

# INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

Sociology 111.02  
Fall, 2006  
MWF 9:00-9:50 ARH 120

Chris Hunter  
Carnegie 114  
Ext. 3135

---

## Course Description

Sociology is concerned with the inter-relationships among individuals and the social structures and groups to which they belong. As you become familiar with sociological inquiry, you should develop more appreciation for the complexity of social life. You will also come to see that individual behavior is not so individual as we sometimes suppose; rather, how we think, act, and feel has a lot to do with the group norms and social structures around us, structures for which we ourselves are only somewhat responsible.

We will use five case studies to examine these issues, rather than a typical introductory textbook. The first two case studies offer differing perspectives on disasters. First, we will examine the growth of community and culture, and their possible destruction, through an analysis of the community of Buffalo Creek, and the aftermath of the flood that helped destroy it. Second, we will look at the operation of a mountain search and rescue team whose members have to deal with emotionally draining work and emotionally traumatized victims.

The next two cases focus on urban education, race, social class, gender, and community. First, we will examine poverty and race through an ethnographic study of male (white and black) adolescents growing up in a low-income housing project in Chicago. Second, we will examine a poor Boston neighborhood, Villa Victoria, to understand why its surprisingly high "social capital" has changed over time. In each case, we will be interested in the connections between "public issues" and "personal troubles" which these cases illustrate and in how those connections help illuminate our own social experiences.

Finally, we will examine the connections between the labor process, gender, and management in a comparative ethnographic study of four Mexican *maquiladoras*. This study focuses on how the meaning of gender can differ depending on daily social practices in the work place and the local community and organizational context.

## Course Format

Many of the important things you can learn in this class will come from listening and talking to other students, so the class is designed to promote interaction and exchange. Most class meetings will combine brief lectures with small- and large-group discussion. I expect everyone to contribute to discussion — so you need to read carefully and think about the material before each class and you need to speak up in class. I also expect people to *listen* to each other, which requires patience, a sense of humor, and mutual respect.

To help you prepare for discussions and exercises, I will distribute discussion questions on some of the readings, which you should complete on your own and bring to class. During classes we frequently will divide into small groups to consider these questions. Working in small groups is a particularly useful experience in a sociology class, given that group behavior is a focus of sociological study. Other classes will feature games or simulations or presentations or videos, with a variety of class activities designed to encourage your active engagement in what goes on.

## Objectives for Individual Learning

1. To become familiar with the kinds of questions sociologists typically ask, the kinds of research methods sociologists use to answer those questions, and the kinds of theories they use to interpret their research findings.
2. To understand sociological perspectives on how social structures and cultures in their diversity serve both to facilitate and to constrain people's actions and interactions.
3. To use sociological perspectives in examining major institutions of contemporary societies, such as families, education, and organizations.
4. To use sociological perspectives in examining issues of social policy, especially issues relating to inequality and diversity.

5. To begin to see one's own life and experiences through a sociological lens.
6. To improve one's skills in writing, critical thinking, oral presentation, and class discussion.

using the "paper grading criteria" sheet at the end of this syllabus).

**You must abide by the rules on honesty in academic work**, outlined in the *Student Handbook* (pp. 11-14), which require you to "acknowledge explicitly any expressions, ideas, or observations that are not" your own. I take your obligation to acknowledge sources very seriously and I expect you will do so as well. In addition, **I require that every paper contain a footnote acknowledging any assistance of any kind you received in producing the paper.** In the case of cooperatively produced work, you must indicate who produced which part of the data or product.

If you are unsure of your obligations about acknowledging sources, please see me. For citations of sources in papers, I will accept any commonly used footnote or reference style, but I strongly recommend you use the American Sociological Association reference style, described later in this syllabus.

**I will grade down any late work, unless you request permission** for the lateness and I grant it **before the due date.**

### Course Requirements

1. **DISCUSSION GROUPS** (15 percent). Each of you will be part of a discussion group of 5 to 6 people that will meet outside of class 10 times, about once a week. Members of each group will rotate responsibility of writing a weekly informal report of that week's discussion, which I will evaluate but without a letter grade. Members of each group will also act as discussion leaders once during the semester, as described at the end of this syllabus.
2. **DATA-ANALYSIS PROJECT** (10 percent). Pairs of students will work together to analyze quantitative sociological data using the MicroCase statistical package. Each pair will write a brief report describing their methodology, findings, and conclusions.
3. **SHORT ESSAYS** (45 percent). You will write **three** short (4-5 page) papers during the semester that will focus on the case studies. You will have the option of writing these papers as letters to the authors of those studies, or as more traditional analytic papers. In either case, you may rewrite the papers if you desire. I will average the grade on the first attempt and on the rewrite to arrive at the grade for the paper. I have listed five such papers, one for each book: everyone will do the first paper, plus two of the others.
4. **FINAL EXAM** (20 percent). The final exam will be either an in-class exam, with questions provided in advance, or a take-home essay exam.
5. **CLASS PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE** (10 percent).

