

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL
Spring, 2002

American Society:
An Introduction to Sociology
(SOCI 10.2)

MWF 10:00–10:50 Bingham 103

Andrew Perrin

TA: Cheol-Sung Lee

Office: Hamilton 269

Office hours: Wednesday, 1:30–3:30; Thursday, 10:00–12:00

Phone: 962-6876

E-mail: andrew_perrin@unc.edu • <http://www.unc.edu/~aperrin>

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

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

Robin Leidner. *Fast Food, Fast Talk* (University of California Press, 1993).

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

Kai Erikson. *Everything in its Path* (Simon & Schuster, 1976).

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

Recommended Books

Émile Durkheim. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (Oxford University Press, 1912 [Trans: 2000]).

Michèle Lamont and Laurent Thévenot. *Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology: Repertoires of Evaluation in France and the United States* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (ed. Tucker). *The Marx-Engels Reader, 2nd ed.* (W.W. Norton, 1978).

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. 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. *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.

Reading Comments You must turn in two 2-page reflective discussions of readings of your choice. These are due *at the beginning of* the class during which the readings are discussed.

Vocabulary Exercises You must turn in two short (one page or less) exercises in which you explore a word in one of the class readings whose meaning you did not previously know. You should note the word, its definition, and its meaning in the context of the reading.

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. In the book review, you must describe and evaluate the book's research question, research design, and argument. You must tell me by March 18 what book you intend to review. You will present a short version of your review to a small group of your classmates on April 1.

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. 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.*

Grading

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

Course Participation	5%
Small-Group Presentations	10%
Reading Response Exercises	10%
Vocabulary Exercises	5%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	20%
Book Review	10%
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 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 in small groups. Your participation will be useless—and graded as such—if you have not done the reading.

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

1/9–1/25

January 9 Lecture: Introduction to “Introduction to Sociology”

January 11 Sociological Introductions (Small Groups)

January 14 Lecture: “What is a Group?”

Reading: Selections from Karen Fields, Introduction to Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* LIB

January 16 Small group discussions of general sociology

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

January 18 Lecture: How to Read, Write, and Think Sociologically
Start reading Erikson!

January 21 No Class: Martin Luther King, Jr. day

January 23 Lecture: Sociology in the Real World

January 25 Small Group Discussions

Reading: Erikson, *Everything in its Path*, pp. 21–48 and 135–259

January 28 Lecture: Social Theory and Sociology

Reading: Adorno, from *Introduction to Sociology*, lectures 1, 2, and 6 LIB

January 30 Lecture: Sociological Foundations: Émile Durkheim

February 1 Small Group Discussions

Reading: Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* Book I, Chapter 1; Book II, Chapters 1 and 4; Conclusion LIB

February 4 Lecture: Social Conflict and Progress: Karl Marx

February 6 Small Group Tasks

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>)
- **(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>)

February 8 Class Presentations of Group Work

February 11 Class Presentations of Group Work

February 13 Lecture: Max Weber's Life and Work

Readings:

- Max Weber, *Class, Status, Party*, from Gerth and Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* LIB
- Max Weber, from *The Types of Legitimate Domination* LIB

February 15 Lecture: Marx and Weber: Competing Ideas

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

Reading: Simmel, "The Stranger" LIB

February 20 Discussion: Goffman

Reading: Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Chapters I ("Performances"), VI ("The Arts of Impression Management"), and VII ("Conclusion")

February 22 Exam Review and Discussion

February 25 Midterm Examination

February 27 Video: *Obedience*

March 1 Small Group Discussions

Reading: Milgram, "Some conditions of obedience to authority." *Human Relations* 18:1 (February, 1965): 57–75.

Part II: **Contemporary Sociological Research**

3/3–5/1

March 4 Lecture: History and Ideas of Contemporary American Sociology

March 6 Lecture: What Makes Americans American? (Comparative Cultural Sociology)

March 8 Small Group Discussions

Readings:

- Stephenson, "Going to McDonald's in Leiden: Reflections on the Concept of Self and Society in the Netherlands" *Ethos* 17:2 (June, 1989) LIB
- Lamont, "The Rhetorics of Racism and Anti-Racism in the United States and France" WWW 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*)
- Agnès Camus-Vigué, "Community and civic culture: the Rotary Club in France and the United States." in Michèle Lamont and Laurent Thévenot, eds., *Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology: Repertoires of Evaluation in France and the United States.* LIB

March 11–15 No class, Spring Break

March 18 Lecture: Introduction to Work and the Workplace

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

Book Review Topics Due

March 20 Video: *Modern Times* (Part I)

March 22 Video: *Modern Times* (Part II)

March 25 Small Group Discussions

Reading: Leidner, *Fast Food, Fast Talk*, Chapters 2 and 3

March 27 Class Presentations of Group Work

March 29 No Class, Passover/Good Friday

April 1 Class Presentations of Group Work

Book Reviews Due

April 3 Small group presentations of book reviews

April 5 Discussion

Reading: Leidner, *Fast Food, Fast Talk*, Chapters 4, 6, and 7

April 8 Discussion: Writing the Final paper

Readings:

- Rose Laub Coser, “Authority and Decision-Making in a Hospital: A Comparative Analysis.” *American Sociological Review* 23:1 (February, 1958), pp. 56–63 [www](#)
- “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](#)

April 10 Lecture: Medical Sociology and Medical Training

April 12 Guest Lecture: Eliana Perrin, M.D.: The Training and Organization of Medical Care

Readings: Bosk, *Forgive and Remember*, Chapters 1 and 2

April 15 Small Group Discussions

Readings: Bosk, *Forgive and Remember*, Chapters 4 and 6

April 17 Lecture: The Sociology of Inequality

April 19 Full-Class Discussion

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

April 22 Video: *Roger and Me* (selections)

April 24 Small Group Discussions

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

April 26 Lecture: The Sociology of Democracy

April 29 Full-Class Discussion

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)
- 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

May 1 Final Discussion and Wrap Up

May 3 Final papers due, 5:00 PM

May 6 Final Examination, 8:00 AM

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.