

Sociology 101.60: Introduction to Sociology

Fall 2009
Online Version

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30-9:30 a.m., Wednesdays, 1:30-2:30 p.m.

Course summary

This course is an introduction to the basic concepts, theoretical perspectives, and substantive issues in sociology. You will learn about culture, social interactions and institutions, and social change in order to develop new ways of understanding your life and the lives of others in the context of the broader society. This process will involve your active engagement with readings, video clips, and discussions.

Course objectives

This course is designed to help you gain knowledge and develop skills that will aid you in becoming a critical thinker, a successful student, and an informed, engaged member of society. Specifically, in this course you will:

- gain knowledge of how society operates on the micro and macro levels
- learn how to interpret human behavior using a sociological framework
- discuss social issues in an informed, critical, and civil manner
- develop what C. Wright Mills called a “sociological imagination,” enabling you to understand your life and the lives of others in the context of broader historical trends and social processes
- develop critical thinking skills
- gain experience writing concise thought pieces and responding to others via the written word

Overall goal

I want you to learn something new in this class. Sounds simple, right? Well, in my experience, this isn't always such an easy task. We all have so many taken for granted assumptions about how the world works, what constitutes reality, why people behave in certain ways, etc., that it is sometimes difficult for us to recognize when “what we've always known” is keeping us from knowing more. I think that all of us—teachers and students alike—need to continually challenge ourselves to learn more about the world in which we live. I believe the way to accomplish this is by questioning status quo interpretations of reality, seeking out information that will help us

answer our questions, and understanding that we can always learn more about any given topic. You should do well in this class if you approach the material with this in mind.

Required readings

The following required book is available at the LCSC Bookstore:

Andersen, Margaret L. and Howard F. Taylor. 2009. *Sociology, The Essentials*, 5th Ed. Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth.

Additional required readings are noted in the Course Schedule and are available on the LCSC Library's Electronic Reserves.

Assignments and Grading

Your grade will be based on the following:

Discussion Posts 30% (60 pts.) You are required to contribute at least one post to the class discussion every other week. If your last name starts with the letter A-H, you will post to odd-numbered discussions (i.e. Discussion 1, 3, 5, etc.), whereas if your last name starts with the letter I-Z, you will post to even-numbered discussions (i.e. Discussion 2, 4, 6, etc.). Please see below under the heading entitled "Evaluation Criteria" for more details on the expectations for these posts.

First Exam - 20% (40 pts.) The first examination will consist of a combination of multiple choice and true/false questions on material covered during Weeks 1-5.

Second Exam - 30% (60 pts.) The second examination will consist of a combination of multiple choice and true/false questions on material covered during Weeks 7-12.

Final Exam - 20% (40 pts.) The final is a comprehensive exam consisting of a combination of multiple choice and true/false questions. It will test your knowledge of material covered throughout the semester.

*****Please keep in mind that any information from the readings is fair game for exams, whether or not it is explicitly covered in our discussions or in the virtual lectures that I post. Also be aware that the virtual lectures will sometimes introduce material not covered in the textbook, so it is important for you to read both.***

*****Exams will be timed. Although the online medium means that, in theory, you could look up answers to exam questions as you are taking them, the limited timeframe that you will have for each exam prevents this from being a realistic option. Given this, please make sure that you are thoroughly prepared for exams before starting them.***

Grading scale:

A+ = 99-100% (197-200 pts.)
A = 91-98% (181-196 pts.)
A- = 90% (179-180 pts.)
B+ = 89% (177-178 pts.)
B = 81-88% (161-176 pts.)
B- = 80% (159-160 pts.)
C+ = 79% (157-158 pts.)
C = 71-78% (141-156 pts.)
C- = 70% (139-140 pts.)
D+ = 69% (137-138 pts.)
D = 61-68% (121-136 pts.)
D- = 60% (119-120 pts.)
F = 59% (118 pts.) or below

Evaluation criteria:

The grading of exams is straightforward. Multiple choice and true/false questions are graded quantitatively – points are awarded for correct answers; no points awarded for incorrect answers.

With regard to discussions, each week up until Thanksgiving Break (with the exception of the first week and exam weeks) I will post a question or group of related questions for you to ponder and then discuss as a group. We will alternate participation in these discussions, as noted above, with half of the class participating in each one (i.e. either the A-H group or the I-Z group, depending on whether it is an odd- or even-numbered discussion). In your response posts, you should provide evidence that you have done the readings (and read the lecture notes, watched any video clips that I may have posted, etc.) by using sociological concepts and applying them appropriately. You should avoid simply summarizing what the textbook authors have to say. You should also avoid simply giving your own opinion on the topic. In other words, **you must show me that you are learning how to think sociologically**. In addition to providing your own thoughts on the questions that I pose, you should also respond to what others have written and perhaps throw out a question of your own for people to respond to. In summary, the more I see evidence of your engagement with both the course material and what your fellow classmates have to say, the better your discussion grade will be. **Quality, not quantity, is the name of the game here.**

With regard to the specific points attached to discussions, your posts for each week will be graded on a 10-point scale. A score of 7.5-8.5 is about average, so please don't wonder why you're not earning the full 10 points each week. After all, 10 out of 10 points equals 100%, a perfect score. (If you ever do receive the full 10 points, you'll know that you've really wowed me.) Keep in mind that I assign these points after the discussion for each week has ended, i.e. you are graded for your overall contribution to each week's discussion, not post-by-post. (You could have one post one week and perhaps three another week. Both weeks will be worth the same 10 points each.)

