INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

Sociology 111.02
Fall, 2008
Room: ARH 102
Time: MWF 1:15 - 2:05 p.m.

Susan J. Ferguson
Office: Carnegie 112
Office Phone: ext. 3133
Office Hours: 2 - 3 p.m. W/F
and by appointment

“Tell me the landscape in which you live, and I will tell you who you are.”
— José Ortega y Gasset

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This introductory course provides an overview of sociology as a discipline, including emphases on sociological concepts, methods, perspectives, and areas of substantive concern. At the same time, the sociological orientation of this course should enable you to view the surrounding world in a different light. The familiar (e.g., families, friendships, school, work) and the perhaps unfamiliar (e.g., poverty, mental illness, natural disasters), can be analyzed and understood using sociological perspectives.

This course is organized into five thematic sections. The first section is an introduction to sociology and the study of society. This introduction includes an overview of the historical significance of sociology and the development of its subsequent theories and methods. The second section examines the relationships between the individual and society through the processes of socialization, social interaction, language, and group membership. Section Three focuses on culture, social structure, and the need for community. The fourth section investigates some of the major social institutions in society, including the family, religion, education, and the government. The final section examines social stratification and social inequality. In particular, we will discuss how societies stratify individuals and groups based on their social class, gender, race, and ethnicity.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

A. To introduce students to the essential concepts, theories, and methods used in sociology to analyze phenomena.

B. To give students an awareness of sociological curricula and the linkage between sociological thought and other substantive areas.

C. To enable students to identify and examine sociologically relevant problems and issues.

D. To encourage critical thinking and writing skills that demonstrate the students' abilities to understand and analyze social issues.

E. To enhance students' understanding and appreciation of the complexity of social life.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
A. **Exams:** There will be two exams (a mid-semester exam and a final exam) that will cover prior lecture and reading material. Any additional material provided by assignments, guest speakers, or videos also will be covered on the exams. The final exam is **not** comprehensive. Both exams are already scheduled in the course syllabus and students are expected to take the exams during class time on those days. There will be **no** makeup exams unless you have spoken with me prior to the exam with a valid excuse. **Each exam will count 20% of your final grade.**

B. **Assignments:** In addition to the two exams, there will be two required outside writing assignments. These assignments are aimed at determining if you are able to apply material learned in class. Each assignment will be relatively short in length, and instructions will be given at least a week prior to when they are due. Assignments should be typed and reflect thoughtful writing skills. **Late assignments, if accepted, will be graded down. Each assignment will count 15% of your final grade.**

C. **Field Observations:** This course is not only about reading and understanding sociological principles and practices, it is also about doing sociology. Throughout the term we will be putting learning into practice through field exercises that invite you to activate your sociological imagination by becoming a participant observer. Our activities will be grounds for discussion and interpretation. At times, I will ask you to hand in an informal written report of your field observations. **Field observations will count 10% of your final grade.**

D. **Discussion Papers:** Students will be writing discussion papers in response to the readings on a regular basis. These papers will prepare you for class discussion and give you practice with writing. **These papers will count 10% of your final grade.**

E. **Attendance and Participation:** Finally, since the fall session is short and your participation encouraged, regular classroom attendance is expected. It has been my experience that irregular or casual attendance results in fragmented understanding and poor performance. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. **If absence occurs, it is the student's responsibility to contact the professor and other students in order to make up lost work.** Attendance also is important because many class sessions will involve audio-visual material or group discussions that students will have the opportunity to participate in. **Class participation, including short exercises, group work, and attendance will count 10% of your final grade.**

F. **Grading Distribution:** The grading distribution can be summarized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94 and up</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90 to 93</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87 to 89</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>84 to 86</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>80 to 83</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>76 to 79</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>70 to 75</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>60 to 69</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>59 and below</td>
<td>F</td>
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</table>

G. **The Writing Lab:** Students are strongly encouraged to make appointments with staff in the
Writing Lab to discuss rough drafts of papers. **If you use the Writing Lab, please acknowledge the staff person you worked with on your paper.**

**IV. REQUIRED READINGS:** The following books are available in the College Bookstore and on reserve in the Burling Library:


In addition to the above books, there are required supplemental readings that will be made available in class. Please keep up with the syllabus by reading the assigned articles or chapters prior to the day that topic is discussed. The attached course schedule with reading assignments shows what you are expected to have read each day of class. You should come to class prepared to summarize and discuss each of the assigned articles or chapters.

