



## **SOC 101: Introduction to Sociology** **Spring 2010**

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The purpose of this course is to explore fundamental questions regarding the human social condition, culture, change and inequality. It is designed to help students better understand themselves and the society in which they live. This course will provide a foundation for students to enter advanced courses in sociology.

### **SPECIFIC LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the course, each student who has successfully completed the course will be able to:

- View things from alternative perspectives: increase their capacity to step imaginatively outside of their own social and cultural context in order to critique it or step outside of their own experience to get a new point of view.
- Demonstrate skills in independent thinking by developing their own thesis statement, supporting that thesis with logical rationale and appropriate evidence, and presenting the thesis in a convincing fashion, orally and in writing.
- make critical-reflective judgments
- describe important characteristics of modern society and how those characteristics shape our lives
- explain the key ways of knowing and of evaluating evidence in the social sciences
- put modern society in a global or historical context, comparing it to societies with other cultural and structural arrangements and tracing connections among societies
- explain causes for human behavior in ways that account for the complexity of social forces and of human motivation
- reflect systematically and meaningfully on ethical dilemmas and issues that face citizens in modern society
- speak and write effectively
- Discuss ways in which groups, social processes, and social institutions affect persons: their goals, their values, their access to resources, and many other aspects of their everyday behavior.
- Employ a sociological imagination in analyzing everyday social processes or events.

The specific objectives articulated above should make clear that the primary learning objectives of this course are not merely memorization of specific facts (such as statistical data — which will change in a few years anyway). Rather, the focus will be on deep learning—including the process of inquiry in sociology and methods of analysis of social patterns.

### **Course Procedure**

Lectures, guided discussions, exercises, videos, and an inquiry study will all be employed as learning techniques in this course. I am responsible for the basic design and materials. However, if this is to be a truly stimulating and dynamic course, your active involvement is critical.

Readings will be assigned for specific class periods and students are expected to come prepared to ask questions and discuss the assigned material. Students should be taking themselves and their colleagues seriously as thinkers. In this course, we will often bite off large chunks of reading and I will expect you to comprehend and synthesize the material before coming to class. Participation within the classroom will be counted in the final grade.

Sociology is a fascinating field of inquiry, and it is my hope that this course will be enjoyable as well as enlightening. I expect persons in the course to be diligent and thorough in their work, but the format of the course is rather flexible. The course is here for us—including me, the instructor—to learn. Let's create an interesting culture of learning together! If some aspect of the course is not helpful to the learning process, let's talk about it.

## Course Requirements

### A. Required Reading

- James M. Henslin, *Down to Earth Sociology*, 14<sup>th</sup> edition.
- Jay MacLeod, *Ain't No Makin' It*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition
- Martin Luther King, Jr. *Stride Toward Freedom*
- Selected articles on course website

### B. Reading Responses OR a Weekly Sociological Journal

**Reading Responses:** Each time a reading assignment is due, students will submit a response to the readings. This response may be in the form of notes taken on the chapter, documented small-group discussions, or a graph used to summarize your summary of the chapter.

Respond to the text in ways that help you master the material and that help us see that you are engaging the material and keeping up with the reading. You are expected to submit **12** reading responses (though I do still expect you to be able to discuss all readings in class). Do one of the following when there is a "reading response" due. (You can vary your approach to this assignment; you need not always use the same strategy.)

- a. *Reading Response Journal:* After reading each section of the chapter, respond with a question or several comments. Read on and repeat the response (verbal-visual processing).
- b. *Summarizing the readings and visualizing the key ideas* (visual/spatial and/or verbal processing)  
Do one of the following:
  - Make a chart that shows the most important concepts.
  - Make several lists of organized ideas related to the chapter.
- c. *Connecting to the Text:* visualizing, questioning, responding (verbal processing)
  - Underline key ideas—mark in margins, make comments, put question marks, visualize concepts and ideas in your mind.
  - Then go back through your underlining and margin notes: write five “big” questions that represent key concepts in the chapter.
  - Answer two of the questions or write a commentary on why you think these are the core issues in this reading material.
- d. *Studying as a Group:* Talk with one or two peers about the important aspects of the text (interpersonal or verbal-auditory processing).

