

# **SOC 258: SOCIOLOGY OF THE BODY**

**Spring 2020**

**Bellevue College**

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(Note: when emailing me, please put "SOC 258" in the subject line)

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Office hours: by appointment. If you'd like to meet with me - via Zoom, Skype, or phone - send me an email and I'd be happy to set something up with you.

**NOTE: This course will be conducted entirely online and in an "asynchronous" way. This means that you will not need to leave your home at any time, nor will you need to "log in" to Canvas at any specific times. As long as you meet the deadlines and due dates, you can complete the assignments at your kitchen table in your pajamas at any time of the day!**

## **COURSE INTRODUCTION**

Why do we spend so much money trying to "improve" our bodies?

Why do women allow themselves to be physically uncomfortable for the sake of their appearances?

Why do some men desire so strongly to be muscular that they are willing to take steroids and put their health at risk?

Why are some perfectly "normal" bodily functions considered to be disgusting or repulsive?

Why is some hair considered to be "good hair," and other hair not?

Which bodies are perceived to be "normal," which are not, and why?

How is all of this shaped by society and culture?

Throughout the quarter, we will examine the body from a sociological perspective, paying particular attention to the ways in which cultural ideas about the body affect our everyday, lived experiences. What is the relationship between your body and your sense of Self? Is your body simply a vessel for your mind and soul, or does your body define what it means to be you? How does your physical appearance (and the ways in which you "manipulate" it) affect your interactions with others? We will attempt to answer these questions (and more) over the next several weeks, exploring how all kinds of social processes are inscribed, (re)produced, and challenged through bodily practices.

The Sociology of the Body is a burgeoning subfield of the larger discipline that I think is very intellectually and theoretically exciting. I have a passion for this subject matter, and I hope by the end of the quarter you will have a passion for it too! You may look at and think about bodies very different after you finish this class.

***"The chief object of education is not to learn things but to unlearn things."***

**-Gilbert Chesterton**

**“Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire.”**

**-William Butler Yeats**

**Check out our Program website, which is full of information about sociology courses, majoring in sociology, and advice about how to make the most out of College: <http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/sociology/> (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.**

### **LEARNING ATMOSPHERE**

I believe that students learn best when they are actively involved in the teaching and learning process. Thus, this is an *active, interactive* course where you will *learn by doing*. You are expected to observe the world, read, write, discuss, and participate. I think of our class as a “collaborative learning community” where we all teach and learn from each other. Every time you post a comment or ask a question, you are teaching something to the rest of us. In order to do well in this course, you will need to abandon the traditional “passive” student role and instead *take control of your learning and education*. I think you’ll enjoy it and learn a lot in the process!

Please note that since this is a class about bodies, we may cover potentially sensitive and/or explicit topics. However, when we do, I expect these topics to be addressed analytically and professionally, with learning in mind. This is an “R” rated class, at times. If you have any questions or concerns about course content, please don’t hesitate to let me know.

**Regarding Safe Space:** This class is a Safe Space for **all** students. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, queer-identified, and transgender students are welcome in this class and are encouraged to speak out and be an integral part of this class. Any questions about what this means should be brought to me immediately. All are welcome!

**A note about inclusion:** Everyone in our class has the right to feel welcome and safe from personal attack, so with this in mind, I expect you to express yourself respectfully. When engaged in your role as a student, please be constructive in your comments. I will be constructive with mine. You may certainly disagree and debate, but you can express your viewpoint in an open, respectful manner. As a sociologist, I know that words do matter (they can hurt a lot!), so please think of other people’s feelings before writing. I cannot allow students to insult or belittle an entire group of people (such as women, men, people of color, gays and lesbians, poor people, Christians, Jews, Muslims, disabled people, veterans, conservatives, liberals, and so on). You are entitled to your beliefs, but you are not entitled to make attacks or victimize others. It is unacceptable to justify bigoted attitudes for any reason, including religion. If you are unable to express your beliefs in a non-insulting manner, please keep them to yourself. I think you’ll find, however, that with a little practice, you can express your viewpoint in an open, respectful manner. If you have any doubts, feel free to check with me and I’d be more than happy to help you express yourself responsibly. Hopefully, by the time you finish our class, you will be more appreciative of and

comfortable with human diversity and differences. Our differences are what make us wonderfully unique.

