

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

SOC& 101 (Section D)

Fall 2010

Bellevue College

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Class Meets: Daily, 10:30-11:20am
Class Location: C164

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our class, "Introduction to Sociology." I look forward to working with you this quarter and sharing with you my fascination with sociology! Hopefully, you enter this class with some degree of curiosity about why human beings behave the way we do. If so, you should find sociology intellectually rewarding as well as illuminating and useful in your own life.

This course is designed as a broad introduction to the field of Sociology. Over the course of the quarter, we will review several topics frequently studied by sociologists, with a particular focus on inequality and the distribution of power in society. We will discover how social institutions (such as education and the economy) depend upon and perpetuate inequalities between people. You will also learn how to use the "sociological imagination" to see how large institutions affect all of our lives for better or worse. As José Ortega y Gasset said, "Tell me the landscape in which you live, and I will tell you who you are." Indeed, our social environments profoundly influence not only who we think we are, but also how we behave, what we think, and how we see others. The overarching goal of this course is to examine and understand this process.



Sociology is a field that relies on scientific research and evidence, not personal opinion or casual observation. In many cases, the ideas sociology has to offer are difficult to grasp and accept because they challenge many of the taken-for-granted attitudes and opinions that we all tend to operate by in our everyday lives. (Science and research often contradict opinion. As an example, just think about how science challenged the previously held belief that the earth was flat and at the center of the universe!) As we all come to the course with strong ideas and beliefs about the world in which we live, the subject matter is personally as well as intellectually challenging. Some of what you will learn in this course may initially seem like "common sense." Sometimes what you will learn might be shocking, surprising, or even make you angry. Hopefully, you will learn from each experience and take these lessons with you on your future endeavors.

"The chief object of education is not to learn things but to unlearn things."
—Gilbert Chesterton

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!

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;
- Describe the “sociological perspective”;
- Identify the ways in which culture and social institutions (such as education, the economy, the media, and the family) shape our everyday experiences;
- Explain “social constructionism”;
- Distinguish between factual statements and value judgments;
- Put aside personal ethnocentric attitudes, becoming culturally relative;
- Better understand perspectives different from your own;
- Formulate logical conclusions;
- Apply sociological knowledge to real-life situations;
- Look at your own life sociologically; and
- Describe how life experiences and opportunities differ according to race, class, and gender.

NOTE: This course’s General Education ratings are: 3 in Critical Thinking, 2 in Reading, 2 in Ethics, 2 in Historical and Intellectual Perspectives, and 3 in Cultural Diversity.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MISCELLANEOUS PURCHASES

Texts: “Sociology: Exploring the Architecture of Everyday Life” (8th Edition)
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 textbook, but rather, I will help you synthesize it. 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 can not 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. That 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.

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) performance on exams and quizzes, (2) performance in seminar, (3) class participation, and (4) performance on homework assignments. Each of these elements is awarded a specific number of points:

Exams (3 @ 200pts each)	600 points (60% of final grade)
Quizzes (9@10pts each)	90 points (9% of final grade)
Seminar (8 @ 15pts each)	120 points (12% of final grade)
Homework Assignments	100 points (10% of final grade)
Participation	90 points (9% 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

- (1) Performance on Exams: Three exams are given over the course of the quarter. Exams may consist of multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and 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!
- (2) Performance on Quizzes: Each week, 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. My rationale for this is that I think our time in class will be much more productive, and you'll learn more, if you've done the readings ahead of time.
- (3) Performance in 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 each week (with the exception of the first and tenth weeks of the quarter). 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, and you'll CIRCLE the best three discussion-questions (that is, the three questions that were the most thought- and discussion-provoking for you all).

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.

Seminar: 8 @ 15pts each = 120 points

- (4) 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 in a meaningful way by adding 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!*
- (5) Performance on Homework Assignments: You will complete several homework assignments 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 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 (usually 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). Some homework assignments are described in the attached Course Calendar, and others will be announced during class.

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 the 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. "Newman," when listed, refers to the course textbook.

WEEK ONE - Introduction to the Course

"We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice."

-John Berger

Topics: What is sociology?
 How do sociologists study the social world?
 Inconvenient facts; debunking myths and common perceptions

Readings and Assignments:

- Read syllabus and make sure you understand it
- Read McIntyre, L. "Who's Afraid of Sociology" (on WEBSITE)
- ❑ Read Miner's "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema" (on WEBSITE)
- ❑ Read question #7 on page 8 (at the end of the "Body Ritual" article). Does Miner's piece make any more sense to you now that you know this? Skim back over the Miner article, looking at it in a different light now that you know the "secret."
- ❑ Quiz (on week one readings) **FRIDAY**
- ❑ Homework Assignment: **DUE FRIDAY**
 You have a two-part homework assignment. First, answer the following question (in a sentence or two): What points do you think Miner was trying to make by writing this article? In other words, why did he write it? Next, write a description of "Sports and Competition of the Nacirema" following a similar model to Horace Miner's "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema." (Hint: limit yourself to one sport.) You'll need to imitate Miner in describing the sport as if you were a complete outsider who knows nothing about the sport or the culture. You also need to use your descriptions to illustrate some underlying theme or value of Nacirema life (what does this sport tell us about what's important to the Nacirema people?). Write about two pages, typed and double-spaced.