One person should serve as recorder who will list who participated in the study group and what key concepts were discussed.

- e. *Create a song, a poem or a rap:* Create a song, a poem, or a rap about the reading assignment which you then audiotape and turn in to the instructor.

Entries that demonstrate a basic or minimal effort to comprehend and retain the material will result in 3 points; solid summaries result in 4 points, really extraordinary responses (with unusual depth, creativity, and/or thoroughness) will earn 5 points.

**Weekly Sociological Journal:** As an alternative to daily reading responses, students would keep a journal in which they will make three entries each week, submitted on Friday on the following dates: **April 9, April 23, May 7, and 21.** Journal entries may vary in length from one entry to the next, but they should reflect serious thought and an application of sociological ideas and perspectives introduced in the course. Each entry will be about half a page in length.

*Purpose:* The purpose of this writing assignment is for students to learn to (1) exercise the "sociological imagination" (2) role-take with people whose experiences of the world are quite different from one's own, and (3) apply sociological concepts and theories to everyday life.

*Format:* You may use (and interchange from entry to entry) three approaches.

1. One common format in this journal would be to describe an incident or event (an interaction at home, at work, in another classroom, or wherever) in an initial paragraph, and then to explain that event using a sociological theory or concept. Under "shared documents" in the course website, there is an attachment that provides models.
2. A second option is to write about readings and the insights you have gained from the assigned readings regarding factors (variables) that shape society.
3. A third option is to write an essay about how an everyday experience at Bellevue College would be quite different if one were a member of a different group (e.g., different gender, member of a different racial or ethnic group, physical ability, sexual identity, and so forth.) A key element in this format is to illuminate how larger social structures and taken-for-granted cultural factors shape the interior experiences of an individual. Each essay will involve imaginatively placing oneself in a position different from your own circumstance and writing as though you were a member of that other group on this campus. It is usually best to write about a specific experience you witnessed at Bellevue College and explaining how you would have comprehended that same experience if you had been a different gender, an international student, a different religion, sexual identity, a different race/ethnicity, or "other." Under "shared documents" in the course website, there is an attachment that provides models.

Journals are not formal papers. Clarity in expressing ideas is important, but journalistic writing style is acceptable in this situation.

*Audience:* You may designate your own audience. You may write this to me, to your parents, or to other introductory sociology students who are struggling to understand a sociological concept and need an example in order to clarify the idea.

*Evaluative process:* Any reasonable entry—any solid effort to address sociological concepts—will be given 3 points. Good, insightful entries will result in 4 points. An exceptional entry will be given 5 points. At the end of the semester I will add up total points for each person and convert those scores into grades. However, this is mostly an introspective process of application. The assignment is more for learning purposes than for evaluation.

**Evaluative Criteria:** Grading will be based on the following criteria:

1. Thoughtful engagement with the material in the course, and
2. Clear application of sociological concepts to everyday situations.
3. Exercise of a "sociological imagination."

D. Analysis and Synthesis Exams

Each student will write two exams. Usually there will be some choice of question focus. Exam #1 involves an application of the "sociological imagination," an exploration of the meaning of macro and micro connections in your own life. This assignment is explained in some detail in Appendix A of this syllabus. The Final Examination is cumulative

E. Inquiry Project (@ approximately 4-5 pages)

For the term project students will conduct an analysis of children's books, prime-time television shows, websites, genres of music, church hymnals, newspaper editorials, evening television news programs, magazine advertisements, comic books, cartoons, or some other source. First, pick a topic of interest and then focus the topic by formulating a *specific question* that you want to answer. If several people want to share a topic and do joint research, that is a strong possibility. We can discuss both pros and cons of doing so. Actually a really good option is to have three or four people take the same issue (let's say, images of females in contemporary American life). Then one person could analyze prime-time television shows, another could examine children's books, and a third person could look at cartoons or church hymns.

