

Student Spotlight

Student Concerns Subcommittee

Canadian Sociological Association

Janaya Davis

**Undergraduate Student, Athabasca University,
Sociology Dept.**



Janaya's academic work is situated in comparative historical sociology, centering on the intersections of state formation, war, and religion. Dedicated to postcolonial frameworks and recovering the contributions of historically overlooked scholars, her research brings a critical commitment to nuance when studying conflict and institutional power. She plans to pursue an MA and PhD in Sociology, wholeheartedly dedicating her life and work to critiquing state violence, systemic corruption, and institutional power.

Nicole McNair

PhD Candidate, McMaster University, Sociology Dept.

Nicole's PhD research examines the intersections of Indigenous motherhood, activism, and fear that emerge in the Community Hearings from the National Inquiry into MMIWG2SLGBTQIA+. Nicole engages in student advocacy work as the current Chair of the CSA Student Concerns Subcommittee. As a white settler with treaty responsibilities, Nicole's research and advocacy work is influenced by settler colonial studies, decolonial frameworks, and both Indigenous and abolitionist feminisms.



For more information and nomination forms:

www.csa-scs.ca/student-spotlight

Have something you'd like to share with us?



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Janaya Davis

She/Her

Undergraduate Student

Bachelor of Arts – Sociology

Athabasca University

Canadian Sociological Association: Student Concerns Subcommittee - Communications

Before joining the Student Concerns Subcommittee (SCS), I was drawn to the CSA as an avenue to connect with a wider academic network. Coming from a non-traditional background, having to take multiple gaps in between semesters and finishing the bulk of my education through independent and distance learning, I wanted to find a meaningful way to engage with the broader discipline across Canada. When the Communications Representative role opened up, I recognized a unique opportunity to use my background to connect distant students, demystify academic pathways, and promote sociology as accessible, practical, and intellectually engaging for peers at all levels.

A primary motivation for stepping into this role was the desire to make sociology feel alive beyond the lecture hall or journal pages. Growing up neurodivergent, I constantly perceived micro- and macro-level social patterns that others seemed to look right past, which often led to being dismissed or misunderstood by peers, a struggle I still navigate today. Finding sociology, and particularly immersing myself in the works of Émile Durkheim and C. Wright Mills, offered profound comfort. Reading their work affirmed that my observations were valid, helping me realize I was not alone in my human experiences. Sociology became an indispensable outlet and a true passion. It provides the language to map out the world, connect personal troubles to public issues, and channel that cognitive lens into meaningful critique. On the SCS, my goal is to amplify diverse student voices, foster cross-institutional dialogue, and create space for students who might perceive the social landscape through alternative, and even neurodivergent, frameworks.

Student Spotlight



Janaya Davis

Additional project insights...

One of the most complex parts of bridging academic research with frontline experience is navigating the contrast between abstract theory and urgent human suffering. Alongside navigating my own personal challenges with mental health and instability, my professional background is grounded in the frontlines of addiction and homelessness. Working directly with individuals navigating carceral systems, displacement, and institutional neglect constantly forces me to ask, who this scholarship is serving, and how our theoretical work genuinely account for the material conditions on the ground. Navigating this balance means refusing sanitized language and bringing humility, vulnerability, and rigorous nuance to both research and advocacy.

Existing in academic spaces through non-traditional routes can feel daunting. Academia frequently privileges linear trajectories and institutional conformity, making it easy to doubt the place of frontline experience or alternative ways of thinking. However, my journey has taught me that authentic change-making requires listening deeply to marginalized realities rather than relying on top-down assumptions. Grounding macro-level inquiry in lived human experience is challenging, but it remains essential for building a sociology that refuses complicity with state violence and remains ethically accountable.

More About Me...

I am an undergraduate student driven by curiosity, critical inquiry, and a genuine desire to do work that matters. I believe that academia should be an open door rather than an ivory tower, and that connecting across our vulnerabilities and shared challenges is how we build a stronger discipline. I warmly invite fellow student members to reach out, connect, and collaborate. Our collective voices and shared experiences are what make this community vibrant, and in particular, what makes the Canadian Sociological Association distinct in its own right.

Outside of my studies and work, I find balance in spending time outdoors, hiking in the summer and walking my dog through city parks year-round. I am an avid reader, with a special interest in history. Even in this downtime, my sociological imagination, as Mills would suggest, shapes how I interpret even my personal interests and activities. I cherish my excitement for academia and my pursuit for social justice, and I enjoy sharing this enthusiasm with colleagues, students, and global communities.

