

THE SOCIAL LIVES OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH
SOC 150
Fall 2012

Bellevue College

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Class Location: L124



COURSE INTRODUCTION

This is an introductory-level course that applies fundamental sociological principles and concepts to the experiences of being a young person in America. The Sociology of Children and Youth is far too large a field to thoroughly cover in eleven weeks. As a result, we will focus primarily on the following sociological questions:

- How do we become who we are?
- What is the role of our families, our schools and friends, and the media in shaping us?
- Why and how do children's lives differ from one another?
- What are the challenges of being a young person, and how do young people negotiate those challenges?
- In what ways do youth exert their power?

We can all remember life as a child – the joys, thrills, pains, and fears. For some, childhood remains a place of comforting and warm memories; yet for others, it was a time of upheaval, pain, and anxiety. Regardless of how we look back at our childhoods, the simple act of being a child in an adult-dominated world is a huge challenge. How does a child become a unique human being when those around her are almost constantly telling her how to act and what to think? How can a child have any say at all when the society grants him little power? Throughout the quarter, we will examine the tension between being a young person who wants to assert control over his/her own life and living in a society that won't quite allow it.

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 often *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 make a comment or ask a question, you teach something to the rest of us. I challenge you to abandon the traditional passive student role and to get involved with teaching and learning – I think you'll enjoy it and learn a lot in the process!

Welcome to our class! I'm very much looking forward to working with you. I absolutely love sociology and hopefully by the end of the quarter you will love it too. If I do my job well, you should come to look at the world in a different way. Most of the time, this increased awareness is invigorating and exciting for students, but sometimes, it can be stressful. Regardless, I hope you will take these "lessons learned" with you on your future endeavors. I strongly believe that sociology has practical and potentially life changing lessons for us all.

Visit and join the Sociology Program's FACEBOOK page.
<https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/373440292722303/>



A note about course content: Since sociologists examine just about every aspect of the social world, we sometimes talk about provocative material in class. Please be advised that, when we explore controversial topics, they will always be framed within an academic context. You are free to leave the room at any time, but please know that you will be responsible for any course material you may have missed while you were gone. If you have any questions or concerns about course content or climate, don't hesitate to let me know.

A note about instructor availability: I have noticed that, sometimes, students have unreasonable expectations about their Instructor's availability. Please be aware that I am not available 24-hours a day. In general, I am in my office for a couple of

hours in the morning (before my classes), and I always check my email a few times a day. As a result, you will rarely be able to reach me by phone or by email 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.* Thank you in advance for your understanding and consideration.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- Question the obvious;
- Explain the changing societal definitions of “childhood,” “adolescence,” and “youth”;
- Describe the various methods of studying children and teens as well as the research limitations and ethical concerns;
- Illustrate the major agents of socialization in contemporary American society;
- Identify the stages of identity development and the crucial role gender and race play in identity development;
- Critically analyze the larger political, economic, and social forces that affect youth;
- Identify some of the ways in which race, class, and gender differentially impact children and adolescents;
- Better understand the major social problems affecting children and youth today;
- Think about the world from a sociological perspective; and
- Apply the sociological imagination to concrete social phenomena.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Texts: “Childhood in American Society: a Reader” by Karen Sternheimer
Additional readings are posted on the course website

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

The following outlines what you may expect of me as your instructor:

- *A sincere effort to help you learn the course material.* Since my ultimate goal is to help you learn and succeed, I intend to spend enough time and effort on class preparation to make the material as understandable and as interesting as I possibly can. I will not simply “regurgitate” the material from the readings, but rather, I will help you synthesize them. This means that class time will not be solely

lecture – we will have interesting discussions, watch films, and engage in a wide variety of activities. I am a big believer that a variety of teaching styles/approaches helps you learn more.

- *Accessibility.* I agree to be available to you outside of class should you desire help. I encourage you to come to my office hours whenever you have a question or concern. I am more than happy to help. If my office hours are not convenient for you, we can schedule an appointment that fits your schedule.
- *Attention.* When you are speaking, you will have my undivided attention.
- *Fairness.* Your grade will be based upon what I detect that you have learned and how I assess your performance. It is your job to clearly communicate to me that you understand the material. I will not negotiate final grades.

