

Introduction to Sociology

Spring 2008, Grinnell College
Soc 111-03: MWF 1:15-2:05, ARH 318
Soc 111-04: MWF 3:15-4:05, ARH 120
Course website on PioneerWeb

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"The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise."
- C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, 1959

Welcome to Sociology at Grinnell College. Sociology is the study of human interaction in groups, small and large, from families to nation-states. Sociologists investigate the causes and consequences of human behavior and social change in specific cultural, structural and institutional contexts. This course invites you to cultivate your sociological imagination and to develop the skills of sociological inquiry.

In this course we will:

- Become familiar with the *questions* sociologists ask, the *research methods* they use to answer their questions, and the *theories* they use to interpret their findings.
- Refine the ability to situate individual and group behavior within larger social *structures* and *institutions*.
- Begin to recognize and critically evaluate forces of social *stratification* and *inequality* that facilitate and constrain human behavior.
- Develop the ability to *think sociologically* about the interactions and social processes in which we participate on a daily basis.
- Improve skills for *critical thinking, writing, discussing, listening, and presenting* one's ideas in an enthusiastic and compelling manner.

The course involves small and large group discussions, short lectures, films, field activities, group presentations and individual written work. Our readings include a sociological anthology, three in-depth case studies that exemplify sociological research, and supplemental readings. As social actors, we all bring relevant experience to the study of social life, so we will draw upon our lived experiences and firsthand observations to enrich our studies.

Our course reader, edited by Susan Ferguson, will usher us through many central arenas of sociological study, from classic works to current research. We will read two classic case studies: first, Jay MacLeod's study of two groups of teenage boys in Chicago, and second, Kai Erickson's study of community devastation by flood in Buffalo Creek. In the latter part of the course, we will read Nancy Lopez' recent study of Dominican, Haitian and West Indian students in New York.

Required Books & Supplies:

1. Erickson, Kai. 1976. *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of a Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
2. Ferguson, Susan. 2008. *Mapping the Social Landscape: Readings in Sociology*. 5th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
3. Lopez, Nancy. 2002. *Hopeful Girls, Troubled Boys: Race and Gender Disparity in Urban Education*. New York: Routledge.
4. MacLeod, Jay. 1995. *Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations and Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
5. A reading and field journal (a notebook of your choice dedicated to this purpose).

Assignments & Grading

Discussion groups (15%). I will assign you to a discussion group that will meet outside of class for an hour each week. This group will offer opportunities to review readings and to discuss sociological ideas and concerns that arise from them. Group members will take turns writing weekly informal reports of the group's discussions. Your group will also act as discussion leaders once during the semester.

Two short papers (2 x 10% each = 20%). You will choose 2 of 3 possible paper deadlines throughout the semester and write brief essays (3-4 pages) that integrate assigned readings with your observations of social life and other sources.

Sociology conference & response paper (10%). Grinnell will host the Iowa Sociological Association's annual conference on April 4. We will attend the conference as a class and you will write a 2-3 page essay in response to conference proceedings.

Exams (15% midsem + 20% final = 35%). Two exams will be given during the semester that draw upon readings, discussion, lecture, films and other activities. Reading questions provided on the website and in group presentations will be a good guide to exam preparation.

Participation and other assignments (20%). Given that this course revolves around discussion of the readings, small group work, lectures, in-class assignments and other activities, ***your attendance, preparedness and active participation are essential.*** There are multiple ways of participating actively in class -- overall I expect you to be physically and psychologically present and to interact critically with the material and your classmates. I will periodically assign in-class or take-home writing and fieldwork assignments that will contribute toward this part of your grade.

Reading and field journal: This course requires a significant amount of reading, writing and discussion. Your reading journal will be your greatest tool for developing your sociological imagination and coming to class prepared to actively participate. Please have a notebook dedicated to this course that you can use to take notes on readings, discussion and lecture, to

keep track of in-class freewrites, and to record field notes. The journal is not graded; however your efforts will be reflected in your ability to participate in discussion, in your formal written assignments and in your preparation for exams.

Notes on reading: Use these questions to guide your reading and notetaking:

1. What is the author's main point or argument? If a research study, what is the author's research question?
2. What theories and research methods does the author use to demonstrate his/her points?
3. What key pieces of evidence are presented to support the author's argument?
4. What is important about the argument? Why does it matter?
5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the specific argument(s) made?
6. How does the article or chapter relate to previous readings, discussions, experiences or observations?

The college's Reading Lab offers further specific strategies on effective and efficient reading in the liberal arts environment.

I encourage you to use RefWorks, Endnote or other bibliographic software to keep track of, and make notes on, what you read. It will serve you well throughout your academic career -- it's never too soon to start organizing your research library, and the technology saves time and headaches in generating bibliographies for papers.

A note on writing: While what you write is essential, *how* you present your ideas in writing is also extremely important. The short essays will provide opportunities to exercise and strengthen your writing skills. I strongly recommend that you take advantage of the college Writing Lab for assistance with your assignments for this and other classes.

