SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIETY  
(Sociology 125)  

Fall 2015  
Meets: MWF 10-10:50 AM  
Room: King 321  

INSTRUCTOR: Prof. Clovis L. White  
OFFICE: 301-A King Building  
OFFICE HRS:  MW 2:30-4PM or by appointment  

PHONE: 775-8374  
EMAIL: clovis.white@oberlin.edu or cwhite@oberlin.edu  

COURSE DESCRIPTION:  

This is a survey course designed to introduce you to the sociological way of thinking about our social world. This course will review many of the concepts, theories and research findings related to the study of social life. In particular, a number of areas of sociological inquiry to be included are: (1) sociological perspectives and research; (2) notions of culture and social inequality; (3) social institutions such as the family and education; (4) socialization; (5) class, gender, race and ethnic inequalities; and (6) deviance and social control. Intermixed with these topics will be discussions or references to social change processes.

COURSE GOALS:

Goal 1: Developing a Sociological Imagination or Sociological Perspective: The course seeks to broaden your understanding of the dynamics associated with social behavior. In doing so, you will be challenged to develop a “sociological perspective” to explain and analyze social behavior.

Goal 2: Developing Information Literacy: Important to developing the sociological imagination is to develop knowledge of the available resources important to the examination of social phenomenon. This will involve exploring library and technological resources critical to the exploration of sociological literature.

Goal 3: Developing Skills to Write and Evaluate Critically: In this course you will be challenged to develop techniques to think and write critically about social phenomenon.

Goal 4: Reviewing and Interpreting Sociological Literature: Just as you will engage in perspectives on societies and social behavior, you will be exposed to the research process by reviewing and interpreting sociological literature on a topic of your choosing.

Goal 5: Developing Community Awareness: To gain a greater appreciation and understanding of society and social behavior and its impact on social lives in the local community.
COURSE FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS:

CLASS FORMAT/PRACTICES: At least once a week, class sessions will be devoted to lectures on topics for the given week. In general, we shall begin a new unit or topic area each week (e.g., socialization). You will benefit most from the lectures if you do the readings early in the week as they are assigned.

CLASS PARTICIPATION/GROUP DISCUSSIONS: As part of this requirement your attendance to class is necessary. Attendance will be taken every class. You are allowed two unexcused absences. More absences will lower your participation grade. Many times during the semester we will be discussing issues or topics related to the unit or readings under study. Students are expected to participate in the discussion to meet this requirement as well. On the given day of discussion, students will usually be divided up into several discussion groups often to contemplate several questions. Although the professor will determine specific points of discussion, some discussions will be based on some of the following:

- Readings assigned (e.g., on Blackboard or from Susan Ferguson’s book, *Mapping the Social Landscape*) or may include some social issue which has emerged recently in the public arena.
- A film/video/DVD viewed and related to the issues at hand.
- Discussion on each of the books *The New Jim Crow, Death and Life of the Great American School System, Just One of the Guys* and *Ain’t No Makin It*.

READING ASSIGNMENTS: Readings are assigned for each week from the books listed below and readings placed on Blackboard (BB). Assigned readings are listed in the lecture/topic section of the syllabus (see pp. 6-9). Each member of the class is expected to read the material and be prepared to discuss it in class.

List of required books to be used during the semester:

editions as well).

**EXAMS:** There will be **TWO IN-CLASS EXAMS.** Each exam will consist of short answer questions and essay questions requiring the integration of materials covered in the readings, lectures, discussion and film/video/DVD presentations. These exams are **NOT OPEN BOOK.** Each exam is worth 25% of your final grade. Exam 2 is **NOT CUMULATIVE** and will be held during the exam period. The **TENTATIVE** exam dates are as follows:

- **FIRST EXAM:** Friday, October 16th
- **SECOND EXAM:** Friday, December 18th, 2-4 pm  Location: TBA

In preparation for the exam, you will be given a review guide on the materials to be covered in the exam and the structure of the exam.

**EXERCISES:** Each student will be responsible for completing **FOUR EXERCISES** during the semester. Each of these exercises will involve the application of experiential activities and/or library research within the sociological realm. These exercises are importantly geared toward meeting some of the goals of the course. Students will be asked to write a 1-5 page paper as it relates to the specific exercise. All the exercises must be completed. This is **40% of your final grade.** Below is a brief description of the exercises and their relationship to the goals of the course. Note that a more detailed description of the exercise will be made available later:

**Exercise 1: REFLECTION EXERCISE ON SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION:**

In this exercise you will explore the concept of “sociological imagination”. Sociological imagination is a term coined by the sociologist C Wright Mills about the perspective we must have whenever we conduct research or observe our social world. This examination will be done in relationship to an article written by C. Wright Mills. This exercise is specifically related to Goal 1 (*Developing a Sociological Imagination or Sociological Perspective*).

