SOCI 108: Introduction to Sociology

Investigating the Social World

Spring 2014
Oberlin College
Professor Julie C. Keller
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Class: Mon. & Wed. 8:35-9:50am; 341 King
Office Hours: Wednesday 4:00-6:00pm and by appointment, 324 King

Course Description

To think sociologically means questioning what we refer to as “common sense.” Sociologists often engage in interrogating taken for granted assumptions about society, organizations, and social contexts. In this course we will read sociological works to explore the current debates and issues in the discipline of sociology. We will focus on social inequality, exploring dimensions of race and ethnic relations, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic class. In doing so, you will learn about the range of methodological approaches sociologists use to better understand social processes. In addition to learning how to think like a sociologist, you will learn to analyze the work of sociologists. After completing this course successfully, you will not only be well-informed about the variety of topics in the discipline of sociology, but you will have added to your toolkit the ability to think critically and to use sociological tools to understand contemporary problems.

Course Objectives

The goals of this course are threefold. At the end of the semester I hope you will have developed the following skills: 1) The ability to critically engage with sociological material and have a rich understanding of what it means to “think like a sociologist”; 2) To understand and debate various theoretical and methodological approaches within the field of sociology; 3) The ability to analyze empirical data using sociological concepts.

Course Requirements

Attendance  Coming to class is mandatory. Each student is allowed to miss 2 days, of class and I will not ask questions about the nature of the absence. These absences are meant to cover illnesses and unforeseen events. Each absence after 2 days results in the removal of points from your total grade. Because you are graded on class participation, it is in your best interest to attend each class. Lateness is strongly discouraged. After 2 late passes, points will be deducted from your total grade. If you will be more than 15 minutes late, please don’t come to class.

**I have a no phone policy in my class. From the start of class (8:35am) until the end of class (9:50pm), please do not engage with your phone in any manner. If this policy is violated, I will ask you to leave for the class period. You may use your laptop in class, provided that it is not used for Facebook, etc.**

Participation  You will be graded on your effort to verbally engage with the topic of discussion. Of course, to be able to fully engage with the topic, you must read all of the assigned material
before coming to class each day. **Whether in hard or electronic copy, please bring the assigned readings for the day and your notes to class.** I encourage you to share your viewpoint during class discussions, even, and especially, if it contradicts that of others. Disagreement and class debates can be quite fruitful and thought-provoking. During our class discussions, please show respect to me and other students who may have different perspectives from your own.

**Quizzes & Midterm Exam** You will be periodically tested on the content of readings and lectures in 4 pop quizzes (on Wednesdays) across the semester. You will also have a midterm exam on **Monday, March 17th** consisting of concept identifications and short essay questions.

**“Wiggle It” Paper** Your first written assignment is a 4-5 page paper that uses a sociological lens to analyze responses to the recent destruction of ancient rocks by three men in Utah.

**Final Project** You will complete a multi-stage final project for this course on the subject of poverty. Working in groups, you will select a county in the U.S. with a high poverty rate and investigate the causes and consequences of poverty, as well as discuss policy reforms.

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<th>Grade Scheme</th>
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<tr>
<td>“Wiggle It” Paper</td>
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<td>Quizzes (4x10pts)</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>Final Project</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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**Required Texts** Please purchase the following books for this course. You can find them at the Oberlin campus bookstore. Copies of these books are also on reserve at Mudd Library. All other required readings will be available on the Blackboard course website.


**Students with Disabilities** Please let me know if you need disability-related accommodations in this course. Contact the Student Academic Services to develop a plan for assistance: Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Disability Services, Room G27 Peters Hall, ext. 55588.

**Academic Honesty** This course adheres to the policies of the Oberlin College Honor Code and Honor System. Please add the statement “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment” to the top of the first page on all written work. 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).
Religious Observance Please inform me by the end of Week 2 of the semester if you need to miss a class to observe a religious holiday. We will find a way for you to make up the work.