**A note about online learning:** As you know, all of Bellevue College is online this quarter. And unfortunately, online classes are not always a great “fit” for everyone. In general, online courses demand more independent initiative and personal discipline than do classes that meet on campus. Additionally, online classes demand stronger reading and writing skills. So, in order to make this quarter as successful for you as possible, you’ll want to follow these tips:

- Check the course website and course calendar around five days per week;
- Contact me if you don't understand something (but don't expect evening or weekend replies);
- Do your best to communicate clearly in writing (I don't grade on “grammar,” but you'll still want to be as clear and thorough as possible);
- Keep up with the readings, and highlight in the book as you read;
- Make sure you watch all the lectures; AND
- Turn in all of your assignments (even the “easy” ones and extra credit!).

**A note about instructor availability:** I have noticed that, sometimes, students who enroll in online classes have unreasonable expectations about their Instructor's availability. Please be aware that I am not online 24-hours a day. In general, I am online for this class a couple of hours per day. You will rarely be able to reach me in the evenings or on the weekends. I am, obviously, an active member of this course, but I do my coursework during the week, during daytime business hours. *Thus, please do not send to me late-night or weekend emails expecting an immediate response.* On Mondays-Fridays, I aim to respond to emails within 24-hours. Please adjust your expectations accordingly. Thanks!

## **COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

After completing the course, the successful student will be able to:

- Explain how the body is simultaneously biological and social;
- Discuss the body at a theoretical and abstract level;
- Identify the role of culture and group norms in the presentations of our bodies;
- Illustrate the complex interactions between culture, groups, identity, the Self, and the body;
- Analyze the major social problems connected to the body;
- Assess the impacts of power, dominance, and inequality on our bodies;
- Explain how bodies can be a site of both oppression and empowerment; and
- Apply the course material to his or her own life, allowing for a deeper understanding of his/her own bodily experience.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS AND MISCELLANEOUS PURCHASES**

Texts: “Sociology of the Body: A Reader (Second Edition)” by Malacrida and Low (Oxford University Press)

Additional course readings are in the “Modules” on *Canvas*

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS**

In order to have a respectful, cooperative learning environment in which we learn as much as possible from one other, we all need to contribute positively to class dynamics. Although each class is unique and develops its own 'personality,' the following are the basic expectations that serve as the foundation of our class culture (yes, online classes have a culture too!).

The following outlines what we can expect of each other:

**Preparation.** All of us should prepare before participating. As your professor, my ultimate goal is to help you learn and succeed, so I will spend ample time and effort on class preparation in order to make the material as understandable and as interesting as I possibly can. Sometimes we will have lectures to watch, and other times we'll have discussions, watch films, or complete activities/assignments. I am a big believer that learning in a variety of ways (not just lecture!) leads to deep and meaningful levels of understanding.

As students, you should complete the readings before participating in discussion. And don't neglect the "smaller" assignments, because they count and add up easily, and so they are worth more in the end than they appear. When we all prepare, everyone benefits.

**Quality.** I believe that I have done my best to choose course materials and assignments that are interesting and engaging, and I'll bring my "best self" to our online class. I work hard to make this course a success for you, and I expect you to try hard too. When making comments and completing assignments, your comments should indicate that you have read and understand the course material. You should always try to do your personal best. Please don't assume that you can simply "wing it" in this class and still earn a high grade. I have high expectations of you, as I want you to succeed. I know you can succeed, even if you've never gone to college before or if you haven't done well in school or if you haven't taken an online class before! I hope you have high expectations of me as well.

**Promptness.** I will post assignments with plenty of time for you to complete them, and I commit to returning your work to you in a timely, reasonable fashion. I will respond to your questions and electronic communications as promptly as possible. As far as your assignments, be sure that you comply with all due dates. I believe that one of the major lessons students take away from college is the importance of meeting deadlines. As a result, **no late work is accepted in this class**. Late work will receive a **zero** grade. Please do not ask me if I will accept your work late...I won't. I do accept work early, so if you want to work ahead a few days, that's totally fine. Due dates are indicated in the Canvas Calendar and in the Modules, so plan ahead.

