INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY: THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

Course description

This course will introduce you to the field of sociology, which is the systematic study of human social action. Specifically, you will learn what sociology is, the type of research questions they study, and how sociology is used to understand individual outcomes and life chances.

Sociology seeks to explain human behavior by examining how social organization, social structures, social institutions, and culture operate as "social forces" in the construction of society. Essentially, sociologists are interested in how all group activities (economic, political, religious, social, among others) affect people's actions.

Course goals & objectives

(1) To learn that much of what we hold as "truth" is socially constructed.

(2) Develop your critical thinking skills and apply it to the study of the social world.

(3) Develop an understanding of contemporary social issues.

Required Course Materials

Text – "You May Ask Yourself" by Dalton Conley, Available at bookstore or online. Publisher: W.W. Norton and Company. ISBN: 978-0-393-93517-2

Supplementary readings available on Blackboard

Other relevant course information

1 – I am generally easier to reach by email than by phone. Do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns, I am happy to help and want you to succeed in this course.

2 - I'll be checking email frequently Monday through Friday from 9 to 5, but will not check as often at night or on weekends.

3 - Laptops are permitted in class for note taking or reading the assigned articles, anyone found to be surfing the web will be asked to leave class.

4 – The text has a helpful website located at: http://www.wwnorton.com/college/soc/conley/welcome.aspx
5 – The textbook publishing company also has a good sociology blog:
http://nortonbooks.typepad.com/everydaysociology/

6 – The Blackboard discussion board should be used to communicate with fellow students (and myself) about course material. It is especially valuable for students to use it when preparing for the examinations.

Course Requirements

Film papers. We are watching 4 films throughout the semester. You are required to write a 3-4 page essay for each that incorporates class readings. Before viewing the films I have assigned a supplementary reading that we will discuss in the class period prior to screening the film. I expect that you cite these supplementary readings in your essays. The combination of these papers accounts for 20% of your grade. (More instructions to be distributed in class.)

Exams. There are two exams throughout the semester. These are a combination of multiple choice and essay questions and the combination of the two accounts for 80% of your overall grade. Exam review sheets will be distributed one week before each examination. The final examination is not comprehensive.

Late papers. The last day to turn in written work is 12/18. One letter grade per week turned in late will be deducted from late papers.

Course Schedule/Reading List

9/4 Introduction
   The Sociological Imagination (Chapter 1).

9/6   The Sociological Imagination (Chapter 1).

9/11  Sociological Methods (Chapter 2)

9/13  Sociological Methods (Chapter 2)

9/18  Culture and Media (Chapter 3)

9/20  Culture and Media (Chapter 3)


9/27  Film #1 "Manufacturing Consent"

10/2  Socialization and the Construction of Reality (chapter 4)

10/4  Socialization and the Construction of Reality (chapter 4)
Film analysis paper #1 due via email by 10 PM

10/9 Midterm examination

10/11 Social Control and Deviance (Chapter 6)

10/16 Social Control and Deviance (Chapter 6)

10/18 Social Control and Deviance - “Common Variables Associated with the Development of Stockholm Syndrome: Some Case Examples”

10/30 Film #2 “Guerrilla: The Taking of Patty Hearst”

11/1 Stratification (chapter 7)

11/6 Stratification (chapter 7)

Film analysis paper #2 due via email by 10 PM

11/8 Capitalism and the Economy (chapter 14)

11/13 Capitalism and the Economy (chapter 14)

11/15 Capitalism and the Economy - “Empty Terrain: The Vision of the Landscape in the Residences of Contemporary Americans”

11/20 Film #3 – “People Like Us: Social Class in America”

11/27 Gender (chapter 8)

11/29 Gender (chapter 8)

Film analysis paper #3 due via email by 10 PM

12/4 Race (chapter 9)

12/6 Race (chapter 9)

12/11 Race - “Racial Formation”

12/13 Film #4 – “Race: The Power of an Illusion”

12/18 Final examination 7 to 9 PM

Film analysis paper #4 due via email by 10 PM

Grading scale

97-100 A+  87-89 B+  77-79 C+  60-69 D
I do want you to speak in class (in fact I will implore you to almost every week), but keep in mind that the most effective way for you to be an effective speaker is to also be an effective listener. This allows for actual discussion and not just people talking past each other. Learning in my classroom is a collective endeavor therefore the success of the whole depends on the ability of individuals to participate with this goal in mind.

Please turn off cell phones during class. If there is a specific reason you need your phone on (i.e. emergency) let me know. Do not talk or whisper conversations with your neighbors (unless otherwise directed) during class, it is distracting to the rest of the class and to me. present (not just in the physical sense)! When interacting in class be respectful of other opinions and listen intently. Intelligent and thoughtful discussion about social issues can be intense, so be certain you frame your comments in a respectful manner.

Honor code

This course is covered by the Oberlin College honor code which means that you are to produce your own work unless otherwise instructed. Consulting with librarians, tutors, and me is okay, but the work you submit must be yours. Any case of suspected plagiarism will be reported to the Honors Committee. For every assignment you must write/type at the top of the first page, “I affirm that I have adhered to the honor code in this assignment.” For more information see:


Special needs

I encourage students with documented disabilities, including non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injury, attention deficit/hyperactive disorder, or psychiatric disabilities, to discuss appropriate accommodations with me. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Office of Disability Services in Peters G-27/G-28.

This syllabus is tentative and may be subject to change.