### Course Requirements and Grading

Discussion Groups	15% of grade
Data-analysis Paper	10% of grade
Short Essays (3)	45% of grade
Final Exam	20% of grade
Class Participation	10% of grade

I am particularly eager to help students improve their writing. If you are concerned about the adequacy of your writing, I strongly recommend that you see me to discuss your papers and that you go to the Writing Lab for advice on writing. I will read your papers for both content and style (and will grade accordingly, explicitly or implicitly

**Required Books [listed in the order we'll read them]:**

**Erikson, Kai.** 1976. *Everything in its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

**Lois, Jennifer.** 2003. *Heroic Efforts: The Emotional Culture of Search & Rescue Volunteers.* New York: NYU.

**MacLeod, Jay.** 1995. *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood.* Boulder: Westview.

**Small, Mario.** 2004. *Villa Victoria: The Transformation of Social Capital in a Boston Barrio.* Chicago: U Chicago.

**Salzinger, Leslie.** 2003. *Genders in Production: Making Workers in Mexico's Global Factories.* California.

**Schedule of Assignments**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPICS</b>	<b>READINGS</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENTS</b>
Aug 25	Introduction to the Course		
Aug 28	The Sociological Imagination		
Aug 30	The Buffalo Creek Flood	<b>Erikson</b> Part One "February 26, 1972" 9-48	<b>Video "Buffalo Creek" [in class] B8623</b>
Sept 1	Social Structure in Buffalo Creek	<b>Erikson</b> Part Two "Notes on Appalachia" 51-78	
Sept 4	The Flood and After	<b>Erikson</b> Part Two "The Mountain Ethos" 79-93	
Sept 6	Culture in Buffalo Creek	<b>Erikson</b> Part Two "The Coming of the Coal Camps" 94-114 <b>Erikson</b> Part Two "Buffalo Creek" 115-132	
Sept 8	Coping with Change: The Human Impact of Disaster	<b>Erikson</b> Part Three "Looking for Scars" 135-155 <b>Erikson</b> Part Three "Individual Trauma" 155-185	<b>Video "Buffalo Creek Revisited" [in class] B8624</b>
Sept 11	Coping with Change: Community and the Loss of Community	<b>Erikson</b> Part Three "Collective Trauma" 186-245 <b>Erikson</b> "Conclusion" 246-259	
Sept 13	Sociological Theories	Theory Handout	
Sept 15	RULES & ROUTINES OBSERVATIONS	IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS	Essay 1: Erikson
Sept 18	RULES & ROUTINES OBSERVATIONS	IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS	
Sept 20	Search & Rescue	<b>Lois</b> "Intro" 1:1-43	
Sept 22	Doing Rescue Work	<b>Lois</b> "Joining" 2,3: 44-84	
Sept 25	Emotions on the job	<b>Lois</b> "Dealing with Crisis" 4: 85-113	
Sept 27	Emotions & others	<b>Lois</b> "Others in Crisis" 5: 114-143	Presentations: Group 1