Expectations & Policies

I will do everything I reasonably can to help you meet your goals in this course and to maintain a respectful classroom atmosphere. I expect you to do the same. Please see me or contact me by email to talk about any questions or problems you have with the material, my presentation of it, or classroom dynamics.

Accessibility: If you need any kind of accommodation in order to participate fully in the course, contact me and Joyce Stern in Academic Advising (ext. 3702) as soon as possible to make the necessary arrangements. "Grinnell is committed to making accommodations for students with physical, learning or psychological disabilities" (*Student Handbook* p. 2), as am I.

Academic honesty & citing sources: As in every course, you are expected to abide by the college's standards of honesty in academic work as outlined in the *Student Handbook*, which require each student to "acknowledge explicitly any expressions, ideas, or observations that are not his or her own." I am required to bring suspicious coursework to the attention of the Committee on Academic Standing. It has become quite easy to find out whether a student has copied sections of a text from written sources or from the internet – do not be tempted.

In addition, in accordance with academic protocol, I expect that every formal paper for this

course will contain a footnote acknowledging assistance of any kind that you received in producing the paper, including advice from Writing Lab staff or feedback from a fellow student. (Again, I encourage you to take advantage of the college's outstanding Writing Lab -- just be sure to cite the staff person who helps you.)

For citations of sources in papers, I will accept any commonly used footnote or reference style provided it is consistent throughout the paper, but I strongly recommend that you use the American Sociological Association reference style.

Written work & deadlines: Bring completed assignments to class or deliver them to my box in Carnegie 115 by 4pm on the due date. Please print double-sided whenever possible. **All written work must be printed out and handed in; I do not accept emailed work.**

Your written work must be handed in **on time. I do not accept late work** unless you talk with me and get my permission for an extension *before* the day the assignment is due. *If you get an extension, send me an email summarizing our agreement, print it out and attach it to your late work.* Even if you have been granted an extension, assignments turned in late may be subject to a grade penalty.

Attendance: I take attendance at the beginning of class. More than two unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade, as will cross-talk, sleeping in class, repeatedly arriving late, or leaving early without notifying me beforehand. An absence is counted as excused only when I receive an email or note from Academic Advising, the Health Center or the Athletics Office.

Please note that **you are responsible** for any and all material missed due to absences. Get the emails and phone numbers of your discussion group members or other classmates and if you miss a class, ask them to review what was covered and/or lend you their notes. (Do not ask me to review what was covered, or if we did anything important. Do not tell me you are skipping my class to study for another class.)

Contacting me: I expect to be in contact with students throughout the semester. Please come by during office hours to discuss course content, thoughts or concerns about assignments, or for extra explanation or assistance. My office hours are posted weekly outside my office (ARH 121). If you are not available during office hours, we can schedule another time to meet. I am online daily during the week, so email is the best way to reach me.

Acknowledgements: Thank you to David Cook-Martin, Karla Erickson, Susan Ferguson and Kent McClelland for substantial contributions to the development of this course.

Course schedule: The following is a tentative outline, subject to change. You should complete the assigned readings by class time on the dates specified.

"MSL" = *Mapping the Social Landscape* (course reader).

Week	Date	Topic & Readings
1	M 1/21	Welcome & Introduction
	W 1/23	What is Sociology? MSL 1 Mills, "The Promise" MSL 4 Schwalbe, "Finding Out How the Social World Works" MSL 6 Duneier, "Sidewalk"
	F 1/25	"Doing" Sociology MacLeod , "Social Immobility in the Land of Opportunity" 1: 3-10 MSL 2 Edin & Kefalas, "Promises I Can't Keep" MSL 3 Romero, "An Intersection of Biography & History"
2	M 1/28	Foundations of Sociology Theory Handout MSL 41 Marx & Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party" MSL 44 Weber, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism"
	W 1/30	Institutions Parsons , "The Social Structure of Medicine" (E-Reserve) MSL 5 Haney et al, "Interpersonal Dynamics in a Simulated Prison" MSL 14 Dyer, "Anybody's Son Will Do"
	F 2/1	Culture and Subcultures Reading on culture TBA MSL 8 Velliquette & Murray, "The New Tattoo Subculture" MSL 13 Lewis, "Learning to Strip"
3	M 2/4	Theories of Inequality MacLeod , "Social Reproduction in Theoretical Perspective" 2: 11-24 MSL 23 Davis et al, "Some Principles of Stratification"
	W 2/6	Socialization MacLeod "Teenagers in Clarendon Heights" 3: 25-49 MSL 15 Adler & Adler, "Peer Power"
	F 2/8	Family MacLeod , "The Influence of the Family" 4: 50-60 MSL 53 Cherlin, "The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage" MSL 55 Lareau, "Invisible Inequality"