Students will then write a paper on the research project—spelling out the method of research, formulating and supporting a thesis, critiquing the methodology that was used (including how well concepts were operationalized), and indicating how a subsequent study might be done to resolve some unanswered questions. The audience for this paper should be the judges of a student paper competition in which undergraduate college students demonstrate an ability to gather data in a systematic way and to analyze it. Evaluation will be based on the research, the quality of the analysis, and the critique of the study.

You will be urged to meet with your instructor about three quarters of the way through the course to consult on progress with the project, with special attention to your interpretation of the data you are collecting and your thesis. You will need to bring an outline or organizational scheme to that meeting.

The paper should be organized like a field research paper in the social sciences:

- Introduction - including clarification of the central question, important subsidiary questions, and relevant theories.
- Literature review – summarizing the main findings of at least two studies that have been done on your topic or a related one.
- Methodology - describing the process, the way in which you coded information, and your definitions of concepts.
- Findings and Discussion – organizing and presenting the data, analyzing the findings, relating the results to appropriate theories, and exploring possible weaknesses in this particular study.
- Conclusion - summarizing what the study suggests about the topic using a thesis statement, how you answered the central question, and what questions remain unanswered.
- Tables of data should be attached to the back of the paper as an appendix.

Each student will also do two peer reviews of papers. Part of the feedback process will be done in class.

The purpose of this assignment is to learn 1) to ask a good social science question 2) to gather and work with data 3) to analyze data and make sense of the findings, 4) to formulate and support a clear and sophisticated thesis.

Criteria for evaluation:

1. Evidence of careful collection of data.
2. Indications of effective analysis of data.
4. Effectiveness of investigation (asking a good question, lit review, sensitivity to shortcomings of the methodology, etc.).

5. Quality of prose and composition. (It must be of such high quality that the author does not jeopardize her or his credibility with readers).

F. Oral Presentation

Each student will also be making an oral presentation based on his or her inquiry project. Criteria for evaluation of the oral presentation are discussed in Appendix B.

## Assessment of Learning and Competence

*Relative values of various assignments are as follows:*

Analysis and Synthesis Exams:	(25 pts., 35 pts.)	60	points
Reading Responses		60	points
Inquiry Project		50	points
Oral Presentation:		30	points
Engagement (attendance/participation)		<u>50</u>	<u>points</u>
TOTAL		250	points

### Grading Scale

92.5	-	100%	A	72.5	-	77.5%	C
90	-	92.5%	A-	70	-	72.5%	C-
87.5	-	90 %	B+	67.5	-	70 %	D+
82.5	-	87.5%	B	60	-	67.5%	D
80	-	82.5%	B-				
77.5	-	80 %	C+	below 60%			F

### Grading Standards for Essays

- A: Perhaps the principle characteristic of the A paper is its rich content. Some people describe that content as “dense,” others as “packed.” The information delivered is such that one feels significantly taught by the author, sentence after sentence, paragraph after paragraph. The A paper is also marked by stylistic finesse: the title and opening paragraph are engaging; the transitions are artful; the phrasing is tight, fresh, and highly specific; the sentence structure is varied; the tone enhances the purposes of the paper. Finally, the A paper, because of its careful organization and development, imparts a feeling of wholeness and unusual clarity. Not surprisingly, then, it leaves the reader feeling bright, thoroughly satisfied, and eager to reread the piece.
- B: It is significantly more than competent. Besides being almost free of mechanical errors, the B paper delivers substantial information—that is, substantial in both quantity, and interest-value. Its specific points are logically ordered, well developed, and unified around a clear organizing principle that is apparent early in the paper. The opening paragraph draws the reader in; the closing paragraph is both conclusive and thematically related to the opening. The transitions between paragraphs are for the most part smooth, the sentence structures pleasingly varied. The diction of the B paper is typically much more concise and precise than that found in the C paper. Occasionally, it even shows distinctiveness. On the whole, then, a B paper makes the reading experience a pleasurable one, for it offers substantial information with few distractions.
- C: It is generally competent—it meets the assignment, has few mechanical errors, and is reasonably well organized and developed. The actual information it delivers, however, seems thin and commonplace. One reason for that impression is that the ideas are typically cast in the form of vague generalities—generalities that prompt the confused reader to ask marginally: “In every case?” “Why?” Stylistically the C paper has other shortcomings as well: the opening paragraph does little to draw the reader in; the final paragraph offers only a perfunctory wrap-up; the transitions between paragraphs are often bumpy; the sentences, besides being a bit choppy, tend to follow a predictable (hence monotonous) subject-