Sept 29	Emotions & the role of "rescuer"	<b>Lois</b> "Rewards" 6-8: 144-196	Essay 2: Lois
Oct 2	DATA ANALYSIS PROJECT	In-class MicroCase Analysis	
Oct 4	DATA ANALYSIS PROJECT	In-class MicroCase Analysis	
Oct 6	DATA ANALYSIS PROJECT	Reflections on Doing Social Research	Data Analysis Paper
Oct 9	Continuing Significance of Social Class	<b>MacLeod</b> "Social Immobility" 1: 3-10	<b>Video "Crossing Lines" [in class]</b>
Oct 11	Theorizing about Class	<b>MacLeod</b> "Social Reproduction" 2: 11-24	
Oct 13	NO CLASS	<b>Have a good Break!</b>	
Oct 14-22	SPRING BREAK		
Oct 23	Poverty & Family/ Work/ School	<b>MacLeod</b> "Teenagers in Clarendon Heights" 3: 25-49 <b>MacLeod</b> "The Influence of the Family" 4: 50-59	
Oct 25	Poverty & Work	<b>MacLeod</b> "The World of Work" 5: 61-82	
Oct 27	Social Reproduction	<b>MacLeod</b> "School" 6: 83-111 <b>MacLeod</b> "Leveled Aspirations" 7: 112-134	Presentations: Group 2
Oct 29	Social Reproduction	<b>MacLeod</b> "Reproduction Theory Revisited" 8: 135-149	
Nov 1	Status Attainment, Poverty, & Race	<b>MacLeod</b> "Eight Years Later" 155-269	
Nov 3	Poverty & Social Capital	<b>Small</b> "Villa Victoria" 1-2:1-43	Essay 3: MacLeod
Nov 6	Social Organization Theory	<b>Small</b> "Local Participation I" 3:44-62	
Nov 8	Cohorts & Collective Narratives	<b>Small</b> "Local Participation II" 4:63-90	Presentations: Group 3
Nov 10	Group Differentiation	<b>Small</b> "Ecology" & "Spatialization" 5-6:91-144	
Nov 13	Loyalties & Social Capital	<b>Small</b> "Labyrinth of Loyalties" 7-8:145-194	
Nov 15	Organizing Neighborhoods	Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative	<b>Video "Holding Ground" (in class) H661</b>
Nov 17	Organizations & Control	[Background on fictive persons and the labor process]	Essay 4: Small <b>Video: "Clockwork" (in class) C6214</b>

Nov 20	Producing Gender	<b>Salzinger</b> "Producing Women" 1-3:1-50	
Nov 22	Chasing Tropes		<b>Video: "The Global Assembly Line" (in class) G5113</b>
Nov 24	THANKSGIVING BREAK		
Nov 27	Living Fantasies	<b>Salzinger</b> "Panoptimex" 4:51-74	
Nov 29	Re-forming Tradition	<b>Salzinger</b> "Particimex" 5:75-99	Presentations: Group 4
Dec 1	Manufacturing Workers	<b>Salzinger</b> "Andromex" 6:100-127	
Dec 4	Contending Gender	<b>Salzinger</b> "Anarchomex" 7:128-151	Presentations: Group 5
Dec 6	Why?	<b>Salzinger</b> "Feminiit(y)ies" 8:152-172	Essay 5: Salzinger
Dec 8	CONCLUSIONS		
Dec 12	FINAL EXAM	[Take-home final due on Tuesday, 9:00 AM]	Final Exam Due

**FIRST PAPER ASSIGNMENT — Erikson****DUE Friday, Sept 15**

In this paper, I am interested in your reading of Erikson's argument, either in terms of its internal logic and adequacy or in terms of how well it might "work" outside of Buffalo Creek. Thus, you might choose one of the following approaches:

First, you might explain what you take to be the strengths and weaknesses of Erikson's argument about the social processes that explain how these people reacted to the flood. You would need to focus on a key aspect of his argument and cite specific cases in Erikson's book to support your interpretation.

Second, you might consider whether Erikson's argument "works" in other settings, for other people. In this case, you would need to explain what role the characteristics of these people, of their culture, and of their social structure play in Erikson's overall argument, and specify how those features might make Buffalo Creek unique or not.

Third, you might consider what practical advice might follow from Erikson's argument: what might an administrator responsible for disaster relief [at FEMA, perhaps] learn from Erikson's study?

The paper should be from 3 to 4 pages long. You might write it in the form of a letter or memo to Erikson, perhaps as if you were one of the residents of Buffalo Creek; but, if you take that voice, please be a literate as well as an insightful informant. Or you might pretend to be a graduate student in sociology who has been asked by Erikson to provide feedback on a draft of his book. Or you might write as a staffer at FEMA to an administrator. Please make your role clear in any case.

**Note:** Although I call this paper a "letter" or "memo" in order to make clear that you are (hypothetically) speaking to Erikson and not to me, you must still provide page references to *Everything in its Path* whenever you use information from the text and you must provide a reference list.

Also, remember that you will be writing two other short papers, chosen by you from the remaining four paper options listed on the syllabus, in addition to this paper. Please consider your overall schedule carefully when choosing which papers to do, and which ones not to do.

