

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL  
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# American Society: An Introduction to Sociology

(SOCI 10.5)

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Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30–4:45 Venable 224

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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*

*You must use Karen Fields' translation of Durkheim's The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. You may purchase and use any complete edition of the other books. I am aware that this is a lot of books; if you are in serious financial difficulty, contact me privately.*

**Émile Durkheim.** *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Trans. Karen Fields (Free Press, 1912 [Trans: 1995]).

**Max Weber.** *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Routledge Classics, 1930 [2001]).

**Erving Goffman.** *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Anchor, 1959).

**David Riesman et al.** *The Lonely Crowd* (Yale University Press, 1950, 1953).

**Arlie Russell Hochschild.** *The Managed Heart* (University of California Press, 1985).

**Charles Bosk.** *Forgive and Remember* (University of Chicago Press, 1972).

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

**Barry Glassner.** *Culture of Fear: Why Americans are Afraid of the Wrong Things* (Basic Books, 1999).

**Thea Skocpol.** *The Missing Middle: Working Families and the Future of American Social Policy* (Norton, 2000).

#### *Recommended Books*

**Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.** *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Pathfinder Press, 1848).

**Karl Marx.** *The German Ideology* (Prometheus Books, 1848).

**Strunk and White.** *The Elements of Style* (Allyn & Bacon, 1959).

#### *Supplementary Readings*

All other readings are available either on the web or on the course website. Readings available on the course website are marked with the WWW symbol. Those available on the web are linked from the course website. A few readings are on reserve in the library, and should also be available by electronic reserve; these are marked with the LIB symbol. The course website is available through <http://blackboard.unc.edu> and is also linked from <http://www.unc.edu/~aperrin>.

#### *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.

## FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

The requirements of this course are as follows:

**Reading** You must complete all the course readings. I have limited them to the most important sections, and usually to 120 pages a week and often less. I have also tried to balance heavy reading weeks with light ones; you should take advantage of this by starting the reading for heavier weeks early. *You are responsible for understanding the readings*—make use of your fellow students, your dictionary, the Internet, your TA, 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. 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.

**Book Review** You must write a review of a sociological book published within the past ten years. You can assume a book is appropriate if it has been reviewed in *Contemporary Sociology* or *The American Journal of Sociology*; however, your review must be substantively different from these reviews. Other books may also be appropriate. You must tell me by November 1 what book you intend to review. You will present a short version of your review to a small group of your classmates on November 15.

**Final Paper** The final paper is your opportunity to synthesize what you have learned during the class with outside interests and experiences. Select an assignment from these four options:

1. Find some issue, situation, or paradox of interest to you and compare how at least two of sociology's grand theorists (Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Simmel, Goffman) would understand it. For this project you will have to do further reading of the theorists you choose, and offer an evaluation of the situation and the theorists' approaches to it.
2. Find some issue, situation, or paradox of interest to you and review and evaluate sociological research and writing on it. For this project you must provide a broad introduction to the field of interest and a sense of the similarities, differences, and relationships among sociological approaches. *This is not simply an annotated bibliography.*
3. Find some issue, situation, or paradox of interest to you and design a sociological study to investigate it. You must provide a theoretical background, literature review, methodological specification, and expected results. (This option is probably of greatest interest to those interested in the craft of social scientific research.)
4. You may choose to do a different assignment, appropriate for a final paper in a sociology course. *You **must** check with me before embarking on this option.*

### *Turning In Papers*

You may turn in your papers printed out on paper or by e-mail. If you submit a paper by e-mail, it must be *received* by the time and date the paper is due. I will send you a confirmation when I receive your message. Don't worry: my system will make a note of the date and time your message was received, so if you send it on time I will know. (I prefer that papers be in PDF format, which you can generate using L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X (my preferred method) or using Acrobat software from Adobe. I will also accept papers in PostScript or in the *de facto* standard, Microsoft Word, assuming I can open them in my word processor.)

### *Grading*

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

Course Participation	15%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	20%
Book Review	15%
Final Paper	35%

## 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 in-class quizzes or writing assignments, and 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.

ON DAYS WHEN DISCUSSIONS ARE SCHEDULED, participation is mandatory. Some discussions will be full-class; others will be broken into two sections, and still others will be in small groups. Since course participation makes up 15% of your grade, it would be smart to attend.

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. 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.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Part I: **What is Sociology? History and Core Ideas**

8/21–9/25

**August 21** Lecture: Introduction to “Introduction to Sociology”

**August 23** Short lecture and discussion: An Invitation to Sociological Thinking

Readings:

- Peter Berger, “What Are Sociologists and Why Are They Doing This?” (from *An Invitation to Sociology*) LIB
- C. Wright Mills, selections from *The Sociological Imagination* LIB
- John L. Locke, selections from *The De-Voicing of Society* LIB

**August 28** Lecture: How to Read a Book

**August 30** Introduction and Discussion: Sociological Foundations: Émile Durkheim

*Come to class prepared to discuss the readings!*

Reading: Karen Fields, Introduction to Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, pages *xvii – li*

**September 4** Lecture: How to Write a Paper (or, the difference between ARGUMENT and OPINION)

*Get a head start on next week by beginning the Marx and Weber readings*

**September 6** Discussion: Durkheim and the Concept of the Social

Readings:

- Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, pp. 1–8, 99–133, 207–216, 231–241, 433–448

**September 11** Lecture: Social Conflict and Division

**September 13** Discussion: Marx

Readings:

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* WWW
- Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, Part I (Available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/index.htm>)
- Max Weber, *Class, Status, Party*, from Gerth and Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* LIB
- **(Optional)** Karl Marx, selections from *Capital*
  - Preface to the French Edition (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/p2.htm>)
  - Chapter I: Commodities (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch01.htm>)
  - Chapter IV: The General Formula for Capital (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch04.htm>)