WEEK TWO - Introduction to the Field; Social Construction of Reality

"We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are."

-Anais Nin

Topics: Social Construction of Reality
 Language; self-fulfilling prophecies; incorrigible propositions; faith
 Racial formations and the social construction of race
 Role of the media in creating and shaping reality

Readings and Assignments:

- Read Newman pp. 52-89, "Building Reality: The Social Construction of Knowledge"
- **QUIZ TUESDAY (on Newman Chapter 3)**
- Read Reinerman, C. and H. Levine "The Crack Attack: Politics and Media in the Crack Scare" (on WEBSITE)
- **DUE FRIDAY: SEMINAR on Reinerman/Levine article**



"The Boondocks"

WEEK THREE – The Sociological Imagination

*"I am somehow less interested
in the weight and convolutions of Einstein's brain
than in the near certainty that people of equal talent
have lived and died in cotton fields and sweatshops."
-Stephen Jay Gould*

Topics: Sociological imagination
Sociological perspective applied to social problems like suicide, mass murder, and eating disorders
Power of the situation

Readings and Assignments:

- Read Newman, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-15)
- Read Hesse-Biber, "Becoming a Certain Body" (on WEBSITE)\
- **QUIZ MONDAY (on Newman Chapter 1)**
- **DUE WEDNESDAY: SEMINAR on Hesse-Biber article**
- **DUE FRIDAY: Homework Assignment**
Based on the readings, lecture, and discussion from this week, what does the above quote from Stephen Jay Gould mean? What is he saying *sociologically*? Write your response in a paragraph or less.

WEEK FOUR – Social Structure and Stratification

Topics: Power of the situation (continued)
Social structure
Architecture of society: status, roles, groups, organizations, and institutions
Social stratification

Readings and Assignments:

- Read Newman Chapter 2 (pp. 17-47)
- Read Kelman and Hamilton "The My Lai Massacre: A Military Crime of Obedience" (on WEBSITE)
- **QUIZ MONDAY (on Newman Chapter 2)**
- **DUE WEDNESDAY: SEMINAR on Kelman/Hamilton article**

WEEK SEVEN – The Sociological Perspective: Impression Management

Topics: Identity management
Dramaturgy
Spoiled identities; stigma

Readings and Assignments:

- Read Newman, Chapter 6, pp159-183
- **QUIZ MONDAY on Newman Chapter 6**
- Read Albas' "Aces and Bombers" (on WEBSITE)
- **DUE THURSDAY: Seminar on Albas article**



WEEK EIGHT – Stratification: Social Class



*"The most dangerous illusion of them all
is the illusion that all is well."
-William Nicholson*

Topics: Social class
Income and wealth
Poverty

Readings and Assignments: **NOTE: No classes on Thursday, November 11th**

- **MONDAY: Exam #2**
- Read Newman, Chapter 10, pp297-333
- **QUIZ TUESDAY on Newman Chapter 10**
- Read Kozol's "Savage Inequalities" (on WEBSITE)
- **DUE FRIDAY: Seminar on Kozol article**

WEEK NINE - Stratification: Race

*"First they came for the Jews,
but I did not speak out because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for the Communists,
and I did not speak out because I was not a Communist.
Then they came for the trade unionists,
and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for me,
and no one was left to speak for me."*

-Pastor Martin Niemöller, victim of the Nazis

Topics: Race and identity
Racism and the individual
Racism and its forms (individual and institutional)

Readings and Assignments:

- Read Newman, Chapter 11, pp336-380
- **QUIZ MONDAY on Newman Chapter 11**
- Read Tatum's "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" (on WEBSITE)
- **DUE FRIDAY, Seminar on Tatum article**

WEEK TEN - Stratification: Race



Topic:

Racism and its forms (individual and institutional) - *continued*

Readings and Assignments: **NOTE: No classes on Thursday and Friday, November 25 and 26**

NO readings or seminar this week! No quiz either.

WEEK ELEVEN– Stratification: Gender



Topics:

- Gender and the individual
- Gender as structure
- Intersection of race and gender
- Gender and communication

Readings and Assignments:

- Read Newman, Chapter 12, pp383-411
- **QUIZ MONDAY on Newman Chapter 12**
- Read Lorber “Night to His Day: The Social Construction of Gender” (on WEBSITE)
- **DUE TUESDAY: Seminar on Lorber article**

WEEK TWELVE– Exams

*“Nobody makes a greater mistake than
when he [or she]
does nothing because he [or she] could only do a little.”
-Edmund Burke*

WEEK TWELVE – Final exams

This course’s third exam will be held on **Wednesday, December 8th, from 9:30-11:20am**. Plan ahead accordingly. I do not give early or late final exams, so you will need to be here.