**Please note that the professor reserves the right to change the readings on the syllabus as needed to accommodate guest speakers, videos, and class discussions.** If changes are made in the syllabus, students will be informed of the required readings.

**Questions To Answer While Reading:**

1). What is the author's main point or argument?

2). What theories and research methods does the author use to demonstrate their point?

3). What are the strengths and weaknesses of this argument?

4). How does this reading contribute to your understanding of sociology?

**PLEASE NOTE: THERE WILL BE NO EXTRA CREDIT WORK.**

**COURSE SCHEDULE WITH READING ASSIGNMENTS**
SECTION I: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY AND THE STUDY OF SOCIETY

Fri. 8/29: Introduction to Course

Mon. 9/1: What is Sociology?

Read:


Wed. 9/3: History of Sociology As a Discipline

Read:


Fri. 9/5: Theory Exercise Read handouts on theory

Mon. 9/8: Research Methodology: Sociologists in the Field

Read:


Wed. 9/10: Current Sociological Research
Read:


SECTION II: SOCIETY IN US: THE CREATION OF SELF AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

Fri. 9/12: Socialization and Identity

Read:


Mon. 9/15: Socialization and Gender

Read:


Wed. 9/17: Socialization in Adulthood

Read:


Fri. 9/19: Research Day: No Class

Finish research with small group, do data analysis, and work on paper.


Mon. 9/22: Socialization and the Media

Read:


Wed. 9/24: Discussion of Derber’s Book, Gender, and Conversation
Read:


Fri. 9/26: Gender and Socialization Research Presentations

No Readings: First Assignment Due

SECTION III: US IN SOCIETY: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY

Mon. 9/29: The Development of Social Structure

Read:


Wed. 10/1: The Effects of Disasters on Social Structure


2). Excerpts on Katrina and other disasters.

Fri. 10/3: The Influence of Culture and History


Mon. 10/6: The Importance of Culture in the Construction of Social Life
Read:


Wed. 10/8: **Coping With Change: The Individual and the Community**

Read:


Fri. 10/10: **Discussion of Buffalo Creek Flood**


Mon. 10/13: **Labeling, Deviance, and Social Control**

Read:


Wed. 10/15: **Deviance and Crime, continued**
Read:


Fri. 10/17: **MID-SEMESTER EXAM**

**FALL BREAK:** October 18th to October 26th **HURRAY!!!**

**NO CLASSES:** Begin reading MacLeod's book.

**SECTION IV: SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN SOCIETY**

Mon. 10/27: **The Institution of Medicine**

Read:


Wed. 10/29: **The Family**

Read:


Fri. 10/31: **Religion**

**Read:**


Mon. 11/3: **Power and Politics**

**Read:**


Wed. 11/5: **Education**

**Read:**


Fri. 11/7: **Education, continued**
Read:


Mon. 11/10: **Education, continued**

Read:


Wed. 11/12: **Finish Reading MacLeod and work on Second Assignment**

Read:

1). MacLeod, Jay. 1995. *Ain't No Makin' It: Leveled Aspirations in a Low-Income Neighborhood*. Ch. 9, pp. 155-195; Ch. 10, pp. 196-238; and Ch. 11, pp. 239-269.

Fri. 11/14: **Discussion of MacLeod's Book**

Read: Finish reading MacLeod, if you have not done so.

**SECTION V: SOCIAL INEQUALITY**

Mon. 11/17: **Social Inequality and Stereotyping**

Read:


Wed. 11/19: The Significance of Social Class

Read:


Fri. 11/21: The Continuing Significance of Social Class

Read:


4). Edin, Kathryn and Maria Kefalas. “Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage,” in Mapping the Social Landscape, pp. 7-18. (Review this article from the beginning of the semester)

Mon. 11/24: NO CLASS: Research Day

Wed. 11/26: NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break

NOTE: Please use this week to get caught up on readings and finish final papers!

Mon. 12/1: Gender Stratification

Read:


Wed. 12/3: **Gender and Institutionalized Sexism**

Read:


Fri. 12/5: **The Significance of Race**

Read:


Mon. 12/8: **Race and Institutionalized Racism**

Read:

1). Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. “Beyond Black and White,” in Mapping the Social
Landscapes, pp. 359-375.


Wed. 12/10: Social Change: What Can We Do?

Read:


Fri. 12/12: Course Summation and Celebration

Finals Week: FINAL EXAM AS SCHEDULED BY GRINNELL COLLEGE
Thursday December 18th at 9 a.m.

HAVE A GREAT WINTER BREAK!!!