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Canadian Sociological Association



Nicole McNair

They/Them/Any

PhD Candidate

Department of Sociology

McMaster University

Canadian Sociological Association: Student Concerns Subcommittee

Before becoming a member of the Student Concerns Subcommittee (SCS), I subscribed to the CSA student listserv and browsed the CSA website for student events and activities. I attended a virtual, pre-conference Coffee Chat hosted by the SCS before my first CSA Conference, to get to know other student members before going to the in-person conference. This got me interested in learning more about the SCS. I've always been passionate about service and community work, so when I saw an opening for the Cross-Appointed Decolonization Subcommittee Student position, I applied. I was selected for the position in 2024, so I'm now in my third and final year as a member of the SCS.

One of the main motivations for joining the SCS was to have the opportunity to learn more about the experiences, needs and concerns of sociology students across the country. Further, I wanted the opportunity to be able to address these needs and hopefully make tangible changes to improve sociology students' experiences, even if in some small way. I was also excited at the opportunity to collaborate with fellow sociology students, since I care about community work and believe that it is essential for change-making. Given that I am also passionate about sociology, I was eager to learn more about the CSA and how it operates. As the current Chair of the Student Concerns Subcommittee, I also hold a position on the CSA's Executive Committee (EC). This position has allowed me to learn so much about the organization, while providing the opportunity to make change, since I am able to vote on CSA motions and use my voice to advocate for students' needs and concerns at EC meetings.

Student Spotlight



Nicole McNair

Additional project insights...

One challenging part of engaging in student advocacy work is navigating when to speak up and when to listen. As a white settler, I have made genuine efforts to 'unsettle the settler within' (Regan 2011) and to better understand the privileges that I have, while also learning and understanding about how these privileges come at the expense of harming others. In learning more about these dynamics, I try my best to shape my advocacy around what I learn from listening to those who experience harm and oppression and use my white privilege to amplify their voices, needs and concerns. Doing this comes with the risk of making mistakes, which can be extremely daunting. Making mistakes can be a humbling experience and academia is not always a space where humility is encouraged.

In addition, it has become evident that speaking out and challenging the status quo comes with risks and repercussions. Finding balance between speaking out to challenge systemic oppression and discrimination, while thinking about how it might impact potential career opportunities, is a real concern. Ultimately, I do my best to act in ways that align with my moral code and hope that whatever direction my future takes, opportunities arise that also align with these principles. Surrounding myself and working with like-minded folks also helps ease this worry.

More About Me...

I am an imperfect human who is trying my best to do work that I am proud of and that will hopefully make some change in the world. I am not at all 'on track' with my PhD program, but have come to accept that we all have our own journey and I try hard not to compare myself, or where I'm at in my program, with others. I believe deeply in community and genuinely hope that initiatives like the Student Spotlight will help us connect with each other. The world we're living in is challenging and a lot of folks are struggling, but I remain hopeful that through connection and community, we can build beautiful things amidst the chaos and the ugly.

Outside of academia, I love reading, eating and travelling. I love attending book talks, borrowing library books and talking about books with anyone. Food brings me joy and I love breaking bread with friends, old and new. Some of the best conversations happen while sharing food. I've lived and worked in several countries (and continents) and truly believe that exposure to other cultures helps build empathy and understanding.

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Interested in being featured?

The Student Spotlight Program allows students to share academic research, applied sociological work, activism, and community engagement projects.

Eligibility

- Students may self-nominate or can be nominated by a faculty member or colleague
- Nominated students must be a member in good standing of the Canadian Sociological Association
- Nominees may be a university or college student at any level of study (Undergraduate, MA, Professional Degree, PhD)

Once Selected

- The nominee will be notified via email. They will be asked to confirm their profile information and given the opportunity to submit a photo (if desired) before the profile is made public.
- Profiles will be posted on the CSA website for one (1) year before being archived. Profiles will also be posted on SCS social media accounts.

Equity Statement

The Canadian Sociological Association (CSA) is committed to the values and principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization. We recognize and honour the intersectionality of equity-based identities. The CSA therefore invites and encourages the nomination (including self-nomination) of members from marginalized groups, including Indigenous peoples, racialized persons, persons with disabilities, persons who identify as women, and/or 2SLGBTIQ+.

For more information and nomination forms, visit:

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