Intro to Sociology: You’re Not the Boss of You
SOCI 112 Syllabus • Fall 2010
Mr. Mattson
King 323, MWF 2:30-3:20pm

Course Description
Learn the methods and theories that sociologists use to understand our mass society that emerged out of 19th-century industrial and political revolutions. This young science’s insights will help us understand contemporary controversies around inequality, social change, gender, race and power. This course will familiarize you with the relationship between sociology and other disciplines, techniques for reading original research articles, basic sociological writing skills, and mostly importantly, the social origin of individual thought and action.

This course is a prerequisite for upper-division sociology classes.

Contact info
Office hours: M 11-noon; W 3:30-4:30; F 11-noon or by appointment
Mailbox on my door in King 305c
greggor.mattson@oberlin.edu
The best way to get in touch is in office hours. The second best way is to leave me a note in my box. The worst way to get in touch is to send me an e-mail less than 24 hours before you need a reply.

Goals
1) learn how sociologists think and work
2) read and write like a social scientist
3) analyze specific research pieces, both book-length monographs and articles
4) locate sociology in relation to other sciences and the humanities

Assessment
Homework 10%
Quizzes 10%
3 papers 60%
Final Exam 20%

Participation
• come to class on time
• be engaged (NO phones, laptops, knitting, grooming)
• having done the readings and brought them to class
• bring your reading notes
• volunteer answers to others’ questions
• come to office hours to discuss thoughts and ideas

Required Books
Office hours
Office hours are for you to have one-on-one time with me. They are the only place I will discuss grades or what you missed in class during an absence. You should visit my office hours at least twice during the semester as a matter of habit: it helps you get the most out of the course, cement your learning, and build relationships.

Reading notes
It’s better to skim each text than get stuck on a difficult page. Try skimming the whole selection in 5 minutes. Notice section headings, bold words, or highlighted quotations to get a sense of the story the author is telling. Then when you read the entire piece, you’ll already know where the argument is going. To ensure your comprehension, answer the following questions:

- what are the main concepts this author is using?
- what is the point of this article—what is the author trying to explain?
- how convincing is the argument?
- how does it relate to the others we have covered?

Attendance & homework
Homework is not accepted late and quizzes cannot be made up. I will drop your 2 lowest grades. If you will be missing class events for approved College events, provide documentation two weeks before your absence. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from a colleague and come to office hours to discuss what you missed.

Grading rubric
Assignments will be graded as follows:

- Thesis: 30 (argument suitable for essay length, recapitulated in conclusion)
- Concepts: 30 (synthesizes a variety of sources, in-text citations in APA format)
- Organization: 20 (ideas grouped in paragraphs, evidence for main points)
- Insight: 10 (creativity, connections between texts, use of language, sparkle)
- Conventions: 10 (stapled, grammar, 1” margins, spelling, punctuated, 12-pt. font)

Grading policies
No late assignments or quizzes. No extra credit.

Final Exam
I will distribute a list of essay questions on the last day of class. From those I will choose the ones that will appear on the exam. They will be broad questions that will require you to draw on the breadth of the course and reflect on what you know about sociology.

Off-campus Assignments
Assignments may invite you to make observations or attend events off campus. Off-campus assignments are done at your own discretion; alternate assignments are available if you prefer.

Sources & Citations (APA format)
You need not make a works cited for course readings but you must cite them properly in the text in APA format. Wikipedia is not an academic source, but may lead you to primary sources.

Paraphrasing primary sources (preferred):
Media in the 1950s catered to the rising middle class, giving a misleading impression of America’s families (Coontz 1990, p. 31).

Direct quotations (use sparingly) must be introduced:

Stephanie Coontz cites the enduring power of the media for creating a new American tradition during the baby boom: “The happy, homogenous families that we ‘remember’ from the 1950s were... a result of the media’s denial of diversity” (1990, p. 31).

Disability Accommodations
If you are a student with a disability, register with the Office of Disability Services (Peters G-27/28 x55588) at least two weeks before any due date or exam.

Honor Code: http://www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/honorcode.html
Remember to sign the code on each assignment—it is your pledge to know the boundaries of cheating (not doing your own work) plagiarism (taking credit for someone else’s work) and fabrication (making up sources or observations). All quotations must be cited properly.

Assignments: 4 pages max.
The assignments are evidence of your comprehension of the course materials and your ability to synthesize them with our discussions. Do not mistake the length of these assignments for their importance. Each is worth 20% of your grade and deserves attention over several days (and editing!), not a last-minute dash the night before.

Assignment #1: The sociological story of a name DUE Tuesday 10/5 at noon
Using your name or the name of a close friend, find out the story of the name (ask parents/grandparents). Use the texts and internet data sources we have used in class to construct a sociological story of your name—what does this name say about the person? Into what trends does it fit? If it defies trends, speculate upon sociological reasons why.

Assignment #2: Peer interview DUE Tuesday 11/2 at noon
Use Lareau to analyze class position and trajectory. Interview someone who is NOT a friend about their upbringing and elementary school extracurricular experiences. Use concepts from Unequal Childhoods to put your interviewee’s experiences into a broader sociological context.

Assignment #4: Observations in public DUE Thursday 12/2 at noon
Using Grazian as a model, make observations of a group of Oberlin students to make a sociological argument about the interactions you witness. How do social roles influence the “personal” decisions made by your colleagues?

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