## TYPICAL PAPER GRADING CRITERIA

### Points:

- 4 = Superior
- 3 = Good
- 2 = Mediocre
- 1 = Deficient

### CONTENT [Content is double weighted in determining the final grade.]

- \_\_\_\_\_ **Attention to the Assignment.** Does the paper contain (within the page limit) all the elements specified in the assignment?
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Argument.** Does the paper have a main point? Does the paper expand on that main point with a clear and logical progression of ideas? Do the introduction and conclusion frame the paper adequately?
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Evidence.** Is the argument supported by an adequate number of concrete facts and vivid details? Are points well enough developed to be convincing?
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Accuracy.** Does the paper correctly present and interpret information from its sources?
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Total for Content.**

### WRITING STYLE

- \_\_\_\_\_ **Words.** Are all words spelled correctly and chosen wisely? Has the writer avoided jargon?
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Sentences.** Are grammar and syntax correct? Are the sentences concise? Can the reader easily understand what is being said?
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Paragraph Organization.** Are sentences varied in length and smoothly connected? Are paragraphs unified, coherent, and fully developed? Does the paper flow smoothly from beginning to end? Does the writer avoid unnecessary repetition of information or ideas?
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Mechanics.** Is any bibliographic information correct and correctly presented? Is there an informative title? Does the writer give credit for help received?
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Total for Writing Style.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Total Score for Paper [(2 x Content) / Style]**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade for Paper**

[The form originally devised by Chris Hunter and Kent McClelland.]

## PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

Each member of each discussion group will serve once as a discussion leader presenting a section of one of our five texts. You will make your presentation to a part of the class, rather than to the class as a whole. To prepare for the presentation, your group might consult additional books, articles, websites, or other materials.

- **What to Turn In:** Talking points, discussion questions, and bibliography listing your supplemental sources.

Each discussion group **collectively** should prepare a set of talking points that provide background information about the author and the reading, as well as a brief summary intended to remind students about the main points or key arguments (no more than three or four) made by the author. To avoid getting lost in excessive detail when you make your presentation, **DO NOT** come prepared with a detailed outline of the reading. You should instead assume that everyone has done the reading, and that your role is to help other students pick out the most important points.

Each group should prepare and turn in one set of questions to begin the discussion (approximately five questions). Be sure to avoid asking "yes/no" and "either/or" questions, since these do not promote discussion. Questions that encourage people to look critically at the strengths and weaknesses of the author's perspective should be on your list. If you read additional materials in preparation (which I strongly suggest), please include a bibliography.

The group's talking points and questions must be typed, stapled, and turned in *prior* to the presentation. Make sure each of you keep a copy for yourself, though.

- **The Presentation Portion** (5 minutes): Each presenter's goal during the presentation is to engage your fellow students in a critical exploration of the reading. [Remember, each of you will present separately to a part of the class, at the same time.] Begin with an introduction focusing on the author or authors including, if possible, background information, other

publications, and general point of view. Next, give a capsule review of the section's content, including some or all of the following: an overview of the author's thesis or research findings; a description of the kind of evidence the author uses to support her or his thesis; some indication of how this piece of scholarship can add to our understanding of the topics of our course; your own opinion of what you found most interesting and relevant about the reading. (In other words, your presentation should be more than a mere summary, though it's best to keep it short and move quickly to engaging other students in discussion.)

- **The Discussion Portion** (10-15 minutes): The discussion questions should focus on the main points of the reading and challenge students to formulate their own opinions. During the discussion (that is, after the presentation portion), leaders should do the following:
  1. Introduce the discussion topic by selecting a starting question.
  2. Promote a discussion without controlling or dominating it. Be sure to leave room for the other members of the group to ask their own questions and give their own reactions.
  3. Encourage the participation of **all** members of the group; be attuned to nonverbal cues that a classmate is ready to participate in the discussion.
  4. Be wary of those who are too eager to talk and who tend to monopolize the airtime.
  5. Promote a climate of acceptance, openness, warmth, and support to facilitate learning.
  6. Keep the discussion moving so that it does not get sidetracked or bogged down.

At the end of the discussion portion, the presenters will summarize the main ideas discussed within the group and bring the discussion to a close. If we have time left over, we'll share some of these insights in the class as a whole.

[I would like to thank Kent McClelland for permission to use these guidelines, which I have adapted somewhat here.]