The following outlines what I expect from you as a student in this class:

- *A sincere effort to learn the course material.* When participating in discussions and when writing assignments/papers, your comments should indicate to me that you have read and understand the course material. Some students wrongly assume that they can simply "wing it" in this class and still receive a high grade.
- *Preparation.* You should come to class having done the assigned readings and homework, and you should always bring the proper supplies with you. On seminar days, you should bring the readings. Note that the BCC guideline for homework is two hours outside of class for each hour spent in class.
- *Attendance.* Please attend all class sessions – your presence in class contributes significantly toward your final grade in the course as I cover a lot of material in class that cannot be found in the readings. If you do need to miss class, please note that you will not be able to make up any in-class work that you may have missed (such as group work), and you are also responsible for any and all work that is due at the class meeting immediately upon your return. This means that being absent does not grant you an extension on anything. I highly recommend that you get the names and contact information of one or two of your classmates so you can contact them for any assignments or notes you may have missed while absent.
- *Promptness.* You should be in class on time except when delayed by an emergency, and you should stay until class is over unless you become ill or have made arrangements with me to leave early. Furthermore, you should 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 will be accepted**. Late work will receive a **zero** grade. Please do not ask me if I will accept your work late...I won't. If you know you are going to be absent on the day an assignment is due, then turn it in early. **Being absent on the day something is due does NOT grant you an automatic extension (even if you were absent on the day it was assigned)**. Major due dates are indicated on the attached Course Calendar, so plan ahead.



With their parents away, the young dragons would stay up late lighting their sneezes.

NOTE: I do not accept assignments via email. It is your responsibility to get the work to me in class when it is due.

- *Contribution.* Learning about each other's experiences and perspectives is an integral part of the learning process in this course. I believe that you will learn a lot about yourself and your fellow classmates. To work effectively in this course, therefore, you are expected to be an active participant in our learning environment. You should do your best to contribute to class discussions and

activities. Please be advised that your grade will suffer if you do not participate and contribute to the intellectual life of our class.

- *Respect and tolerance.* Since learning about diverse experiences is central to this course, it is of the utmost importance that you respect your classmates' experiences, differences, and opinions. Disrespectful attitudes will not be tolerated.
- *Honesty.* This means no cheating, and no plagiarism. If you cheat/plagiarize, you 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. 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). ***In this class, your assignments should be grounded in the textbook (rather than web resources, which are often wrong!). This means that you should NOT do internet research in this class – all you need can be found in the course textbook and supplementary readings.*** If you have any hesitation, or if you are in doubt about one of these issues, feel free to ask me.

GRADING

Grades are based on six factors: (1) exams, (2) quizzes, (3) seminar, (4) homework, (5) a group presentation, and (6) class participation. Each of these elements is awarded a specific number of points:

Exams (2 @ 250pts each)	500 points (40% of final grade)
Quizzes (7 @ 10pts each)	70 points (7% of final grade)
Seminar (8 @ 15pts each)	120 points (12% of final grade)
Homework (8 @ 20pts each)	160 points (16% of final grade)
Group Presentation	100 points (10% of final grade)
Participation	50 points (5% of final grade)
TOTAL	1000 points

The following are the letter-grade equivalents to the course 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

Exams: Two exams are given over the course of the quarter. Exams *may* consist of multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and/or essay questions. You are encouraged to study with your classmates for each exam. **Please note that I do not give make-up exams.** If you are absent on the day of an exam, you will receive a zero grade. Please review the attached Course Calendar and make note of the exam dates. Plan ahead!

Quizzes: Most weeks, I will give a short quiz on the reading materials. Quizzes will be held at the beginning of class, so if you come in late, you will miss the quiz and receive a **zero** grade. You are permitted to miss one quiz without consequence to your grade (I drop the lowest score). Quizzes will typically be short answer, although I may throw in a multiple choice question once in a while. The purpose of these quizzes is to ensure that you have done the readings and understand them on a basic level.

Seminar: We will have nine seminars over the course of the quarter; you are permitted to miss one seminar without consequence to your grade (I drop the lowest score). (NOTE: If you do not miss any seminars, your lowest score will count as extra credit!)

Seminar involves discussing a specific reading and completing a brief assignment independently AND another one in small groups in order to reach deeper levels of learning. Early in the quarter, I will assign students

randomly to groups. This will be your quarter-long Seminar Group (although I reserve the right to re-assign groups at any time, particularly if a group has become dysfunctional). Each week, you will work in this group, having discussions with your group members and completing a brief group assignment with them.

