Introduction to Sociology Syllabus

Objectives

Books &tc.
Daniel John Steward
Introduction to Sociology

Engagements
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Reckonings
Office Hours: TR 3-4 (Drop-In); W (Appt.)
TR 08:35—09:50 am

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Niceties

Objectives

The discipline of sociology will be introduced as a field of inquiry. We will examine many of the questions that sociologists ask, the theories that help us frame these questions and the methods that help us answer them. We will address questions such as: "Why is there inequality?" and "Can individuals change society?" and "What is the role of religious institutions?" Such general questions will also be explored in various particular contexts. Each student will select a social problem to study over the course of the semester, complete a research notebook about the problem, and bring his or her research and reflections on this problem to bear on the general questions that arise in our readings and class discussions. In addition to the problems selected by students, the class will also consider the long-standing (and ongoing) social struggles regarding evolutionary theory in the modern world (i.e., the challenges to Darwinism from the "Scopes Monkey Trial" in the early 20th century to the "intelligent design" debates of the early 21st century). Over the course of the semester, students will be expected to:

Appreciate the centrality of questions and problems in the development of the sociological imagination.

Practice using sociological concepts and theories to illuminate and explore social problems that they find particularly interesting or important.

Enhance their research and writing skills through the completion of a course notebook.

Books &tc.

The following books (available at the Oberlin College Bookstore) are required for this course:


Other books, articles, films, webpages, etc. will be required or recommended from time to time throughout the semester. Students will be given advance notice of such requirements so that they may acquire copies of such materials and prepare for class discussions. Students are expected to read/view/study all required materials prior to the class session in which they will be discussed, and to bring their copies of these materials to class.
Engagements

This course will be a sustained engagement with the required texts, and our class sessions will typically include both lecture and discussion regarding these texts. Although subject to change, at the discretion of the instructor, the following schedule of engagements will help students to plan their work over the course of the term.

Week 01: 2006.09.04—2006.09.10
Read/discuss this Syllabus. Read/discuss Berger (1963: 164-176).
2006.09.05 (T) Classes begin. Enrollment, drop/add begin. Happy Syllabus Day!

Week 02: 2006.09.11—2006.09.17
2006.09.14 (R) Add/Drop deadline.

Week 03: 2006.09.18—2006.09.24

Week 04: 2006.09.25—2006.10.01

Week 05: 2006.10.02—2006.10.08
Read/discuss Charon (2007: 77-109). Read/discuss Krugman (1996) and/or a similar (but hopefully more recent) article, blog, website, etc. of your choosing.

Week 06: 2006.10.09—2006.10.15
2006.10.12 (R) Course Notebook (MIDTERM) is due today.
Midterm course evaluations today.

Week 07: 2006.10.16—2006.10.22
Fall Recess: R & R

Week 08: 2006.10.23—2006.10.29
Read/discuss Charon (2007: 151-175). (Other readings TBD.)
Student/Instructor Conferences
2006.10.26 (R) Midterm grades available via PRESTO.

Week 09: 2006.10.30—2006.11.05
Read/discuss Charon (2007: 176-214). (Other readings TBD.)
Student/Instructor Conferences
2006.10.31 (T) Happy Halloween!

Week 10: 2006.11.06—2006.11.12
Read/discuss Charon (2007: 215-246). (Other readings TBD.)
2006.11.07 (T) P/NP, CR/NE, or withdraw deadline for a full semester course.

Week 11: 2006.11.13—2006.11.19
Read/discuss Charon (2007: 247-286). (Other readings TBD.)

Week 12: 2006.11.20—2006.11.26
Read/discuss Charon (2007: 287-307). (Other readings TBD.)
2006.11.23 (R) Happy Thanksgiving! (No class today.)

Week 13: 2006.11.27—2006.12.03
Read/discuss Charon (2007: 308-328). (Other readings TBD.)
Week 14: 2006.12.04—2006.12.10
Group meetings. Panel Discussions.

Panel discussions.

Last day of classes...

Exam Week: Don’t Panic (Breathe...)
2006.12.20 (W) Course Notebook (FINAL) is due (11:00 am).

Next Year...
2007.01.08 (M) Fall Grades available on PRESTO.

