

# **Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology**

## **SPEAKER SERIES:**

### **Jean Sebastien Guy Memorial Lecture**

#### **Theoretical Approaches to Therapy Culture**

**Dr. Peter Mallory, Department of Sociology  
St. Francis Xavier University**

The language of therapy and counselling now infuses social life well beyond the formal setting of the therapist-client relation. Many people today, for example, speak of practicing self-care or struggling to discover their “authentic” selves. In the quest to live a fulfilling life, many of us put faith in the power of positive thinking or in open communication to alleviate life’s problems. Likewise, we can turn to an extensive wellness industry promising us access to emotional and psychological wellbeing. Given how powerful and pervasive the language of psychology and emotions has become, sociologists and anthropologists now believe we’re living in a “therapeutic culture” or a “therapeutic society”—that is, a society where people think of themselves, their relationships, and the institutions that make up the social world in primarily psychological terms. This talk takes a theoretical approach to the scholarship on therapeutic culture, focussing on the concept of culture in its various iterations. As I argue, the most significant advances in research on therapy culture have been sparked through theoretical developments in the concept of culture more generally. By drawing out the often-latent meaning of culture in therapy culture, we gain a richer appreciation for the conceptual development of the field and its core animating tensions.

**Tuesday, June 9, 2026**

**2:30 p.m., room TBA**

**All Welcome!**