If you look at the Course Calendar, you will see that there is a Seminar due most weeks. On Seminar day, it is crucial that you come to class prepared. You will need to complete the reading ahead of time and bring a brief assignment to each seminar. (NOTE: **I will not accept assignments that are not typed.**)

Each INDEPENDENT seminar assignment (that you bring with you to class on Seminar day) should include the following:

- a statement of what you think the article's main claim/conclusion is (in your own words); in other words, what is the thesis of the article, and what is the author CONCLUDING about the topic? (Oftentimes, the title of the article is a big hint about the conclusion/thesis!) Please note that a thesis is NOT the same as the topic of the article, but rather, a thesis is an ARGUABLE CLAIM that the author is making.
- 3-4 central questions that you have about the article that you would like to talk about with your classmates (the questions should be thought-provoking, not "What did you think about the article?" and "What is the author saying?").
- Seminar assignments should NOT include your opinion about the article (you will have plenty of time to talk about that during seminar!).

In class on seminar days, you will break into your assigned groups and come to an agreement about what the thesis of the article is. Your group will write your agreed-upon thesis on a piece of paper, and then begin talking about your discussion questions. After your discussion ends, your group will staple your individual seminar assignments to the sheet of paper that contains your agreed-upon thesis.

I grade seminar in the following manner:

I review your group's agreed-upon thesis and assign it a grade (for example, 15 out of 15). I then look at my notes from class and check to see who contributed to discussion in a meaningful way. Those students will receive the highest grade in the group (in this example, they'd receive 15s). Students who participate a little might receive 10s, and those who don't participate at all would receive even less. Students who do not submit individual assignments (stapled in the packet) receive a **zero** grade. This means that not all seminar group members automatically receive the same grade – students who participate less receive lowered grades.

Homework Assignments: You will complete several homework assignments throughout the quarter that require you to reflect on the course material. You should do your best to address every assignment thoughtfully, clearly, and completely. Homework will be graded not only on completeness (Did you adequately address all the components of the assignment?), but also thoughtfulness (Does your assignment show that you thought hard about the topic, or did you give the topic just a little superficial attention?). Homework assignments vary in length - some may be a paragraph long, others will be 1-2 pages (but always typed and double-spaced). Please note that I will not accept late homework, so homework that is not handed in on time will receive a **zero** grade. Additionally, I will not accept homework that isn't typed (unless I've specifically mentioned that it can be handwritten). Homework assignments are described in the attached Course Calendar.

Group Presentation: You will form groups of five to six students each and prepare a group presentation. During the last week of the quarter, your group will present to the class a 20-minute presentation. Details about the presentation will be distributed in the first part of the quarter.

Participation: Participation is essential to the format of this class and will therefore contribute significantly toward your grade. In short, your success in this class depends on your *active* participation. "Participation" includes attendance, class discussions, group work, and independent in-class assignments. As a result, if you skip class or disrupt class by coming in late regularly or whispering, then your participation grade will suffer. Conversely, if you contribute to class discussions and add important insights, your grade will benefit. *Do not take this portion of your grade lightly – excellent attendance and participation can significantly improve your final grade!*

Students with Disabilities. All students are responsible for all requirements of the class, but the way they meet these requirements may vary. If you need specific academic accommodations due to a disability, please speak with me and with Disability Resource Center (564-2498). You will need to obtain the appropriate documentation from DRC in room B233. The disability accommodation documentation must be given to me before it is needed rather than afterward, so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

COURSE CALENDAR

The following Course Calendar will be revised as needed. Please note that you will be held responsible for all revisions to the calendar. So, if you miss a class, be sure to immediately check with me regarding any changes. You should make every effort to complete the readings in the order listed.

WEEK ONE - Introduction to the Sociology of Children

Readings and Assignments:

- Read syllabus and make sure you understand it
- Read "Introduction" in Sternheimer pp vi-vii
- Read "Editor's Introduction: Meanings of Childhood" pp1-3
- Read "Childhood in America, Past and Present" (Reading 3), in Sternheimer, pp45-50
- Read "In Search of the Child" (Reading 5), in Sternheimer, pp65-74
- **DUE FRIDAY: Homework**
Based on your recollection, discuss what was hard about being a child (in general). Why was it hard? You should write about a page (typed). NOTE: You should write about only those things you are comfortable revealing to me and/or your classmates. (To give you an example that would be appropriate for this assignment, I was the youngest of three children and I remember hating it when my parents wouldn't let me do the things that my older sisters were allowed to do. Although now I understand why my parents did this, at the time it was really, REALLY HARD to be told "no." It made me feel very, very angry, and it made me feel that my parents didn't think I was as important as my sisters. I felt left out.)
- **QUIZ FRIDAY (on all week 1 readings)**