**Engagement.** On your end, I need you to be engaged because the success of our class depends almost as much on you as on me. I expect you to actively engage with the course materials, participating and being involved as much as you possibly can. On my end, I agree to be available to you should you desire help. I encourage you to email me if you have a question or concern, and I encourage you to advocate for your own needs. If you want to talk via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, we can schedule an appointment that fits your schedule. However, please be aware that I am not available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. I do my coursework during regular

business hours. *Thus, please do not send to me late-night or weekend emails expecting an immediate response.* Thank you in advance for your understanding and consideration.

**Honesty and integrity.** Your grade will be based upon what I detect that you have learned, so it is your job to show me that you understand the material. This is very important: if you cheat/plagiarize, you will fail. No excuses will be taken into account. Your work must be your own, except when asked to work with other students. Furthermore, you are required to acknowledge in your papers if you have borrowed any ideas, terms, or phrases, even if you have borrowed from a classmate OR from the book. Please do not copy and paste material from wikipedia or any other website into your assignments, as this is a severe form of cheating (that is very easy to catch, by the way). If you cheat/plagiarize on any portion of a quiz, you'll receive a zero grade for the entire quiz. ***In this class, your assignments should be grounded ONLY in the book and course materials in the Modules (rather than web resources, which are often wrong). This means that you should NOT do internet research in this class – all you need is in the course textbook.*** In fact, ***if you do outside research in this class, you will lose points.*** I dock points for this because: (a) information on the Internet is often misleading and/or inaccurate and (b) I need to make sure that you understand OUR BOOK (which is, after all, sociological, and the research cited in it is solid, reliable social science!). If you have any hesitation, or if you are in doubt about one of these issues, feel free to ask me.

**Respect and inclusion.** Since learning about diverse experiences is important in this course, it is of the utmost importance that we respect each other's experiences, differences, and opinions. I will do everything within my power to encourage a class culture that is free of prejudice and discrimination. I value you.

## GRADING

Grades are based on your performance on the following:

Quizzes: 9 @ 50 points each	450 points
Essays: 4 @ 50 points each	200 points
Mini-Assignments: 13 @ 10 points each	130 points
Lecture notes: 12 @ 10 points each	120 points
Discussion: 10 @ 10 points each	100 points
TOTAL	1,000 points

Course Grade	Point Total	Course Grade	Point Total
A	= 930-1,000 points	C+	= 770-799 points
A-	= 900-929 points	C	= 730-769 points
B+	= 870-899 points	C-	= 700-729 points
B	= 830-869 points	D+	= 670-699 points
B-	= 800-829 points	D	= 600-669 points
		F	= 0-599 points

- (1) Weekly Quizzes: Starting in Week Two, you will take a quiz on Canvas every week. Quizzes will likely consist of multiple choice and/or short answer questions. **I do not give make-up quizzes and you must complete them before the deadline.** Quizzes

will cover all of the content from that week – readings, lectures, videos, etc., so be sure that you take the quizzes after you’ve done the rest of the work for that week.

- (2) Essays: You will complete four essays throughout the quarter that require you to reflect on the course material and/or observe the social world. You should do your best to address every essay question thoughtfully, clearly, and completely, as you can earn up to 50 points for each essay. These essays will be graded not only on their completeness (Did you adequately address all the components of the assignment?), but also on their thoughtfulness (Does your essay show that you understand and thought hard about the course material/readings? Do you connect your answer to the course materials?). PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT THESE ESSAYS WITHOUT FIRST READING THE BOOK and WATCHING THE LECTURES - I will definitely be able to tell if you are "shooting from the hip" rather than relying on what you've read to help you with the assignment. And again, **PLEASE DO NOT DO "INTERNET RESEARCH" FOR THESE ESSAYS – you should rely solely on the course materials (if you rely on other sources, your grade will suffer as I need to ensure that you understand the book, which is far more reliable than much of the Internet).** Essays vary in length - most are roughly 500 words, although some are 750-1000 words. Please note that **I will not accept late essays**, so work that is not handed in on time will receive a zero grade.
- (3) Mini-Assignments: Most weeks, you will have at least one “mini-assignment” to complete. Sometimes these will be brief worksheets, and other times they may be personal reflections. They will vary. These assignments will be posted for you in the Modules.
- (4) Lecture Notes: You will watch weekly lectures on Canvas and take notes while you watch. You’ll submit these notes for a grade. NOTE: this should be an “easy” way to earn full points so don’t pass up these assignments! All you need to do is demonstrate to me that you watched and understand the important points from lecture.
- (5) Discussion: Each week, you will participate in large class discussions on the Canvas discussion board. It is your responsibility, as a member of our class, to respond thoughtfully not only to my prompt(s), but also to your classmates’ comments. You are required to participate thoroughly in each week’s discussion(s), as your grade will be based on the quality of your contributions and your level of involvement. In order to receive high grades on your discussion, you will need to:
  - (a) make an initial post about the topic by Wednesday night of each week (you will notice that each discussion has two due dates - one due date for your initial post, and another due date for your follow-up posts/responses) - your initial post should rely upon the readings and videos, demonstrating to me that you know the material. Your initial post is worth 5 points. Additionally, you need to...
  - (b) respond to AT LEAST 2-4 of your classmates' posts throughout the week (i.e. contribute something intellectually meaningful).

