

Name of Presenter: Clare Nowalk

Name of Faculty Sponsor: Joslyn Brenton

Title of Presentation: Caught Up in the Life: A Sociological Examination of Sex Trafficking in the United States

The proposed oral presentation will begin by providing a definition of sex trafficking. Relevant terminology used in the sex trafficking industry will also be given in conjunction to this. These terms will then be applied specifically to the United States, characterizing how the industry functions, what victims look like, and, with the help of statistics, the pervasiveness of the problem. This will allow for a shared understanding among audience members of the basic knowledge needed when thinking critically about the industry.

After establishing the basics of the industry, the bulk of the presentation will focus on how sociology can be used to better understand why and how it happens. Three systems of inequality will be at the base of this analysis: racism, sexism, and wealth inequality. These three categories will be applied as lenses for the presentation, creating connections between what audience members may already be familiar with when they think of sociology and making that knowledge relevant to the issue of sex trafficking. With the support of case studies describing the experiences of victims who have been trafficked, myths and over dramatizations of sex trafficking in popular media portrayals will be challenged.

The last minute or so of the presentation will build on all of this to provide ideas about solutions to the question of what audience members can do with this information. Audience members will be asked to leave the presentation thinking critically about the existence of sex trafficking in the United States as well as offer a call to action to take part in movements that provide resources to victims that may be targets of social inequalities such as racism, sexism, and class inequality.

The content of this presentation is drawn from a three-credit independent study completed in Fall 2018 in partial fulfillment of the Sociology major.