to deal directly with all matters relating to the citation process. Failure to do so will be dealt with harshly with penalties ranging from a zero on work not properly documented to a formal report to the proper academic disciplinary committee.

Breakdown of Course Topics:

Unit I: Conceptualizing Fear: Setting the Scene (Approx. 16 January – 27 February)

- What Is a Sociology of Fear?
- Moral Panics
- The Nature of Risk Today
- Shaping the Image of Fear
- Managing Change
- Science, Health, and Welfare
- The Precautionary Principle
- What's Become of the Accident?
- Stats and Other Damned Lies

Film Selection: *A Clockwork Orange*, Director's Cut (with guest lecture)

Midterm Exam

Unit II: Student-Driven Presentations (Approx. 12 March – 16 April)

****Check Email Daily****