We will have 10 weeks worth of discussions before Thanksgiving, given that during the first week and on the weeks you take exams, I will not post a discussion question. And, again, each of you is required to participate in five of these, depending on where your last name falls in the alphabet. During the last two weeks of the semester, we will have one final discussion, in which

the entire class will participate. If you participate in all six of the discussions you are required to participate in, you will receive 5 bonus points. Do the math, and you'll see that it is therefore theoretically possible for you to accumulate 65 points for discussions, meaning there is an extra credit cushion built in.

Academic integrity

Any instance of plagiarism, cheating, or other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in a manner that is unpleasant for all involved. Please do not ruin your academic future by engaging in such foolish behavior. If you have any questions about what is meant by the term "academic dishonesty," please ask me for an explanation or clarification.

Additional notes

Documented disabilities

If you have a documented disability or other issue that may affect your performance in this course, please let me know during the first two weeks of the semester, and we will work together to figure out appropriate accommodations.

Contacting me

If you have questions about the course material and/or would like to further discuss any of the topics we are covering, please feel free to come chat with me on campus during my office hours. You can also try calling my office phone during office hours. Please be aware, however, that if you leave a message at any other time on my office phone, I may not get it until the following office hour. If you need to be in touch with me otherwise, please use email via the course's Blackboard site. I check email at least 3 times per week, so if I do not reply immediately, know that I will within a couple of days. If/when you email me, please include a phone number where you can be reached, so I can call you if I think that would be a more efficient and effective way to respond.

Course schedule

The course schedule is subject to change, depending on our progress in covering the material. It is your responsibility to stay abreast of the course announcements and note any changes that I might make. Occasionally, I may add an article or an excerpt from a book for you to read for the week, in addition to the required readings already listed here. I also often include links to video clips and websites in the weekly learning modules. You should consider these required viewing and/or reading.

Your active engagement with the assigned readings and discussions is key to your success in this class. The readings for each week should be completed *prior to when you post to the week's discussion* so that you are able to contribute to those discussions in an informed manner. I will post discussion questions by Wednesday evening of each week, and the discussion will remain

open until the following Sunday at midnight, which means that you must keep pace with the readings and discussions for each week.

The first two exams will be available starting at 3 p.m. on the Wednesday of the weeks they are scheduled (Weeks 6 and 13) and will remain available until the following Sunday at midnight (i.e. four days). The final will be available starting at 9 a.m. on Monday, December 14th and remain available until midnight on Wednesday, December 16th.

Week 1 (8/26): Introduction to the Course: What is Sociology?

Week 2 (9/2): Sociological Theory and Methods

Reading: Andersen and Taylor, Ch. 1; Mills, “The Promise” and Schwalbe, “Finding Out How the Social World Works” (E-reserves)

***Discussion 1 (last names starting with A-H)**

Week 3 (9/9): Culture and Socialization

Reading: Andersen and Taylor, Chs. 2 and 3

***Discussion 2 (last names starting with I-Z)**

Week 4 (9/16): The Structure of Society: Groups, Organizations, and Institutions

Reading: Andersen and Taylor, Chs. 4 and 5; Rizter, “An Introduction to McDonaldization” (E-reserves)

***Discussion 3 (last names starting with A-H)**

Week 5 (9/23): Social Control, Deviance, and Crime

Reading: Andersen and Taylor, Ch. 6

***Discussion 4 (last names starting with I-Z)**

Week 6 (9/30): *First Exam* (to be completed by midnight on Sunday, October 4th)

Reading: none

Week 7 (10/7): Social Class and Social Stratification

Reading: Andersen and Taylor, Ch. 7; Domhoff, “Who Rules America?: The Corporate Community and the Upper Class” (E-reserves)

***Discussion 5 (last names starting with A-H)**

Week 8 (10/14): Global Social Stratification: Social and Environmental Causes and Consequences

Reading: Andersen and Taylor, Ch. 8; Isbister, “The Foundations of Third World Poverty” (E-reserves)

***Discussion 6 (last names starting with I-Z)**

Week 9 (10/21): Race and Ethnicity

Reading: Andersen and Taylor, Ch. 9; Waters, “Optional Ethnicities: For Whites Only?” (E-reserves)

***Discussion 7 (last names starting with A-H)**

Week 10 (10/28): Gender

Reading: Andersen and Taylor, Ch. 10; Adams and Bettis, “Commanding the Room in Short Skirts: Cheering as the Embodiment of Ideal Girlhood” (E-reserves)

***Discussion 8 (last names starting with I-Z)**

Week 11 (11/4): Education

Reading: Anderson and Taylor, Ch. 13 (only need to read pp. 343-355); Kozol, “The Savage Inequalities of Public Education in New York” (E-reserves)

***Discussion 9 (last names starting with A-H)**

Week 12 (11/11): Power, Politics, and the Economy

Reading: Andersen and Taylor, Ch. 14; Derber, “One World Under Business” (E-reserves)

***Discussion 10 (last names starting with I-Z)**

Week 13 (11/18): *Second Exam* (to be completed by midnight on Sunday, November 22nd)

Reading: None

***** Thanksgiving Break (11/23-11/27)*****

Week 14 (12/2): Social Change and Social Movements

Reading: Andersen and Taylor, Ch. 16

***Discussion 11 (everyone)**

Week 15 (12/9): Course Wrap-up: What have we learned this semester?

Reading: None

Finals Week (12/16): *Comprehensive Final Exam* (to be completed by midnight on Wednesday, December 16th)