• Objectives • Books &tc. • Engagements ••• Reckonings •
• Literacies • Inquiries • Niceties •

Reckonings

Two senses of 'reckoning' are important in this course. First and foremost, our reckonings are our considered opinions regarding reading and research that we have done. Such reckonings will be recorded throughout the semester in a Course Notebook. This notebook will have three parts:

Mini-Essays: Students will write six mini-essays in response to questions posed by the instructor. Each mini-essay should be 300-500 words long (approximately 1-2 pages). Three of these essays must be completed by 2006.10.12, and the other three by 2006.12.20. Each of these essays is worth 0-5 points.

Social Problem Essay: Students will write an essay about a social problem of their choosing. The essay should be 2000-2500 words long (approximately 8-10 pages). Each student must propose a social problem for analysis, and explain why she or he has chosen it, by 2006.10.12, and each student must complete his or her essay by 2006.12.20. The essay should make appropriate references to the sources listed in the bibliography. The final analysis will be worth 0-20 points.

Annotated Bibliography: Students will compile a bibliography recording their research regarding their social problem. Each bibliography must include at least 15 sources, at least five of which must be annotated. Each annotation should be 250-300 words long, and each citation must be in proper form (according to the ASA Style Guide, 2d ed.). Each source entry will be worth 0-1 points (to a maximum of 15 points), and each annotation will be worth 0-5 points (to a maximum of 25 points). At least one of the annotated entries must refer to a scholarly source (i.e., a peer-reviewed article, a law review, or another source approved by the instructor), and no more than five of the bibliography entries may be websites, blogs, etc. Ten entries must be completed by 2006.10.12, two of which must be annotated; the remaining entries are due by 2006.12.20.

The course notebook must be completed and delivered to the instructor in both a Midterm and a Final version, in either a .doc format or a .html format. Students are expected to submit their notebooks in both printed form and as an email attachment.

Grading Scale

097-100% ... A+
093-096% ... A
090-092% ... A-
087-089% ... B+
083-086% ... B
080-082% ... B-
The second sense of 'reckoning' is the calculation of a grade for each student. In this course, student reckonings (sense #01) will contribute to student grades (sense #02) according to this Grading Scale. Students may earn a total of 100 points in this course: 90 from the Course Notebook and 10 from class participation. Letter grades will be assigned, at the end of the course, according to the Grading Scale. It gives you a worst-case formula: For each point range, the scale shows you the lowest possible letter grade. Higher grades might be awarded depending upon overall class performance. If the highest-scoring student/s have not earned A’s, but I am convinced that students have (as a whole) been working diligently, then I will add enough points to the high scores to move them into the A-range and the same number of points to all of the other scores (moving everyone up a bit). Of course, it is entirely possible—though extremely unlikely, in my experience—that all students in the class will earn A’s. It is also possible—though again, extremely unlikely—that everyone will earn F’s.

There are no official prerequisites for this course—it is, after all, an introduction to sociology. There are, however, some practical prerequisites:

(Literal) Literacy: You should feel very comfortable reading and writing in the English language; otherwise, this course will be a nightmare. By 'literacy' I do not mean the casual styles of email, text messaging, etc. I mean the proper English you find in edited texts such as newspapers and books. Written work should not include misspelled words, ungrammatical sentences, or incoherent paragraphs.

Computer Literacy: You should feel very comfortable using a computer, especially using word processors and/or text editors, browsing the worldwide web, and downloading files; if you don’t know how to do such things, you should be comfortable that you can develop those skills early in the semester.

Students will almost certainly have questions about this Syllabus, the various readings, their research, and other aspects of this course. There will be opportunities to raise questions during class and after class. The instructor will also be available for drop-in office hours and by appointment as indicated at the top of this Syllabus. A detailed guide to the Course Notebook, a Course Bibliography, and a Frequently-Asked-Questions page (the Course FAQ) will be posted early in the semester.
Students are reminded that they are bound by the Oberlin College Honor Code. Although students are encouraged to give and receive assistance from each other with respect to their ongoing research, and to discuss the readings with other students, all written work in this course should be your own.

Students with documented disabilities are invited to contact the instructor to make reasonable accommodations.

All students are encouraged to participate actively in this course and take responsibility for their own learning. And all are reminded of the immortal words of Bill S. Preston, Esq.: "Be excellent to each other."

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