verb-object; and the diction is occasionally marred by unconscious repetitions, redundancy, and impression. The C paper, then, while it gets the job done, lacks both imagination and intellectual rigor, and hence does not invite a re-reading.

- D: Its treatment and development of the subject are as yet only rudimentary. While organization is present, it is neither clear nor effective. Sentences are frequently awkward, ambiguous, and marred by serious mechanical errors. Evidence of careful proofreading is scanty, if nonexistent. The whole piece, in fact, often gives the impression of having been conceived and written in haste.
- F: Its treatment of the subject is superficial; its theme lacks discernible organization; its prose is garbled or stylistically primitive. Mechanical errors are frequent. In short, the ideas, organization, and style fall far below what is acceptable college writing.

## Course Policy on Plagiarism

All academic endeavors are based on one fundamental principle—the honesty and integrity of those engaged in the search for truth. If someone fabricates facts or intentionally distorts materials in interpreting data, a great disservice has been done to his or her colleagues and to the academic discipline in question. Truth and knowledge cannot be attained in an atmosphere of dishonesty and distrust. As a person engaged in academic work, I expect students to adhere to this ethic of honesty in writing papers and taking exams. *Plagiarism* (copying the work of someone else or having someone else write one's papers) is such a gross violation of the integrity of academia that its incidence could result in the failure of the entire course for the student(s) involved. I trust that the above is unnecessary information for this group.

## Course Outline and Schedule of Assignments

When you read assigned material, I would recommend that you first skim the assignment, generating some questions that interest you. Then read the chapter thinking about those questions and seeking answers (the author's or your own) to those questions.

### Macro and Micro Perspectives

- |          |           |  |
|----------|-----------|--|
| April 5  | (Mon.):   | Introduction to the Course   |
| April 6  | (Tues.):  | Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology  |
| April 7  | (Wed.):   | The Sociological Imagination   |
| •        |           | <i>Down to Earth Sociology</i> : "The Promise" pp. 20-27. ( <b>Reading response due</b> )              |
| April 8  | (Thurs.): | Macro, Meso, and Micro Impacts: The Nature of Human Social Experience                                  |
| •        |           | <i>Down to Earth Sociology</i> : "The Survivors of the F-227," pp. 277-286                             |
| •        |           | <i>Down to Earth Sociology</i> : "Anybody's Son Will Do," pp. 458-469. ( <b>Reading response due</b> ) |
| April 9  | (Fri.):   | Macro, Meso, and Micro Impacts: The Nature of Human Social Experience                                  |
| •        |           | <i>Down to Earth Sociology</i> : "The Sounds of Silence" pp. 109-117                                   |
| •        |           | <i>Down to Earth Sociology</i> : "Sympathy in Everyday Life" pp. 118-134                               |
| April 12 | (Mon.):   | Macro/ Micro Connection: Experiments, Ethics, and Antisocial Behavior                                  |

- *Down to Earth Sociology*: "If Hitler Ask You to Electrocute a Stranger, Would You?" pp. 253-260. (**Reading response due**)

April 13 (Tues.): Term Projects: Methodology

- **Term Project topic due**

April 14 (Wed.): Science and Technology: Macro Systems, Change, and the Human Experience

- *film*- Frontline documentary, "*Growing Up Online*"