Course Schedule

Week 1: (2/3 & 2/5)—Introduction to the Discipline

M: Introduction to the Course (Syllabus Day)
W: Sociological Imagination: An Introduction
   *Course syllabus
   *C. Wright Mills, “The Promise of Sociology,” pp.1-5 from *The Sociological Imagination*
   *Conley, Ch. 1, pp.3-15

Week 2: (2/10 & 2/12)—Theory & Methods

M: “The Holy Trinity” and Other Important Theorists
   *Conley, Ch. 1, pp.15-33
W: Methods of Investigation
   *Conley, Ch. 2, pp.43-67
   *Duneier, M. 1999. *Sidewalk*, excerpt, pp.3-14

Week 3: (2/17 & 2/19)—Culture & Media

M: Culture & Sociology
   *Conley, Ch. 3, pp. 75-94 (Stop just before “Media”) 
W: Media
   *Conley, Ch. 3, pp. 94-113

Week 4: (2/24 & 2/26)—Gender & Sexuality

M: *Dude*...
   *Preface, Chapters 1 & 2
W: *Dude*...
   *Chapters 3 & 4

**DUE: Wednesday, 2/26 “Wiggle It” Paper, Hard copy in class, electronic on BB**
**Week 5: (3/3 & 3/5)—Gender & Sexuality (continued) & Deviance**

**M: Dude...**
*Chapters 5 & 6, plus Appendix

**W: Deviance & Criminology, Part 1**
*Conley, Ch. 6, pp. 187-204
*Bateson, J. 2013. “The Deadly Span,” *Contexts*  
*Optional: Contexts Podcast, “The Deadly Span,” Talk with John Bateson:*  
http://contexts.org/episodes/the-deadly-span/

**Week 6: (3/10 & 3/12)—Deviance (continued)**

**M: Deviance & Criminology, Part 2**
*Conley, Ch. 6, pp.205-233
*Fox Butterfield, “Father Steals Best”

**W: Deviance & Criminology, Part 3**

**Week 7: (3/17 & 3/19)—Immigration**

**M: Midterm Exam**

**W: Immigration**
*Conley, Ch. 9, pp.350-354
*In-class Film—*Which Way Home*

(Saturday 3/22- Sunday 3/30): Spring Break—*Please get a head start on the reading for Week 8, below. And, enjoy your break!*

**Week 8: (3/31 & 4/2)—Social Psychology**

**M: The Presentation of Self...**
*pp.1-76

**W: The Presentation of Self...**
*pp.77-113
Week 9: (4/7 & 4/9)—Social Psychology (continued)

M: The Presentation of Self...
   pp.114-166
W: The Presentation of Self...
   pp.167-237

Week 10: (4/14 & 4/16)—Poverty

M: Introduction to Studying Poverty
   *Conley, Ch. 10, pp.375-390 (stop before The War on Poverty Today)
W: The War on Poverty
   *Royce, E. 2008. “Conclusion” from Poverty and Power, pp.283-292
   *Conley, Ch. 10, pp.390-405
      http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/04/can-upward-mobility-cost-you-your-health/

Week 11: (4/21 & 4/23)—Race & Ethnicity

M: Introduction to Studying Race
   *Conley, Ch. 9, pp.325-350
W: Race (continued)
   *Tomaskovic-Devey and Warren. “Explaining & Eliminating Racial Profiling”
   *Kim. “Out of Sorts: Adoption and (Un)Desirable Children”

Week 12: (4/28 & 4/30)—Family

M: Introduction to Studying Families
   *Conley, Ch. 12, pp.451-464
   *Richards, “The Next Frontier in Fertility Treatment,” New York Times, 1/12/14:
      http://nyti.ms/19nFqkY
W: Work-Family Tensions

Week 13: (5/5 & 5/7)—Presentations

M: Group Presentations, Day 1
W: Group Presentations, Day 2

**Final Project Due: Saturday, May 17, 7:00pm**