

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL
Summer I, 2009

Sociological Perspectives

(SOCI 101)

Section 002 M–Th 3:00–5:00 Saunders 104

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is designed to give you a dynamic introduction to the field of sociology, with special attention paid to issues, ideas, and facets of American culture and society. If you and I do our jobs correctly, you'll walk away with an appreciation of the ideas and methods of sociological inquiry and a sense of where the field is today.

This course has four broad goals:

1. **To introduce sociology and its ideas**

You should have a sense of the kinds of issues with which sociology grapples, the tools it brings, and the ideas upon which it is built.

2. **To survey several fields of contemporary sociology**

Where is sociology going today? What do sociologists do?

3. **To encourage critical approaches to social claims**

Claims about the nature of society are made daily in the press, popular and business books, and elsewhere. After this class, you should be able to evaluate these claims critically and think about how they might be tested sociologically.

4. **To write well**

Social science is, fundamentally, a written art. Writing well is integral to good sociology. Your writing will be evaluated for clarity of thought, language, structure, and grammar.

READINGS AND RESOURCES

Required Books

Dalton Conley. *Being Black, Living in the Red* (University of California Press, 1999).

Eric Klinenberg. *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago* (University of Chicago Press, 2002).

Lichterman and Potts. *The Civic Life of American Religion* (Stanford University Press, 2009).

Allison J. Pugh. *Longing and Belonging: Parents, Children, and Consumer Culture* (University of California Press, 2009).

Supplementary Readings

All other readings are available either on the web or on the course website. These are marked with the WWW symbol. Those available on the web are linked from the course website. The course website is available through <http://blackboard.unc.edu> and is also linked from <http://perrin.socsci.unc.edu>.

Other Resources

Have a dictionary close at hand to look up words you don't know. You can find an adequate one at <http://www.dictionary.com> if you prefer using an online version.

The UNC Writing Center (<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb>) can help you with writing clearly and correctly.

There is an astonishing amount of information available on the World Wide Web. A significant proportion of that information—though by no means all—is true and relevant. By all means, use the Web to supplement your reading and knowledge, but use it critically and make sure you know the source of the information. You alone are responsible for the accuracy of information in your written and spoken work.

FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

The requirements of this course are as follows:

Reading You must complete all the course readings. *You are responsible for understanding the readings*—make use of your fellow students, your dictionary, the Internet, and me to make sure you understand the readings. Course time is to be used for substantive discussion and further exploration of the implications of course readings, *not* for grasping the basic contents.

Participation You must attend, and participate in, all class discussions and small group exercises. You are also responsible for the information contained in course lectures.

Exams There will be two examinations. You must take the examinations at the date, time, and place assigned.

Writing Exercises Part of your grade in this course will be based on your performance on a variety of writing exercises. There will be several unannounced writing exercises throughout the course (**at least 6**), which will be graded. They may take place at the beginning of class, or they may take place at the end of class. I will not give make-up exercises for any reason other than a proven health emergency or a death in the family, but you will get, as in Monopoly, a “Get Out of Jail Free” card: I will drop your lowest writing exercise grade, no questions asked.

Final Paper The final paper is your opportunity to synthesize what you have learned during the class with outside interests and experiences. Your final paper must develop a sociological argument using appropriate sources. It is an academic paper and, as such, must be written in an appropriate style. The paper is due **in class on Thursday, June 11**.

Find some issue, situation, or paradox of interest to you. Using the library, locate at least two recent sociological studies that address some important facet of this topic. Your paper should evaluate these studies and the current state of sociological knowledge on your topic. Finally, design a study (you do not need to carry out the study, just design it) to examine the next big question remaining in your chosen topic area. What would you hypothesize? How would you do the study? What roadblocks and obstacles do you foresee?

There is no specific length requirement or limit, but you should be thinking along the lines of about 5–7 double-spaced pages.

Grading

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

Participation	15%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	20%
Writing Exercises	25%
Final Paper	25%

COURSE POLICIES

YOU ARE AN ADULT. As a student in this class, you are provided with a set of resources for learning the class's contents, and you are expected to fulfill a series of requirements designed to evaluate the depth and breadth of your knowledge of those contents. Your grade, therefore, is a reflection of your success in utilizing the resources you have at your disposal. There will be no extra credit or make-up assignments.