**Exercise 2: DEVELOPING A RESEARCH TOPIC AND AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.**

Based on information gained through information literacy session, you will be asked to conduct library research, and construct an annotated bibliography based on a sociological topic and question of your choosing. This activity is specifically geared toward addressing Goals 2 (*Developing Information Literacy*) and 3 (*Developing Skills to Write and Evaluate Critically*)
Exercise 3: CONSTRUCTING A LITERATURE REVIEW OF SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH.

This exercise is an extension of the work that you have done on the previous exercise on annotated bibliography. The purpose of this exercise is to create a written literature review on the sociological topic of your choosing. Essentially, you will construct a paper based on (1) the research question of interest to you (e.g., what is the role of racial attitudes in intergroup conflict? Is there one cause associated with racial conflict or are there other important contributors?) and (2) explore and review what the sociological literature has to say about this topic. This requires constructing a written review of the relevant past research on the topic (i.e., like displayed in your annotated bibliography but in essay format. For example, there are those researchers who say prejudice contributes significantly to social conflict while there are others who argue that conflict is a mere consequence of competition for resources. Your job in this case would be to summarize this literature debate while noting any strengths or weaknesses or other observations that seem support either argument. Another way to think about it would be to describe the evidence that does and/or does not support each of these positions. Further instructions and examples will be given later. This exercise is directed toward meeting Goals 3 (Developing Skills to Write and Evaluate Critically) and 4 (Reviewing and Interpreting Sociological Literature).

Exercise 4: REFLECTION ON EXPERIENCE IN OWN SCHOOLS.

Here you will be asked to reflect a bit about your experience in school and the schools in your area and how this relates to experiences revealed in Jonathan Kozol’s work, Shame of the Nation and Ravitch’s work Death of the Great American School System. This activity contributes to goal 5 (Developing Community Awareness)

**GRADING:** Final grades will be assessed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Exams (2 @ 25%)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercises (4 @ 10%)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HONOR CODE:** On all exams and exercises, you are expected to follow the guidelines as established by the Oberlin College Honor System.

http://new.oberlin.edu/office/dean-of-students/honor/students.dot
As such, you are required to follow code to the letter and write and sign at the end of each academic papers, exercises, exams, quizzes, etc, submitted for credit the following: "I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment." The default of this statement is that you are required to do your own work without the help from others not explicitly authorized by me (You may, however, use campus resources, such as the library, composition instructors, or writing tutors).

**CLASS POLICIES**

- **Ground rules: Be respectful.** Let it be known that not everyone is going to agree with every author’s comments, perspectives nor my comments for that matter. It may at times become tense in class over certain topics that may appear to be of a personal nature. And I encourage you to openly express your thoughts, ideas, and experiences in written assignments or discussions. At the same time it is important that you carefully support your assertions with literature/research on the topic. Ultimately, be respectful of the rights of others to their thoughts and opinions. Be cognizant that we are engaging in intellectual learning and by no means assume that everything will be resolved in our discussion.

- **Open door policy:** You can see me during my office hours or by appointment, especially as it relates to assignments and any questions or comments you may have about course content or related issues. Do not hesitate to ask for help!

- **SPECIAL NEEDS OR DISABILITIES:** If you require special accommodations due to defined disabilities, please see me at your earliest convenience so that we can address these needs in a timely manner. You will need to present a letter from the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (Peters Hall G27) documenting the accommodations needed. Please contact Ms. Jane Boomer at x5588 or visit [http://new.oberlin.edu/office/disability-services/](http://new.oberlin.edu/office/disability-services/)

- **Other concerns:**
  1. **TURN YOUR CELL PHONES OFF OR SILENCE THEM DURING CLASS PLEASE!**
  2. **PLEASE DO NOT EAT IN CLASS.** It is very distracting.(besides some of us may be hungry as well!). Drinking a beverage is fine.
  3. Do not talk or whisper conversations with your neighbors during class. This is distracting to the rest of the class and to me!
  4. **AVOID BEING LATE TO CLASS.** This is also disturbing to the class and me. If you are consistently late for class, this could impact your letter grade.
  5. You may **NOT** have your laptops open unless to address specific special needs.
## TOPICS AND ASSIGNED READINGS

("BB" = indicates reading is on Blackboard)*

### SOCIOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

#### WEEK 1: AUGUST 31, SEPTEMBER 2, 4:
**INTRODUCTION: SOCIOLOGY AND THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION:**
What is sociology? What is social structure?

Readings:
1. David M. Newman, *Sociology*, Chapters 1 and 2 (also on BB)
2. Sue Ferguson’s, *Mapping the Social Landscape*, Chapter 1 (“The Promise”)
3. James Henslin, “Sociology and the Social Sciences” (BB)
4. Donna Gaines, “Teenage Wasteland” (BB) or Chapter 2 in Sue Ferguson’s 6th ed.