WEEK TWO – Becoming: Socialization and Identity

Readings and Assignments:

- Read "Yeah, You're Big Bill: Entering Kids' Culture" (Reading 11)
- Read Newman's "Building Identity: Socialization" (on WEBSITE)
- Read Davis' "Extreme Isolation" (on WEBSITE)
- **DUE THURSDAY: Seminar on Davis article**
- **DUE FRIDAY: Quiz on all Week 2 readings**



WEEK THREE – Becoming: Socialization and Roles/Groups/Institutions

Readings and Assignments:

- Read Adler/Adler "Peer Power" (on WEBSITE)
- **DUE THURSDAY: Seminar on Adler/Adler article**
- Read "Exchanges, Labels, and Put-Downs" (Reading 15)
- Read Gracey "Learning the Student Role: Kindergarten as Academic Bootcamp" (on WEBSITE)
- **DUE FRIDAY: Quiz on all Week 3 readings**
- **DUE FRIDAY: Homework**
In "Learning the Student Role," Gracey describes the events that occurred in a kindergarten class as he made scientific observations. According to Gracey, what explicit and implicit (look these words up if you don't know what they mean!) lessons do children learn in school? Also, what personal characteristics were encouraged by the teachers, and what personal

characteristics were discouraged? Finally, based on upon your own personal experiences, what kinds of things did you learn in school (besides the subject matters such as math, reading, writing, history, etc.)? In other words, did you acquire any specific skills or personality traits from your elementary, middle, and high schools? Write 1-2 pages, typed.

WEEK FOUR – Becoming: Socialization and Gender

Readings and Assignments: **NOTE: NO CLASSES ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 9th**

- Read Lorber’s “Night to His Day” (on WEBSITE)
- **DUE THURSDAY: Seminar on Lorber article**
- Read “Popularity” (Reading 14)
- Read “Crude Comments and Sexual Scripts” (Reading 16)
- Read “Constructing Opposite Sides” (Reading 22)
- Read “Barbie Girls Versus Sea Monsters: Children Constructing Gender” (Reading 248)
- Read Messner’s “Boyhood, Organized Sports, and the Construction of Masculinities” (on WEBSITE)
- **DUE FRIDAY: Quiz on Week 4 readings**
- **DUE FRIDAY: Homework**

Refer to the Messner article as you complete this assignment. According to Messner, how do organized sports socialize boys to be masculine? In other words, what lessons/messages do boys and men learn from organized sports? Provide examples. Why do you think athletic success is such an important source of masculine identity for boys? Why do you suppose that young boys don’t generally gain as much masculine esteem from academic success (academically successful boys are often labeled “nerds”)? And finally, in your opinion, which cultural avenues are most likely to be sources of feminine identity for girls? In other words, if sports affirm a boy’s masculinity, what affirms a girl’s femininity? Provide examples. Write about 2 pages, typed.



WEEK FIVE – Becoming: Socialization and Sexuality

Readings and Assignments:

- Read Simonds’ “The Death of the Stork: Sex Education Books for Children” (on WEBSITE)
- **DUE MONDAY: Homework**
Did you receive any formal sex education in school? If so, around what grade/grades? What do you remember about the content? What do you remember about the tone of the lessons? Do Simonds’ findings in her research surprise you? Why/why not? Now thinking beyond school, how did you “learn” about sex as a child/teen? What were your “agents of socialization” regarding sexuality? Would you say that most of your understanding of sexuality came from what you learned in school OR from elsewhere? Is this a “good” thing or a “bad” thing, in your opinion? Write about 2 pages, reflecting on your own sex education.
- Read Pascoe’s “Dude, You’re a Fag” (on WEBSITE)
- Read Micelli’s “In the Trenches: LGBT Students Struggle with School and Sexual Identity” (on WEBSITE)
- Read Tolman’s “Dilemmas of Desire: Teenage Girls Talk About Sexuality” (on WEBSITE)
- **DUE FRIDAY: Quiz on Week 5 readings**
- **DUE FRIDAY: Seminar on Tolman**

WEEK SIX – Becoming: Socialization and Social Class

Readings and Assignments: **NOTE: No classes on Friday, October 26th**

- **EXAM #1 – MONDAY**
- Read “Concerted Cultivation and the Accomplishment of Natural Growth” (Reading 18), in Sternheimer
- Read “Girls, Race, and Identity: Border Work Between Classes” (Reading 24)
- **DUE TUESDAY: Homework**
Based on the parenting styles described in Lareau’s “Concerted Cultivation and the Accomplishment of Natural Growth” article, which type do you think you had as a child? How do you think this may have affected you as an adult? Explain in a paragraph or so (typed).