April 15 (Thurs.): Sociology of Science and Technology

- *Down to Earth Sociology*: "Social Change among the Amish," pp. 508-517. (**Reading response due**)

April 16 (Fri.): Gender and Sex

### **Gender within Culture**

April 19 (Mon): Gender: Social Inequality and the Glass Ceiling

April 20 (Tues.): Sociological, Psychological, and Historical Perspectives on Gender

April 21 (Wed.): *review*

April 22 (Thurs.): Images of Women in the Popular Culture: "Killing Us Softly" (film and discussion)

April 23 (Fri.): *review*

April 26 (Mon.): Gender Socialization and Sexual Scripts.

- *Down to Earth Sociology*: "Sexuality and Gender in Children's Daily Worlds," pp. 180-191.
- *Down to Earth Sociology*: "But What Do You Mean? Women and Men in Conversation," pp. 192-198. (**Reading response due**)
- **Measurement decisions about term project and bibliography due**

### **Culture and Conformity: Why Societies Curb Human Behavior**

April. 27 (Tues.): The "Deviants": Who are they and why do they do it?

- *Down to Earth Sociology*: "The Saints and the Roughnecks," pp. 299-314.
- *Down to Earth Sociology*: "Fraternities and Rape on Campus," pp. 349-359. (**Reading response due**)

April. 28 (Wed.): Human Freedom, Social Conformity, and Deviant/Criminal Behavior

- *Down to Earth Sociology*: "On Being Sane in Insane Places," pp. 294-306.

April 29 (Thurs.): The Sense of "Self" and the Jail Experience

- *Reading TBA*

April 30 (Fri.): **Analysis & Synthesis Exam #1** (Time-line and essay using the sociological imagination to understand one's own life. See Appendix A)

May 3 (Mon.): Justice and the Death Penalty

- "Trial by Fire: Did Texas execute an innocent man?" by David Grann (posted on course website)

May 4 (Tues.): The Criminal System:

### **Inequalities within a Culture: Class, Race, and Ethnicity**

May 5 (Wed.): Occupation and Income

May 6 (Thurs.): Economic Stratification and Conflict.

- *Down to Earth Sociology*: "The U.S. Upper Class", pp. 395-406.
- *Down to Earth Sociology*: "Nickel and Dimed", pp. 411-424. (**Reading response due**)

May 7 (Fri.): Conflict of Microcultures: Schools, Corporate Structures, & Opportunity Differentials

- "War of Values" by Danielle Morton

May 10 (Mon.): Economic Stratification; The Meaning of Race and Ethnicity

- *Down to Earth Sociology*: "Showing My Color", pp. 360-368. (**Reading response due**)

May 11 (Tues.): Sociological Perspectives on Race and Racism

May 12 (Wed.): Race and Ethnic Inequality.

- "A Death in Texas," by Tom Barry, (posted on course website) (**Reading response due**)

May 13 (Thurs.): Racism and Sexism: *Crash* (film and discussion)

May 14 (Fri.): Institutional Racism and Sexism

May 17 (Mon.): Institutional Racism and Sexism: Solutions

May 18 (Tues.): Institutional Racism and Sexism: Solutions

- Reading TBA

May 19 (Wed.): Culture, Conflict, and Misunderstanding

May 20 (Thurs.): Reproduction of Poverty—The Continuity of Inequality in the United States.

- Jay MacLeod, *Ain't No Makin' It*, Chaps. 1 & 3. (**Reading response due**)

May 21 (Fri.): Reproduction of Poverty—The Continuity of Inequality in the United States.

- Jay MacLeod, *Ain't No Makin' It*, Chaps. 4, 5, and 6

May 24 (Mon.): Reproduction of Poverty—The Continuity of Inequality in the United States.

