This course is designed to introduce students to the discipline of sociology. The course will review and discuss sociological concepts, theories, and research. First, the course will look at the role of sociology as a tool for examining the social world. Secondly, the course will introduce major theorists, perspectives, and research problems in sociology. Popular media direct much of our attention to social problems such as crime, social inequality, and political corruption. Yet rarely are such reports accompanied by analysis of the institutional bases of these phenomena. The focus of this course is to employ sociological methods to critically analyze social problems. We will attempt to answer such questions as: "what is involved in defining an issue as a social problem?" and "how are public resources mobilized to remedy a social problem?"

**Required Readings:**

Conley, Dalton: *You May Ask Yourself: An Introduction to Thinking Like a Sociologist*

Venkatesh, Sudhir: *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets*

Massey, D et al.: *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration*

**Course Requirements:**

1. Come prepared to discuss the assigned readings and offer constructive/critical comments on the course materials.
2. There will be two required essays (9-10 pages). The topics will be assigned by the instructor. These two papers will make up 80 percent of your final grade.
3. Students will write a weekly response essay from a designated reading from *Contexts Magazine* and will be available on blackboard (The assigned readings are denoted with an *). Your response should assess the strengths and/or weaknesses of the author’s argument. These will be due at the beginning of class each Friday (unless otherwise noted) and we will discuss your reactions during class time. The response essays should be between 250-350 words. These assignments will make up 20 percent of your final grade.

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**Week 1) Introduction**

Sept 4: Introductory Concepts
* W. Beaver, “A Matter of Degrees” (blackboard)

**Week 2) The Sociological Tradition**

Sept 10: D. Conley, *You May Ask Yourself*, chapter 1
* H. Brownstein et al., “Home Cooking: Marketing Meth” (blackboard)
Week 3) Socialization and Social Networks
Sept 17: D. Conley, You May Ask Yourself, chapter 4
* G. Alan Fine & N. Difonzo “Uncertain Knowledge” (blackboard)

Week 4) Class, Status, and Social Mobility
Sept 24: D. Conley, You May Ask Yourself, chapter 14
* D. Downey, “How Schools Really Matter” (blackboard)

Week 5) Immigration and National Identity
Oct 1: D. Massey, Beyond Smoke and Mirrors, chapters 1-3
* R. Alba, “Sacco and Vanzetti and the Immigrant Threat” (blackboard)

Week 6) Incorporation, Assimilation, and Public Policy
Oct 8: D. Massey, Beyond Smoke and Mirrors, chapters 4-7
* R. Sampson, “Rethinking Crime and Immigration” (blackboard)

Week 7) Environment and Society
Oct 15: Conley, You May Ask Yourself, chapter 17
* H. Angelo, “Nature’s Looking Glass” (blackboard)

Paper #1 Due Date: TBA

Oct 22: Fall Break

Week 8) Culture and Media
Oct 29: D. Conley, You May Ask Yourself, chapter 3

Week 9) Gender and Family
Nov 5: D. Conley, You May Ask Yourself, chapter 7 & 12
* E. Armstrong “Is Hooking Up Bad for Young Women?” (blackboard)

Week 10) Racial Boundaries
Nov 12: Conley, You May Ask Yourself, chapter 13
* H. Gans, “Race as Class” (blackboard)

Week 11) Social Control and Deviance
Nov 19: Conley, You May Ask Yourself, chapter 6
* V. Rios, “Stealing a Bag of Potato Chips and Other Crimes of Resistance” (blackboard)

Week 13) Sociology in the Trenches
Nov 26: Venkatesh, Gang Leader for a Day, chapters 1-4
* M. Rank, “Rethinking American Poverty” (blackboard)

Week 14) Separate and Unequal
Dec 3: S. Venkatesh, Gang Leader for a Day, chapters 5-8
* R. Farley “The Waning of American Apartheid?” (blackboard)

Week 15) Collective Action and Social Change
Dec 10: Conley, You May Ask Yourself, chapter 18

Paper # 2: DUE DATE TBA
*The instructor reserves the right to amend/revise the syllabus at his discretion.

**Honor Code:** This course will follow the policies described in the Oberlin College Honor Code and Honor System. Please contact me if you have any questions about citation, or the relationship of the Honor Code to your work in this course. For more information on the Honor Code, see [http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html).

**Use of Technology in the Classroom:**

Access to the Internet can be a valuable aid to the classroom learning environment. Students may use laptops and other devices in order to explore concepts related to course discussions and topics. **Students are discouraged from using technology in ways that distract from the learning community (e.g. Facebook, texting, Tumblr, 4chan etc.) and if found doing so, will be asked to leave the classroom for the day and will not get credit for attendance that class session.** Students are expected to respect the educational environment. In class, all cell phones should be on silent. Unless specifically directed by the instructor, students shall refrain from sending email and instant messages, or from engaging in other activities (internet, engaging in private conversations and so on) that undermine the classroom environment for others.