WEEK SEVEN – Becoming: Socialization and Race/Ethnicity

Readings and Assignments:

- Read “Using Racial and Ethnic Concepts: The Critical Case of Very Young Children” (Reading 19)
- Read Tatum “Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?” (on WEBSITE)
- Read “Constructing and Negotiating Racial Identity in School” (Reading 20)
- Read Romero’s “Life as the Maid’s Daughter” (on WEBSITE)
- **DUE WEDNESDAY: Seminar on Reading 19**
- **DUE WEDNESDAY: Homework**
Think about the role of race in your childhood (keeping in mind that you may very well have not been conscious of race or the role of race at the time!). Describe the racial makeup of your elementary, middle, and high schools. Describe the racial makeup of your childhood neighborhood(s). What races were your friends? Were you around primarily people of the same race as you, or were you primarily around people of a different race? What races were the characters in the shows/movies you watched and the books you read? How did all of these experiences affect you? (NOTE: You are not allowed to say “they didn’t affect me,” because as sociologists well know, EVERYTHING affects you in one way or another!)
- **DUE FRIDAY: Quiz on Week 7 readings**

WEEK EIGHT – Popular Culture, Media, and Consumerism

Readings and Assignments:

- Read Kilbourne’s “Socialization and the Power of Advertising” (on WEBSITE)
- Read “Kids and Commerce” (Reading 27)
- **DUE MONDAY: Seminar on Kilbourne article AND on Reading 27 (bring two papers)**
- **DUE WEDNESDAY: Homework**
Reflect on the following questions: What role and responsibility do you feel parents should have when it comes to addressing the commercialization of childhood? Is it fair to expect them to cope, on their own, with a billion dollar industry, or should there be governmental policies in place that control/limit marketing to children? Why do you think the U.S. government has not taken a very active role in protecting children from commercial culture? Do you see a difference between this issue and laws that require children to wear bicycle helmets or laws protecting them from tobacco marketing? Reflect in about a page or two, typed.
- Read “Kids in Toyland” (Reading 28)
- Read “It’s Not the Media: The Truth About Pop Culture’s Influence on Children” (on WEBSITE)
- Read “The Impact of Pervasive Beauty Images on Black and White Girls’ Self-Concepts” (on WEBSITE)
- **DUE FRIDAY: Quiz on Week 8 readings**

WEEK NINE – Social Problems of Youth

Readings and Assignments: **NOTE: NO CLASSES ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 12th**

- **DUE TUESDAY: Homework**
Identify a social problem that you think is affecting youth today. Find a news article about the problem, and bring it to class. In a paragraph or two (typed), answer the following: Why do you think this is an important problem for youth? Has our society dealt with this problem adequately? Why/why not? What do you think can be done about the problem?
- Read Leo’s “American Pre-Schoolers on Ritalin” (on WEBSITE)
- **DUE THURSDAY: Seminar on Leo article**
- Read Gaines “Teenage Wasteland: Suburbia’s Dead-End Kids” (on WEBSITE)

WEEK TEN – Social Problems of Youth

Readings and Assignments: **NOTE: No classes on Thursday and Friday, November 22nd and 23rd**

- **DUE MONDAY: Quiz on Week 10 readings**
- Read White’s “Fast Girls: Teenage Tribes and the Myth of the Slut” (on WEBSITE)
- Read Blank “The Kid No One Noticed” (on WEBSITE)
- Read Luker’s “Dubious Conceptions: The Politics of Teenage Pregnancy” (on WEBSITE)
- **DUE WEDNESDAY: Seminar on Luker article**



WEEKS ELEVEN and TWELVE – Group Presentations and Course Wrap-up



FINAL EXAMINATION - This course's second exam will be held on **Friday, December 7th, from 9:30-11:20.** Plan ahead accordingly. **I do not give early or late final exams.**