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INFORMATION IN THE READINGS AND GIVEN DURING LECTURES. If you do not understand something I say in a lecture, ask me during the lecture, during a later class, or privately via e-mail or office hours.

PARTICIPATION IS MANDATORY. Some discussions will be full-class; others will be in small groups. Your participation will be useless—and graded as such—if you have not done the reading.

SUMMER CLASSES ARE THE SAME AS SEMESTER CLASSES. You are receiving the same credit for this class as if you were taking it during spring or fall. You should expect to do the same amount of work for that credit. This includes the general expectation that, for every hour of class time, you should plan to spend two hours out of class, so **budget 16 hours a week** for class preparation and homework.

ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE ON THE DATES LISTED. Make sure you give yourself sufficient time to finish assignments by their due dates. You will lose roughly one letter grade per day between the due date and the date the paper is received. You may make the calculation yourself as to whether your work will improve sufficiently in the extra time to make up for the grade reduction. In exceptional cases, I may grant an extension; you *must* discuss this with me in advance.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS COURSE IS COVERED BY THE UNC HONOR CODE (see <http://www.unc.edu/depts/honor/studinfo.html>). I take academic dishonesty—including, but not limited to, plagiarism—very seriously. There will be no excuses or second chances; if you have plagiarized the *ideas* or *words* of someone else without giving credit, you will be referred to the Student Attorney General. The usual sanction for the first offense of academic dishonesty is suspension from the university for a semester. If you have questions as to what constitutes academic dishonesty, check <http://www.unc.edu/depts/honor/plagiarism.html> or consult your TA or me.

ADEQUATE COMPLETION OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE CLASS WILL EARN YOU A B-. Work whose quality clearly exceeds these requirements will earn a B, B+, A-, or A.

COURSE SCHEDULE

May 12 Introduction to “Introduction to Sociology”

May 13 Thinking about Inequality: Conley, Chapters 1 and 3

May 14 Conley, Chapters 4 and 5

May 18 Conley, Chapter 6

May 19 Risk and Behavior. Elizabeth M. Armstrong. “Diagnosing Moral Disorder: The Discovery and Evolution of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.” *Social Science and Medicine* 47:12 (1998): 2024–2042. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536\(98\)00308-6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536(98)00308-6)

May 20 Mistake, Misconduct, and Disaster

May 21 Perrin, Wagner-Pacifici, Hirschfeld, and Wilker, “Contest Time: Time, Territory, and Representation in the Postmodern Electoral Crisis.” *Theory and Society* 35 (2006), 351–391. <http://www.springerlink.com/content/n061n0417u06j034/>

May 25 Memorial Day - No Class

May 26 Inequality and Disaster: Klinenberg, Prologue, Introduction, Chapter 2

May 27 Who are we? Who are we becoming? Klinenberg, Chapters 4, 5, and Epilogue

May 28 Midterm Examination

June 1 Pugh, Chapters 1–3;

June 2 Pugh, Chapters 4 and 5

June 3 Culture, Desire, and Consumption

- Larson, Branscomb, and Wiley. “Forms and Functions of Family Mealtimes: Multidisciplinary Perspectives.” *New Directions for child and Adolescent Development* 111 (2006), pp. 1–15. <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/112478275/abstract>
- Horace Miner, “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema.” *The American Anthropologist* 58:3 (June, 1956). [www http://www.msu.edu/~jdowell/miner.html](http://www.msu.edu/~jdowell/miner.html)

June 4 Pugh, Chapters 6–8

June 8 Who are we? What do we believe? Lichterman & Potts, chapters 4 and 5

June 9 Reason and Belief

- Lichterman and Potts, Chapter 3
- Sam Harris, “The Case Against Faith.” http://www.samharris.org/site/full_text/the-case-against-faith

June 10 Beliefs, Inequality, and Health:

- Bearman, P. S., & Brückner H. (2001). “Promising the Future: Abstinence Pledges and the Transition to First Intercourse.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 106(4), 859-912.
- Terrence D. Hill, Christopher G. Ellison, Amy M. Burdette, and Marc A. Musick. “Religious involvement and healthy lifestyles: Evidence from the survey of Texas adults.” *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* 34:2 (June, 2007). <http://www.springerlink.com/content/06625249510m2j27/>

June 11 Putting it all together: Final Discussion. **Final Paper Due in Class.**

June 16 Final exam, 3:00–6:00 pm. Exam is open-book, open-note, open-internet.