#### WEEK 2: SEPTEMBER 7:

**NO CLASS: LABOR DAY HOLIDAY OBSERVED**

#### SEPTEMBER 9, 11:
**THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES:** In what ways to sociologists look at the nature of our social existence?

Readings:
2. Sue Ferguson’s, Chapter 4 (“Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology”) (7th ed or BB)

#### WEEK 3: SEPTEMBER 14, 16, 18:
**RESEARCH PROCESS:** How do we know what we know?

Readings:
1. Sue Ferguson, Chapter 7 (“Finding Out How the World Works”) (7th ed or BB)
2. James Henslin, “How Sociologists Do Research” (BB)
3. Diana Scully and Joseph Marolla, “Riding the Bull at Gilley’s: Convicted Rapists Describe the Rewards of Rape” (BB)
WEEK 4: SEPTEMBER 21: INFORMATION LITERACY SESSION: IN CLASS
SEPTEMBER 23: NO CLASS IN OBSERVANCE OF YOM KIPPUR
SEPTEMBER 25: CULTURE

Readings:
2. Sue Ferguson, Chapter 10 (“Culture: A Sociological View”) in 7th ed or BB
3. “The Tattoo Subculture” on BB

WEEK 5: SEPTEMBER 28, 30, OCTOBER 2: SOCIALIZATION: How do we become who we are?

Readings:
1. D. Newman, Sociology, chapters 5 (“Building Identity”) (also on BB)
2. Kingsley Davis, “Extreme Isolation” (BB)

EXERCISE 2 DUE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2nd

WEEK 6: OCTOBER 5, 7, 9: THE SELF: Who are you?

Readings:
1. D. Newman, Sociology, chapters 6 (“Building Image”) (also on BB)
2. Sue Ferguson, Chapter 11 (“Night to His Day: The Social Construction of Gender.”)

WEEK 7: OCTOBER 12, 14, 16: DEVIANCE & SOCIAL CONTROL: Are you deviant?/ MIDTERM EXAM

Readings
1. D. Newman, Sociology, chapter 8, “Constructing Difference: Social Deviance” (also on BB)
2. William J. Chambliss, “The Saints and the Roughnecks” (BB)

MIDTERM IN-CLASS EXAM: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16th

WEEK 8: OCTOBER 17-25: FALL BREAK
SOCIAL INEQUALITIES


Readings:
1. D. Newman, Sociology, review chapter 9, read chapter 10 (“The Architecture of Inequality: Social Class and Inequality”) (also on BB)
2. Sue Ferguson, Chaps. 23 (“Some Principles of Stratification”)
3. Jay MacLeod, Ain’t No Makin It, (all)

WEEK 10: NOVEMBER 2, 4, 6: INEQUALITIES BY RACE AND ETHNICITY: How and why does one racial and/or ethnic characteristics impact ones place in society?

Readings:
2. Michelle Alexander, The New Jim Crow, ALL

WEEK 11: NOVEMBER 9, 11, 13: INEQUALITIES BY GENDER AND SEX: How does ones gender and sex play a role in our behavior and access to social rewards?

Readings:
1. D. Newman, Sociology, chapter 12 (“The Architecture of Inequality: Sex and Gender”) (also on BB)

EXERCISE 3 DUE FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13TH

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

WEEK 12: NOVEMBER 16, 18, 20: INSTITUTIONS & THE FAMILY: Do we know what is a family is today?

Readings:
1. D. Newman, Sociology, Chapter 7 (“Building Social Relationship: Intimacy and Families”) (also on BB)
2. Sue Ferguson, Chapters 53 (“The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage”) in 7th and 6th Ed)
**WEEK 13: NOVEMBER 23, 25:**  
**EDUCATION:** Do we all get the same education?

**NOVEMBER 27:**  
**NO CLASSES THANKSGIVING RECESS**

Reading:

**WEEK 14: NOVEMBER 30, DECEMBER 2, 4:**  
**POWER, POLITICS & ECONOMY:** How is power distributed in the political and economic arenas?

Reading:
1. Diana Kendall, “Politics in a Global Perspective” and “the Economy in Global Perspective” (BB)
2. Sue Ferguson, Chapt. 35 (“The Power Elite”)

**WEEK 15: DECEMBER 7, 9, 11:**  
**SOCIAL CHANGE/WRAP-UP:** Will your generation change America?

Reading
1. Sue Ferguson, Chapter 58 (“Generation X, Y, and Z: Are they changing America?”

**EXERCISE 4 DUE: MONDAY, DECEMBER 7TH**

**WEEK 16: DECEMBER 12-15:**  
**READING PERIOD**

**FINAL EXAMINATION:**  
**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18TH**  
2-4 PM, LOCATION TBA