In other words, you will need to make a TOTAL of 3-5 **high-quality** posts each week- one will be your initial post (to my discussion prompt) and then the rest will be your responses to what others have said. I have set up the weekly discussions so that you

cannot see what others have posted until you've made your own initial post first. Also **your initial post will be due by 11:59pm on Wednesday of each week, and your follow-up posts/responses will be due by 11:59pm on Sunday of each week.**

The following are guidelines that you should follow in order to contribute to successful class discussions:

Your responses to my discussion questions should be in sentence/paragraph format, and you should avoid what I call "text message" grammar (that means no "u" instead of "you"). While format is always important (since it eases communication), the focus in this class is primarily on content. Therefore, your comments should be meaningful and expand your classmates' understanding of the topic. The goal for our discussions is to deepen our understanding of the course themes.

On each discussion thread, you can earn up to ten points for your contributions. Your posts must reflect real thought and deepen the conversation. Therefore keep the following in mind:

- Say something that will *contribute* to a *meaningful* discussion--this requires *time and thought!* Thoroughly reflect on and think about the point you are making.
- Fully explain and elaborate your points, using examples, evidence and logic to explain. Rely on evidence whenever possible, as this course is a social science course, and you are learning the social science perspective. Speak with precision regarding your meaning, rather than being vague or general.
- Respond to the topic, not the author. This does not mean you should ignore the person who wrote the original post, but it means you need to focus on the ideas in the post and how to further the conversation on the topic, not tell the author what you think of his or her post.
- Place your reaction in the context of the discussion. Make sure that you clearly connect your response to the week's (or previous weeks') themes.
- Minimize prejudices, biases, unfounded beliefs, and too much reliance on emotional reactions, which can sidetrack good sound judgment and opinions rooted in your learning and in the sociological perspective. It is easy for bias, belief and emotion to dominate a discussion because we have existing emotions around the topic at hand, or because we fall prey to "reductionism" (seeing individuals as causes of their predicaments, which have social roots and solutions).
- Feel free to be personal and interpersonal on the threads, in addition to substantive discussion. This aspect of discussion helps the group bond as a community. Remember, too, that you will apply many of the topics to your own social worlds. Be careful, however, not to go WAY off on a personal tangent--stay focused on the topic. If you want to carry on a more personal discussion, use the "other" forum on the discussion site. The assignment forums are reserved for analyzing the assignment of the week.

Examples of good discussion posts include: clarifying or expanding the relevant concept if important points are missing, vague or incorrect; looking at the issue from another angle or perspective; adding pertinent information; asking a question that forces your classmates to think more in depth on the topic.

I'm looking forward to an engaging and interesting discussion board!

**The Disability Resource Center serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. If you are a student who has a disability or learning challenge for which you have documentation or have seen someone for treatment and if you feel you may need accommodations in order to be successful in college, please contact us as soon as possible. If you are a student with a documented autism spectrum disorder, there is a program of support available to you. If you are a person who requires assistance in case of an emergency situation, such as a fire, earthquake, etc, please meet with your individual instructors to develop a safety plan within the first week of the quarter. The DRC office is located in B 132 or you can call them at 425.564.2498. Deaf students can reach them by video phone at 425-440-2025 or by TTY at 425-564-4110. Please visit our website for application information into our program and other helpful links at [www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc](http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc)**

**If you are a student with an official NOTICE OF ACCOMMODATIONS from the DRC, please email me early in the quarter so I can best support your learning needs.**