**September 18** Lecture: From Europe to America: The Founding of American Sociology

**September 20** Discussion: Durkheim and Weber on Religion

Readings:

- Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, pp. 21–45, 392–417
- Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Chapters I, II, III, V

**September 25** Discussion: Simmel and Goffman

Readings:

- Georg Simmel, “The Importance of Numbers in Social Life” and “The Stranger” LIB
- Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Chapters I (“Performances”), VI (“The Arts of Impression Management”), and VII (“Conclusion”)

**September 27** No class, Yom Kippur

Part II: **Contemporary American Society**

10/2–11/15

**October 2** Lecture: History and Ideas of Contemporary American Sociology

**October 4** Discussion: The Individual in Society

Reading: Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, Chapters:

I “Some Types of Character and Society”

V “The Inner-Directed Round of Life”

VI “The Other-Directed Round of Life: From Invisible Hand to Glad Hand”

VII “The Other-Directed Round of Life (*Continued*): The Night Shift”

VIII “Tradition-Directed, Inner-Directed, and Other-Directed Political Styles: Indifferents, Moralizers, Inside-Dopesters”

IX “Political Persuasions: Indignation and Tolerance”

XI “Americans and Kwakiutls”

XVI “Autonomy and Utopia”

- **(Optional)** Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*

**October 9** MIDTERM EXAM

Bring a blue book to the class. The exam will cover readings, discussions, and lectures up to this point.

**October 11** Discussion: Cross-Cultural Comparisons

Readings:

- Stephenson, "Going to McDonald's in Leiden: Reflections on the Concept of Self and Society in the Netherlands," *Ethos* 17 (June 1989), pp. 226–247 [LIB](#)
- Michèle Lamont, "The Rhetorics of Racism and Anti-Racism in France and the United States" ([http://www.russellsage.org/publications/working\\_papers.htm](http://www.russellsage.org/publications/working_papers.htm); also in Michèle Lamont and Laurent Thévenot, eds., *Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology: Repertoires of Evaluation in France and the United States*)
- Abigail Saguy, "Sexual Harassment in France and the United States" (<http://www.people.virginia.edu/~bb3v/symbound/wps/Saguy.html>; also in Michèle Lamont and Laurent Thévenot, eds., *Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology: Repertoires of Evaluation in France and the United States*)

**October 16** Lecture: Introduction to Work and the Workplace

Reading: Jeff Leiter, "Latino Labor in North Carolina" (<http://sasw.chass.ncsu.edu/jeff/latinos/eeoc.pdf>)

**October 18** No Class: Fall Break

**October 23** Discussion: Emotion Work

Reading: Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*

**October 25** Guest Lecture: Eliana Perrin, M.D.: The Training and Organization of Medical Care

Readings:

- Bosk, *Forgive and Remember*, Chapters 1 and 2
- Rose Laub Coser, "Authority and Decision-Making in a Hospital: A Comparative Analysis." *American Sociological Review* 23:1 (February, 1958), pp. 56–63 [WWW](#)
- "Learning to Doctor: Reflections on Recent Accounts of the Medical School Years," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 1988 [WWW](#)

**October 30** Discussion: Medicine and Medical Training

Readings:

- Bosk, *Forgive and Remember*, Chapters 4 and 6
- "Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Diseases" by B. Link and J. Phelan. 1995. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. Special Issues. pg 80-94 [WWW](#)

**November 1** Lecture: The Sociology of Inequality

Hand in proposed book review topics by today

**November 6** Discussion: Race and Inequality

Reading: Conley, *Being Black, Living in the Red*, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6

**November 8** Guest Lecture: Dohoon Lee

Part III: Media and Democracy in Contemporary America

11/13–12/6

**November 13** Lecture: Political Sociology

**November 15** Small-group presentations of book reviews

Book reviews due

**November 20** Discussion: Crime, Fear, and Perception

Reading: Glassner, *The Culture of Fear: Why Americans are Afraid of the Wrong Things*, Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, and 9

**November 22** No class: Thanksgiving

**November 27** Writing Workshop II

**November 29** Discussion: The State of American Democracy I

Reading: Skocpol, *The Missing Middle*, Chapters One, Two, Four, and Five

**December 4** Discussion: The State of American Democracy II

Readings:

- Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy* 6:1 (January, 1995) ([http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_democracy/v006/6.1putnam.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v006/6.1putnam.html))
- Alejandro Portes and Patricia Landolt, "Unsolved Mysteries: The Tocqueville Files II." *The American Prospect* 25 (1996) (<http://www.prospect.org/print/V7/26/26-cnt2.html>)
- Katha Pollitt, "As the Ball Rolls," *The Nation*. LIB

**December 6** Final Discussion and Wrap Up

**December 10** Final Papers Due by 5:00 pm

**December 17** Final Exam Date

## RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

*These are only a few suggestions—contact me for more in your areas of interest.*

- Textbooks  
*I have not assigned a traditional textbook for this class. If you'd like to look at one for reference, I recommend Giddens' Introduction to Sociology, or Coser et al.'s Introduction to Sociology.*
- Social Theory
  - Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*.
  - Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought*.
- Individual and Society
  - Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*. University of California Press.
  - Whyte, *The Organization Man*. Simon and Schuster.
- Sociology of Work
  - Nippert-Eng, *Home and Work*. University of Chicago Press.
  - Newman, *No Shame in My Game*. Vintage.
- Inequalities
  - Bowen and Bok. *The Shape of the River*. Princeton University Press.
  - Skrentny. *The Ironies of Affirmative Action*. University of Chicago Press.
  - Ferguson, *Bad Boys*. University of Michigan Press.
- Politics and Democracy
  - Putnam. *Bowling Alone*. Basic Books.