- Finish reading Jay MacLeod, *Ain't No Makin' It*, Chap. 7 and either 9 or 10 (**Reading response due**)

### **Social Change**

May 25 (Tues.): Changing Society: Social Movements and Institutionalization

- Martin Luther King, Jr, *Stride Toward Freedom*, Chaps 1-5 (**Reading response due**)

May 26 (Wed.): Changing Society: The Legacy of Rosa Parks

May 27 (Thurs.): film and discussion

May 28 (Fri.): Resistance and Conflicts

- Work on term papers

May 31 (Mon.): a holiday!

June 1 (Tues.): Nonviolent Resistance: What is the strategy and why did it work?

- Martin Luther King, Jr, *Stride Toward Freedom*, Chap 6-8
- **Submit two copies of a polished (but not final) draft of your term paper for peer review.**

June 2 (Wed.): Peer Review of Term Papers

- Read two papers written by peers. We will offer each other feedback in the class

June 3 (Thurs.): *review*

June 4 (Fri.): Nonviolent Resistance: The Moral Issues.

- Martin Luther King, Jr, *Stride Toward Freedom*, Chaps, 9

June 7 (Mon.): Oral Presentations on Content Analysis

- **Term Project Due**

June 8 (Tues.): *review*

June 9 (Wed.): Oral Presentations on Content Analysis

June 10 (Thurs.): Oral Presentations on Content Analysis

June 11 (Fri.): Oral Presentations on Content Analysis

June 14: (Mon.): Oral Presentations on Content Analysis

June 15<sup>th</sup> (Tues.): **Final Exam**

## Appendix A

### Reflection Essay #1: The Sociological Imagination

**Purpose:** To learn to apply the "sociological imagination" to one's own life.

**Process:** Draw a "time line" which begins with some event or transition in your family's life in the 1960s or 1970s. Extend the time line up to the present. Above the line note the important events in our society's history during that period of time (e.g., wars, economic booms and busts, civil unrest, social movements, and the like). Below the line, note important events and transitions in your and your family's life. Write a 250 word essay to accompany your time line in which you discuss two relationships you see between you and your family's biography and our society's history. This requires use of a "sociological imagination." Your essay should show how the events of our society's history have affected the events of your life and of members of your family. Be as specific as you can be without revealing more about your private life than you wish.

**Audience:** Write as if you are trying to explain the idea of the sociological imagination and the relevance of the idea to your own family members.

Here, for example, is a portion of a time line done by me:

Civil Rights Movement Vietnam War			Women's Movement 1st personal computers		Iraq War begins terrorist attack in NY War in Afghanistan begins eco. recession			
1965	1969	1973	1979	1991	1996	1999	2005	2009
My parents are in activists college	My parents get married.	I am born.	We get our first computer (Apple).	I graduate from high school and go to college.	After a cross- continent road trip, I enter grad school.	I move to Washingto n DC and start working in an intl. org.	I am in a Ph.D.; prog., meet my future husband	I take position as Adjunct Prof. of Soc. at Bellevue College

## Appendix B

### Presentation Evaluation

The *content and organization* are especially important in any speech; however, the *presentation* is an important dimension in the overall quality of an oral presentation. However, you will be reporting on material that will be submitted as written work and the content will be assessed there. Therefore, on the oral evaluations the evaluation will focus more on oral communication skills.

1. Was there any presentational creativity; that is, did the presentation appeal to a variety of learning styles? (For example, did you address auditory, visual, and/or participatory modes of processing information? If you want to be really creative, you might appeal to sense of smell or taste. You might also want to consider use of music, simulations, photographs, or a short clip of a video. Feel free to be innovative, *but only insofar as it helps reinforce the ideas you intend to communicate!*)
2. Did the presenter use good communication skills to *engage* the audience?
  - a) Was the voice variegated in inflection, tone, and volume rather than a monotone?
  - b) Was the tempo too fast or too slow?  
Did the presenter(s) provide appropriate pauses to give people time to think and reflect on what was said?
  - c) Did the presenter(s) have good eye contact with the audience?
  - d) Did the presenter(s) utilize body movement to engage the audience?
  - e) Were the speaking style and grammar appropriate for an academic audience?