- 4 M 2/11 Social Structure
MacLeod, "The World of Work" 5: 61-82
MSL 16 Jankowski, "Gang Business"
MSL 22 Boswell & Spade, "Fraternities & Collegiate Rape Culture"
- W 2/13 Education I
MacLeod, "School" 6:83-111
MSL 50 Crow Dog & Erdoes, "Civilize Them with a Stick"
MSL 52 Ferguson, "Bad Boys"
- F 2/15 Social Inequality: Class
MacLeod, "Leveled Aspirations" 7: 112-134
MSL 12 Granfield, "Making It by Faking It"
MSL 24 Domhoff, "Who Rules America?"
- 5 M 2/18 Structural Inequality: Race
Film: *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (in class)
- W 2/20 Social Inequality: Race
MacLeod, "Reproduction Theory Revisited" 8: 135-149
Omi & Winant, "Racial Formation in the United States" (E-reserve)
MSL 32 Lee et al, "Beyond Black & White"
- F 2/22 Dreams & Aspirations
MacLeod, "The Hallway Hangers" 155-195
MSL 21 Bourgeois, "In Search of Respect"
MSL 25 Shapiro, "The Hidden Cost of Being African American"
- 6 M 2/25 Cultural Accommodation
MacLeod, "The Brothers" and "Conclusion" 196-268
- W 2/27 Structural Inequality: Class
Film: *People Like Us* (in class)
Essay 1 Due
- F 2/29 Guest Lecture: Laura Sachiko Fugikawa, USC
Readings TBA
- 7 M 3/3 Crisis
Erickson, "Introduction" & Part One: "February 26, 1972" 1-50
Film: Pickering, *The Buffalo Creek Flood: An Act of Man* (in class)
- W 3/5 Groups
Erickson, Part Two: "Notes on Appalachia" & "The Mountain Ethos" 51-93
Blee, Kathleen M. "Becoming a Racist: Women in Contemporary Ku Klux Klan and Neo-Nazi Groups" (E-reserve)
- F 3/7 Stereotypes & Norms
Erickson, Part Two: "The Coming of the Coal Camps" and "Buffalo Creek" 94-134

8 M 3/10 Social Fragmentation & Deviance
Erickson, Part Three: "Looking for Scars" 135-155
MSL 18 Colvin, "Descent into Madness"
MSL 49 Karp, "Illness & Identity"

W 3/11 Review

F 3/12 Midsem Exam

Weeks 9-10:
March 15-29

SPRING BREAK

11 M 3/31 Social Identity
Erickson, Part Three: "Individual Trauma" 156-185
Film: Pickering, *Buffalo Creek Revisited* (in class)

W 4/2 Community
Erickson, Part Three: "Collective Trauma" & "Conclusion" 186-260

F 4/4 **Iowa Sociological Association Conference at Grinnell**

12 M 4/7 Race, Class & Education
Lopez, "Unequal Schooling" 1: 1-14
MSL 31, Bonilla-Silva, "'New Racism'..."
MSL 51 Kozol, "Still Separate, Still Unequal"
Essay 2 Due

W 4/9 Labeling
Lopez, "From 'Mamacita' to 'Hoodlum'" 2: 15-38
MSL 19 Rosenhan, "On Being Sane in Insane Places"
MSL 20 McLorg & Taub, "Anorexia Nervosa & Bulimia"

F 4/11 No class - **Conference Response Essay Due**

13 M 4/14 Race, Class & Education
Lopez, "Urban High Schools" 3: 39-66
MSL 33 LeDuff, "At a Slaughterhouse..."
MSL 34 Flower Kim, "Out of Sorts"

W 4/16 Social Construction of Gender & Race
Lopez, "'Problem' Boys" 4: 67-88
MSL 9 Espiritu, "The Racial Construction of Asian American Women & Men"
MSL 29 Lesko, "Our Guys/Good Guys"

F 4/18 Structural Inequality: Gender
Lopez, "Rewarding Femininity" 5: 89-112
MSL 27 Risman, "Gender as Structure"
MSL 30 Loe, "Working at Bazooms"

- 14 M 4/21 Family
Lopez, "Homegrown" 6: 113-140
MSL 54 Crittendon, "The Mommy Tax"
- W 4/23 Work
Lopez, "After Graduation" 7: 141-162
MSL 42 Leidner, "Over the Counter"
MSL 43 Hochschild, "The Time Bind"
- F 4/25 Work
Lopez, "Education as a Way Out" 8: 163-174
MSL 26 Ehrenreich, "Nickel and Dime"
- 15 M 4/28 Power
MSL 35 Mills, "The Power Elite"
MSL 36 Clawson et al, "Dollars & Votes"
MSL 37 Derber, "One World under Business"
Essay 3 Due
- W 4/30 Mediated Fears
MSL 7 Glassner, "The Culture of Fear"
MSL 38 Gitlin, "Media Unlimited"
MSL 39 Mantsios, "Media Magic"
- F 5/2 TBA
- 16 M 5/5 TBA
- W 5/7 TBA
- F 5/9 Review